The
SCOTTISH CHIEFS,
A ROMANCE.
Five Volumes in Two.

BY MISS JANE PORTER,
Author of Thaddeus of Warsaw, And Remarks on Sidney's Aphorisms.

There comes a voice that awakes my soul. It is the voice of years that are gone; they roll before me with all their deeds. Ossian

(From the London edition of 1810)

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July 1810.
THE

SCOTTISH CHIEFS.

CHAP. I.

As Wallace pursued his march along the once fertile and well-peopled vallies of Clydesdale, he passed not over a track with which he was not well acquainted: but their present appearance affected him like the sight of a friend whom he had seen depart in all the graces of youth and prosperity, and met again overcome with disease and wretchedness.

The pastures of Carstairs on the east of the river, which used at this season to be whitened with sheep, and sending forth the grateful lowings of abundant cattle; and the hills which had teemed with laborious reapers rejoicing in the harvest; were now laid waste and silent. The plain presented one wide flat of desolation. Where once was spread the enamelled meadow, a dreary swamp extended its vapory surface; and the road, which a happy peasantry no longer trod, lay choked up with thistles and rank grass, while birds and animals of chase would spring from the surrounding thickets on the passing traveller, to tell him, by their wildness, that he was distant from the abode of men. The remains of villages were visible: but the blackness of ashes marked the walls of the half-ruined dwellings.

Wallace felt that he was passing through the country in which his Marion had been rifled of her life; and as he moved along, nature, all around, seemed to have partaken her death. As he rode over the moors which lead towards the district of Crawford-Lammington, amidst whose hills the beloved of his soul first drew
her breath, he became totally silent. Time rolled back; he was no longer the Regent of Scotland, but the fond lover of Marion Braidfoot. His heart beat as it was wont to do in turning his horse down the defile which led direct to Lammington; but the scene was completely changed: the groves in which he had so often wandered with her, were gone; they had been cut down for the very purpose of burning the house they had once adorned; of destroying that place which had once been the abode of beauty and innocence and of all the tender charities.

One shattered tower (a) alone remained of the castle of Lammington. The scathing of fire embrowned its sides, and the uprooted garden marked where the raver had been. While his army marched before him along the heights of Crawford, Wallace slowly moved on, and mused on the scene. In turning the angle of a broken-down wall, his horse started, and the next moment he perceived, as if the earth opened, and an aged figure with a beard as white as snow, and wrapped in a dark plaid, appeared emerging from the ground. At sight of the apparition, Murray, who accompanied his friend, and had hitherto sympathized in silence, suddenly exclaimed, "I conjure you, honest Scot, whether you be ghost or man, to give me a subject for conversation! and tell me to whom this ruined tower belonged?"

The tongue of his own country, and above all, the sight of two warriors in the Scottish garb, encouraged the old man, and stepping out on the ground, he drew near to Murray. "Ruined, indeed, sir," replied he, "and its story is simple and sad. When the Southrons who hold the fortresses in Annandale, heard of the brave acts of Sir William Wallace, they sent an army of men to destroy this castle and domains, which were his in right of his wife, the Lady Marion of Lammington, whom, sweet creature! I hear they most foully murdered in Lanark."

Murray was struck speechless at this information; for had he suspected that there was any private reason with Wallace for his lingering about this desolate spot,
he would have rather drawn him away, than have stopped to ask questions.*

"And did you know the Lady Marion, venerable old man?" inquired Wallace, in a voice so descriptive of what was passing in his heart, that the man turned towards him; and struck with his noble mien, he pulled off his bonnet, and bowing, answered: "Did I know her? She was nursed on these knees. And my wife, who cherished her sweet infancy, is now within that brae. This is our only home now; for the Southrons burnt us out of Lammington-castle, where our young lady left us to be her stewards when she went to Ayr to be married to the brave young lord with whom I have so often clambered these hills. He was as handsome a youth as ever the sun shone upon; and he loved my lady from a boy. I never shall forget the day when she stood on the top of that rock, and let a garland which he had just made for her, fall into the Clyde. Without more ado, never caring because it is the deepest here of any part of the river, he jumps in after it; and I after him. And well I did, for when I caught him by his bonnie gowden locks, he was insensible. His head had struck against a stone in the plunge, and a great cut was over his forehead. God bless him, a sorry scar it made! but many, I warrant, he has beside; though I have never seen him since he was a man.

Gregory, the honest steward of Lammington, was soon recognised in this old man's relation: But time and hardship had so altered his appearance, that Wallace could not have recollected the ruddy age and active figure of his well-remembered companion, in the shaking limbs and pallid visage of the hoary speaker. When the venerable narrator had ended, the chief threw himself off his horse. He approached the old man: with one hand he took off his helmet, and with the other putting back the same golden locks, he said, "Was the scar you speak of any thing like this?" His face was now close to the eye of Gregory who, immediately, in the action, the words, and the mark, recognising the young play-mate of his happiest days, with an exclamation of joy, threw himself on his neck and wept; then looking up, with the tears rolling over his cheeks,
he exclaimed, "O Power of Mercy, take me now to thyself, since my eyes have seen the deliverer of Scotland?"

"Not so, my venerable friend;" returned Wallace, "you must yet make these desolated regions bloom anew. Decorate them, old man, as you would do the tomb of your mistress, with every produce of the year. I give them to you and yours. Marion and I have no posterity! Let her foster-brother, if he still live, as he drew the same milk with her, let him be ever after considered as the laird of Lammington."

"He does live," replied the old man, "but the shadow of what he was. In attempting, with a few resolute lads, to defend these domains from the marauders, he was severally wounded. His companions were all slain, and we found him on the other side of my lady's summer-house, left for dead. His mother, and his young wife and babes, fled with him to the woods, and there remained till all about here was laid in ashes. Finding the cruel Southrons had made a general waste; yet fearful of fresh incursions, should any survivors appear above ground, we, and several of the adjacent villagers who had been driven from their homes, dug us these subterraneous dwellings; and ever since have lived like fairies in the green-hill side. My son and his family are now in our cavern, much reduced by sickness and want; for famine is here. Alas, the Southrons in conquering Scotland have not gained a kingdom, but made a desert!"

"And we must make it smile again!" returned Wallace, "I go to reap the harvests of Northumberland. What our enemies have torn hence, in part they shall refund: a few days and your granaries shall overflow. Meanwhile, I will leave with you my friend;" said he, turning to Murray; "at the head of five hundred men, he shall to-morrow morning commence the reduction of every English fortress that yet stains with its shadow the waves of our native Clyde; for, when the sun next rises, the Southrons will have passed the Scottish borders, and I shall again have blown the trumpet of war. He will deliver you food from the stores of our enemies; and when I return, I shall ex
pect to see the respected steward of Lammington again within its walls; in the midst of its tenantry (which Lord Andrew Murray will gather from the adjoining counties) dispensing those comforts from that now solitary tower, which must ever flow from it as the true memorial of my Marion’s name and virtues!”

Gregory, seeing that his lord was going to depart, fell at his feet, and begged that he might be allowed to bring his Annie to see the husband of her once dear child.

“No; not now,” replied Wallace, “I could not bear the interview—she shall see me when I return.”

He then drew near to Murray, who cheerfully acquiesced in his commission, as it promised him not only the glory of being a conqueror, but would afford him the satisfaction he hoped of driving the Southron garrison out of his own paternal castle. To send such news to his noble father at Stirling, would indeed be a wreath of honour to his aged, but yet warlike brow. It was arranged between the young chief, and his commander, that watching towers should be thrown up on every conspicuous eminence throughout the country, from the heights of Clydesdale to those which skirted the Scottish borders. From these, concerted signals of victories, or certain sorts of information, were to be severally interchanged. The sound of the Regent’s bugle brought Ker and Sir John Graham to his side. The appointed number of men were left with Murray; and Wallace joining his other chieftains, bade his friend and honest servant adieu!

He now awakened to a sense of the present scene, and saw his legions traverse hill and dale till they entered on the once luxuriant banks of the Annan. This territory of some of the proudest lords of Scotland, lay in more terrific ruin than even the tracts he had left. There, reigned the silence of the tomb, here existed the expiring agonies of men left to perish. More recent marks of devastation smoked from the blood-stained earth; and in the midst of some barren waste, a few houseless wretches would rush forward at the sight of the Regent, throw themselves before his horse, and beg for food for their famishing selves and
dying infants. "Look;" cried an almost frantic mother holding up the living skeleton of a child, which hardly seemed to breathe, "my husband is slain by the Southrons who hold Lochmaben-castle; my subsistence is carried away, and myself turned out to bring forth this child on the pitiless rocks. I have fed there till this hour on the berries; but I die, and my child expires before me!" "Here are our young ones," cried another woman with shrieks of despair, "exposed to equal miseries. Give us bread, Regent of Scotland, or we perish!"

"Fast for a day, my brave friends," cried Wallace, turning animatedly towards his troops, "lay all the provision you have brought with you, before these hapless people. To-morrow you shall feast largely on Southron tables."

Wallace was instantly obeyed. As his men marched on they threw their loaded wallets amongst the famishing groups; and followed by their blessings, descended with augmented speed the ravaged hills of Annandale. The grey dawn was tinging the dark head of Brunswark, as they advanced towards the Scottish boundary. At a distance, like a wreath of white vapours, lay the English camp along the southern bank of the Esk. Wallace at this sight ordered his bugles to sound; and they were immediately answered by those of the opposite host. The heralds of both armies advanced; and the sun rising from behind the eastern screen of hills, shone full upon the legions of Scotland now winding down the romantic precipices of Wauchope.

Less than two hours arranged every preliminary requisite to the exchange of prisoners; and when the clarion of the trumpet announced that each party were to pass over the river to the side of its respective country. Wallace stood in the midst of his chieftains to receive the last adieus of his illustrious captives. When de Warenne approached, the Regent took off his helmet. The Southron had already his in his hand.

"Farewell, gallant Scot:" said he, "if ought could imbitter this moment of recovered freedom, it is, that leave a man I so revere, still confident in a final hopeless cause!"
"It would not be the less just, were it indeed desperate," replied Wallace, "but had not heaven shewn on which side it fought, I should not have had the honour of thus bidding the brave Earl de Warenne farewell."

De Warenne passed on; and the other lords, with grateful and respectful looks, paid their obeisance. The litter of Montgomery drew near: the curtains were thrown open: Wallace stretched out his hand to him; "The prayers of sainted innocence are for ever thine!"

"Never more shall her angel spirit behold me here, as you now behold me," returned Montgomery: "I must be a traitor to virtue before I ever again bear arms against Sir William Wallace." Wallace pressed his hand, and they parted.

The escort which guarded De Valence advanced; and the proud Earl seeing where his enemy stood, took off his gauntlet, and throwing it fiercely towards him, exclaimed, "Carry that to your minion Ruthven, and tell him, that the hand which wore it will yet be most tremendously revenged!"

As the Southron ranks filed off towards Carlisle, those of the returning Scottish prisoners approached their deliverer. Now it was that the full clangor of joy burst from every breast and triumph-breathing instrument in the Scottish legions; now it was that the echoes rang with loud huzzas of "Long live the valiant Wallace, who brings our nobles out of captivity! Long live our matchless Regent!"

As these shouts rent the air, the Lords Badenoch and Athol drew near. The princely head of the former bent with proud acknowledgment to the mild dignity of Wallace. Badenoch's penetrating eye in a moment saw that it was indeed the patriotic guardian of his country, to whom he bowed, and not the vain averter of regal power. At his approach, Wallace lighted from his horse, and received his offered hand and thanks with every grace inherent in his noble nature; "I am happy," returned he, "to have been the instrument of recalling to his country one of the princes of the royal blood." "And while one drop of
it exists in Scotland," replied Badenoch, "its possessor must acknowledge the bravest of our defenders in Sir William Wallace."

Athol next advanced; but his gloomy countenance contradicted his words, when he attempted to utter a similar sense of obligation. Sir John Monteith was eloquent in his thanks. And Sir William Maitland, the only surviving son of the knight of Thirlestane, was not less sincere in his professions of gratitude, than Wallace was in his pleasure at having given liberty to so near a relation of Helen Mar. The rest of the captive Scots, to the number of several hundreds, were ready to kiss the feet of the man who restored them to their honours, their country, and their friends: and Wallace bowed his happy head under a shower of blessings, which poured on him from a thousand grateful hearts.

In pity to the wearied travellers, he ordered tents to be pitched; dispatching a detachment of men to the top of Langholm hill, to send forth a smoke,(c) in token to the Clydesdale watch, of the armistice being at an end. He had hardly seen them ascend the mountain, when Graham arrived from reconnoitring; and told him, that an English army of great strength had formed behind his camp, and where now wheeling round by the foot of the hills to take the reposing Scots by surprise.

"They shall find us ready to receive them," was the prompt reply of Wallace: And his actions were ever the companions of his words. Leaving his harassed friends under a sufficient guard to rest on the banks of the Esk, he put himself at the head of 5000 men, and sending a thousand more with Sir John Graham to pass over the Cheviots and attack the Southrons in flank when he should give the signal, he marched swiftly forward; and fell in with some advanced squadrons of the enemy amongst the recesses of those hills. Little expecting such a rencontre, they were marching in defiles upon the ridgy craigs, taking every precaution to avoid the swamps which occupied the broader way.

At sight of the Scots, Lord Percy, who commanded the Southron army, ordered a party of archers who
were clambering round by the projecting cliffs, to discharge their arrows. The artillery of war being thus opened afresh, Wallace drew his bright sword, and waving it before him like a meteor of night, called aloud to his followers; his inspiring voice echoed from hill to hill, and the higher detachments of the Scots pouring down upon the unprepared archers with the resistless impetuosity of their own mountain streams, precipitated their enemies into the valley; while Wallace with his pikemen charging the horse in those slippery paths, drove the terrified animals into the morasses, where some sunk at once, and others plunging, threw their riders to perish in the swamp.

Lord Percy, desperate at the confusion which now ensued, as his archers fell headlong from the rocks, and his cavalry lay drowning before him, called up his infantry:—They appeared; but though ten thousand strong, the determined Scots met their first ranks breast to breast, and soon levelling them with their companions, rushed on the rest with the force of a thunder-storm. It was at this period that the signal was given from the horn of Wallace; and the division of Graham meeting the retreating Southrons as they attempted to fall back behind the hill, completed their defeat. The slaughter became dreadful, the victory decisive. Sir Ralph Latimer, the second in command, was killed in the first onset; and Lord Percy himself, after fighting like a lion, and being covered with wounds, sought safety in flight.

CHAP. II.

This being the season of harvest in the northern counties of England, Wallace carried his reapers, not to lay their sickles to the field, but with their swords to open themselves a way into the Southron granaries.

Wallace, meanwhile, provided for the wants of his friends on the other side of the Esk. The plunder of Percy's camp was dispatched to them; which being abundant in all kinds of provisions, was sufficient to
keep them in ample store till they could reach Stirling. From that point, they had promised their Regent, they would disperse to their separate estates, collect recruits, and reduce the distracted state of the country into some composed order. Wallace had disclosed his wish, and mode of effecting this renovation of public happiness, before he left Stirling. It contained a plan of military organization, by which each youth, able to bear arms, should not only be instructed in the dexterous use of the weapons of war, but in the duties of subordination; and, above all, in the nature of those rights for which he was now contending.

"They only require being thoroughly known, to be regarded as inestimable," added he: "But while we raise around us the best bulwark of any nation, a brave and well-disciplined people, while we teach them to defend their liberties, let us see that they deserve them. Let them be men contending for virtuous independence, not savages fighting for licentious freedom. We must have our youth of both sexes, in towns and villages, from the castle to the cot, taught the sublime truths of Christianity. From that root will branch all that is needful to make them useful members of the state, virtuous and happy.—And while war is in our hands, let us in all things prepare for peace; that the sword may gently bend into the sickle, the dagger to the pruning-hook."

There was an expansive providence in all this, a concentrating plan of public weal, which few of the nobles had ever even glanced at, as a design conceivable for Scotland.

"Ah! my lords," replied he to their warlike objections, "deceive not yourselves with the belief, that by the mere force of arms a nation can render itself great and secure. Industry, temperance, and discipline, amongst the people, with moderation and justice in the higher orders, are the only aliments of independence. They bring you riches and power; they make it the interest of those who might have been your enemies, to court your friendship."

The council at Stirling had received his plan with enthusiasm. And when, on the day of his parting with
the released chieftains on the banks of the Esk, he, with all the generous modesty of his nature, rather submitted his design to them as if to obtain the approbation of friends, than to enforce it with the authority of a Regent; when they saw him thus coming down from the dictatorship to which his unrivalled talents had raised him, to equal himself still with them, all were struck with admiration; and Lord Badenoch could not but say to himself—"The royal qualities of this man can well afford this expense of humility. Bend as he will, he has only to speak, to shew his superiority over all, and to be a king again."

There was a power in the unostentatious virtues of Wallace, which, declaring themselves rather in their effects, than by display, subdued the princely spirit of Badenoch even to his smile; and while the proud chieftain recollected how he had contemned the pretensions of Bruce, and could not brook the elevation of Baliol; how his soul was in arms, when, after he had been persuaded to acknowledge the supremacy of Edward, the throne was given to one of his rivals; he wondered at himself to find that his very heart bowed before the gentle and comprehensive wisdom of an untitled Regent.

Athol, alone of the group, seemed insensible to the benefits his country was receiving from its resistless protector; but he expressed his dissent from the general sentiment with no more visible sign than a cold silence.

When the messenger of Wallace arrived on the banks of the Esk with so large a booty, and the news of his complete victory over the gallant Percy, the exultation of his chieftains amounted to such enthusiasm, that had their Regent been then present, he might again have found his moderation put to the test of refusing a crown.

On Badenoch opening Wallace's dispatches, he found that they repeated his wish that the nobles would immediately proceed to the execution of the plan they had sanctioned with their approbation: They were to march directly for Stirling, and in their way dispense the super-abundance of the plunder amongst the...
ishing inhabitants of the land. He then informed the Earl, that while the guard he had left with him, should escort the liberated Scots beyond the Forth, the rest of his little army south of that river, must be thus disposed. Lord Andrew Murray was to remain chief in command in Clydesdale, while Sir Eustace Maxwell should give up the wardship of Douglas to Sir John Monteith, and himself advance into Annandale to assist Sir Roger Kirkpatrick, who must now have began the reduction of the castles in the west of that province. At the close of these directions, Wallace added, that he was now going to sweep the English counties to the Tees mouth; and that he should send the produce round by his fleets from Berwick, to replenish the exhausted stores of the Highlands. “Next year,” continued he, “I trust they will have ample harvests of their own.”

And what Wallace said he would do, he did. The country was panic-struck at the defeat of Percy; and his beaten soldiers, flying in all directions before their conqueror’s legions, gave such dreadful and hyperbolical accounts of their might, and of the giant prowess of their leader, that as soon as ever the glittering of the Scottish spears were seen rising the summit of any hill, or even gleaming at a distance along the horizon, every village was deserted, every solitary cot was left without inhabitant; and corn and cattle, and every kind of property, fell into the hands of the Scots.

Lord Percy lay immovable with wounds, in his castle at Alnwick; and his hopeless state, by intimidating his followers, contradicted the orders he gave to face the marauding enemy. Several times they attempted to obey, but as often shewed their inability; they collected under arms, but the moment their foe appeared, they fled within the castle-walls, or buried themselves in deep obscurities amongst the surrounding hills. Not a sheaf in the fields of Northumberland did the Scots leave to make a cake for its Earl’s breakfast, not a head of cattle to smoke upon his board. The country was sacked from sea to sea. But far different was its appearance from that of the ravaged vallies of Scotland: There the fire had burnt up the soil; the hand
of violence had levelled the husbandman's cottage, had buried his implements in the ruins, had sacrificed himself on its smoking ashes! There the fatherless babe wept its unavailing wants; and at its side sat the distracted widow, wringing her hands in speechless misery; for there lay her murdered husband, here her perishing child!

With such sights was the heart of Wallace pierced, as he passed through the Lowland counties of his country; nay, as he scoured the Highland districts of the Grampians, even there had he met the foot of barbarian man and cruel desolation. For thus it was that the Southron garrisons had provisioned themselves. — By robbing the poor of their bread; and when they resisted, firing their dwellings, and punishing the refractory with death.

But not so the generous enmity of Sir William Wallace. His commission was not to destroy, but to save; and though he carried his victorious army to feed on the Southron plains, and sent the harvests of England to restore the trampled fields of Scotland, yet he did no more. No fire blasted his path; no innocent blood cried against him, from the ground! — When the impetuous zeal of his soldiers, flushed with victory, and in the heat of vengeance, would have laid several hamlets in ashes, he seized the brand from the ringleader of the destroying party, and throwing it into an adjoining brook; "Shew yourselves worthy of the advantages you have gained," cried he, "by the moderation with which you use them. Consider yourselves as the soldiers of the All-powerful God, who alone has conducted you to victory; for, with a few, has he not enabled us to subdue a host?—Behave as becomes your high destiny; and debase not yourselves by imitating the hirelings of ambition, who receive as the wages of their valour, the base privileges to ravage and to murder.

"I wish you to distinguish between a spirit of retaliation, which actuates your present violence. What our enemies have robbed us of, as far as they can restore, I take again. Their bread shall feed our famishing country; their wool clothe its nakedness. But blood for blood, unless the
murderer could be made to bleed, is a doctrine abhorrent to God and to humanity. What justice is there in destroying the habitations and lives of a set of harmless people, because the like cruelty has been committed by a lawless army of their countrymen, upon our unoffending brethren? Your hearts may make the answer. But if they are hardened against the pleadings of humanity, let prudence shew your interest in leaving those men alive, and with their means unimpaired, who will produce other harvests, to again, if need be, fill our scanty granaries.

"Thus I reason with you, and I hope many are convinced: But they who are insensible to argument, must fear authority; and I declare that every man who inflicts injury on the houses, or on the persons of the quiet peasantry of this land, shall be punished as a traitor to the state."

According to the different dispositions of men, this reasoning prevailed. And from the end of September, the time when Wallace first entered Northumberland, to the month of November, when, having scoured the counties of England, even to the very gates of York, he returned to Scotland, not an offence was committed, at which his merciful spirit could repine. It was on All Saints day, when he again approached the Esk; and so great was his spoil, that his return seemed more like some vast caravan, moving the merchandise of half the world, than the march of an army which had so lately passed that river, a famishing, though valorous host.

The outposts of Carlaverock soon informed Maxwell, its present occupier, that the Lord Regent was in sight. At the joyful intelligence, a double smoke streamed from every watch-hill in Annandale; and Sir Eustace had hardly appeared on the Solway-bank to meet his triumphant chief, when the eager speed of the rough Lord of Torthorald, brought him there also. Wallace, as his proud charger plunged into the ford, and the heavy waggons, groaning under their load, crepted after him, was welcomed to the shore by the shouts not only of the soldiers which had followed Maxwell and Kirkpatrick, but by the people, who in crowds, of men, women, and children, came in throngs to hail their pre-
server. The squalid hue of famine had left every face; and each smiling countenance, beaming with health, security, and gratitude, told Wallace, more emphatically than a thousand tongues, the wisdom of the means he had used to regenerate his lost country.

Maxwell had prepared the fortress of Lochmaben, once the principal castle of the Bruce's in Annandale, for the reception of the Regent. And thither Wallace was conducted in prouder triumph than ever followed the chariot wheels of Cæsar. Blessings were the clarions that preceded him; and hosts of people whom he had saved when ready to perish, were the voluntary actors in his pageant.

When he arrived in sight of the two capacious lochs, which spread like lucid wings on each side of this princely residence, he turned to Graham, "What pity," said he, "that the rightful owner of this truly regal castle does not act as becomes his blood! He might now be entering its gates as a king; and so Scotland the sooner find rest under its lawful monarch."

"But he prefers being a parasite in the court of a tyrant;" replied Sir John, "and from such a school, Scotland would reject a monarch."

"But he has a son;" replied Wallace, "a brave and generous son;—I am told by Lord Montgomery, who knew him in Guienne, that a nobler spirit does not exist. On his brows, my dear Graham, we must one day hope to see the crown."

"Then only as your heir, my Lord Regent," interrupted Maxwell, "for while you live, I can answer for it that no Scot will acknowledge any other ruler."

"I will first eat my own sword," cried Kirkpatrick.

At this moment, the lofty portcullis of the great gate was raised, and Maxwell falling back to make way for the Regent, Wallace had not time to answer a sentiment, which indeed was now so familiar to him, by his hearing it from every grateful heart, that he now hardly remarked its tendency; as it made no ambition-springing impression on his well-principled mind.

Ever pressing towards establishing the comfort and happiness of his country, he hastened over the splendid repast that was prepared for him; and dispersing as
fast as possible the ceremonials with which the zeal of Maxwell sought to display his respect for the virtues and station of his commander, he retired with Graham to make up dispatches for his more distant chieftains; and to divide and apportion the spoil, to the necessities of the different provinces. In these duties his wakeful eyes were kept open the greatest part of the night. They for whom he laboured, slept securely! That thought was rest to him. But they closed not their eyes without praying for the sweet repose of their benefactor. And he found it; not in sleep, but in that peace of heart which the world cannot give.

CHAP. III.

Day after day succeeded each other in the execution of his beneficial designs.—The royal halls of Lochmaben did not long detain him, who knew no rest but when he was going about doing good.—While he was thus employed, raising, with the quickness of magic, by the many-working hands of his soldiers, the lately ruined hamlets, into well-built villages; while the grey smoke curled from a thousand russet cottages which now spotted the sides of the snow-clad hills; while all the Lowlands, whithersoever Wallace directed his steps, breathed of comfort and abundance; he felt like the father of a large family in the midst of a happy and vast home, where every eye turned on him with reverence, every lip with gratitude.

He had hardly gone the circuit of these now cheerful valleys, when an embassy from England, which had first touched at Lochmaben, overtook him at the tower of Lammington. The embassadors were Robert Lord De Lisle, the brother of Earl De Warenne, and Anthony Beck, Bishop of Durham.

At the moment their splendid cavalcade, escorted by a party from Sir Eustace Maxwell, entered the gate of Lammington, Wallace was in the hourly expectation of Edwin, for whom he had sent; and hearing the trampling of horses, he hastened forth into the court-
yard, attended by a group of Gregory's grand-children. One was in his arms, two others held by the corners of his plaid, and a third rode before him on the sword which he had unbuckled from his side. It was a clear frosty day; and the keenness of the air brightened the complexion of Wallace, and deepened the roses of his infant companions. The leader of the Scottish escort immediately proclaimed to the embassadors that this was the Regent. At sight of so uncourtly a scene, the haughty prelate of Durham drew back.

"This man will not understand his own interest!" said he in a disdainful whisper to Delisle.

"I am inclined to think that his estimation of it will be rather beyond ours." As Lord De Lisle made this reply, the officer of Maxwell informed Wallace who were the illustrious strangers. At the mention of a Southron, the elder children ran screaming into the house; leaving the youngest, who continued nestling her face into the breast of Wallace, as the bishop drew near.

"We come, Sir William Wallace," said the prelate, in a tone whose lordly sound was somewhat lowered when his eye was surprised by the god-like dignity which shone over the countenance of the man whose domestic appearance had at first excited his contempt; "we come from the King of England with a message for your private ear."—"And I hope, gallant chief-tain," joined Lord De Lisle, "that what we have to impart will give peace to both nations; and establish in honour the most generous as well as the bravest of men?"

Wallace bowed to the compliment of De Lisle, (whom he knew, by his title, must be the brother of De Warenne;) and resigning the child into the arms of his friend Graham, with a graceful welcome he conducted the Southron lords into the grand hall.

De Lisle, looking round, said, "Are we alone, Sir William?"

"Perfectly;" he replied, "and I am ready to receive any proposals of peace which the rights of Scotland will allow me to accept."

De Lisle drew from his bosom a gold casket, and
laying it on a table before him, he addressed the Regent.

"Sir William Wallace, I come to you not with the denunciations of an implacable liege lord, whom a rash vassal has offended; but in the grace of the most generous of monarchs, who is anxious to convert a brave insurgent into a loyal friend. My lord the king, having heard by letters from my brother the Earl De Warenne, of the honourable manner in which you treated the English whom the fate of battle threw into your power; instead of sending over from Flanders a mighty army to overwhelm this rebellious kingdom;—has deputed me, even as an ambassador, to reason with the rashness he is ready to pardon. And with this diadem," continued he, drawing a circlet of jewels from the casket, "which he tore from the brows of a Saracen prince on the ramparts of Acre, he sends the assurances of his regard for the heroic virtues of his enemy. And to these jewels, he commands me to say, that he will add a more efficient crown, if Sir William Wallace will awake from this trance of false enthusiasm, and acknowledge, as he is in duty bound to do, the supremacy of England over this country.—Speak but the word, noblest of Scots," added he, "and the Bishop of Durham has orders from the generous Edward, immediately to anoint you as King of Scotland;—that done, my royal master would support you in your throne, against every man who should dare to dispute your authority."

At these words Wallace rose from his seat.—"My lord," said he, "since I took up arms for injured Scotland, I have been used to look into the hearts of men; I therefore estimate with every due respect the compliment which this message of your King pays to my virtues. Had he thought that I deserved the confidence of Scotland he would not have insulted me with offering a price for my allegiance.—To be even a crowned vassal of King Edward, is far beneath my ambition.—Take back then the Saracen's diadem: It shall never dishonour the brows of him who has sworn by the cross, to maintain the independence of Scotland, or to lay down his life in the attempt."

"Weigh well, brave sir," resumed the Earl, "the
consequences of this answer to Edward. He will soon be in England: and not at the head of such armies as you have discomfited, but with countless legions; and when he falls upon any country in indignation, the places of its cities are known no more."

"Better for a brave people so to perish," replied Wallace, "than to exist in dishonour."

"What dishonour, noble Scot, can accrue from acknowledging the supremacy of your liege lord? or to what can the proudest ambition in Scotland extend, beyond that of possessing its throne?"

"I am not such a slave as to prefer what men might call aggrandizement, before the higher destiny of preserving to my country its liberties untrammelled. To be the guardian of her freedom, and of the individual rights of every man born in Scottish ground, is my ambition. Ill should I perform the one duty, were I to wrong the posterity of Alexander by invading their throne; and horrible would be my treason against the other, could I sell my confiding country for a name and a bauble, into the grasp of an usurper!"

"Brand not with so unjust an epithet, the generous Edward!" interrupted De Lisle; "let your own noble nature be a witness of his. Put from you all the prejudices which the ill-conduct of his officers have excited; and you must perceive that in accepting his terms you will but repay your country's confidence, by giving it peace."

"So great would be my damning sin in such an acceptance," cried Wallace, "that I should be abhorred by God and man. You talk of noble minds, Earl; look into your own, and will it not tell you, that from the moment a people can bring themselves to put the command of their actions, and with that their consciences, into the hands of an usurper, (and that Edward is one in Scotland, our annals and his tyrannies declare;) they sell their birth-right, and become unworthy of the name of men; they abjure the gift with which God had intrusted them; and justly, the angels of his host depart from them. You know the sacred injunction—

_Virtue is better than life!_ By that we are commanded to preserve the one at the expense of the other: and
we are ready to obey.—Neither the threats nor the blandishments of Edward, have power to shake the resolves of them who draw the sword of the Lord and of Gideon!"

"Rebellious man!" cried Beck, who had listened impatiently; and whose haughty spirit could ill brook such towering language being directed to his sovereign; "since you dare quote scripture to sanction crime, hear my embassage. To meet the possibility of this flagitious obstinacy, I came armed with the thunder of the church; and the indignation of a justly incensed monarch. Accept his most gracious offers, delivered to you by the Lord De Lisle. Here is the cross to receive your oath of fealty. But beware!" added he, stretching out his hand as if he thought his commands were irresistibile; "keep it with truer faith than did the traitor Balia; or expect the malediction of heaven, the exterminating vengeance of your liege lord!"

Wallace was not discomposed by this fierce attack of the stormy prelate: "My lord of Durham," replied he, with his usually serene air, "the threats, or the bribes of Edward, are, as I have said, equally indifferent to me—Had he sent me such proposals as became a just king, and were possible for an honest Scot to admit, he should have found me ready to have treated him with the respect due to his rank and honour. But when he demands the sacrifice of my integrity; when he asks me to sign the deed that would again spread this renovated land with devastation; when he requires me to do this, were I to consider the glozing language of his embassy, as grace and nobleness, I should belie my own truth; which tramples alike on his menaces, and his pretended claims.—And I ask you, priest of heaven! is he a God greater than Jehovah, that I should fear him?"

"And dost thou presume, audacious rebel!" exclaimed Beck, "that the light of Israel deigns to shine on a barbarian nation in arms against a hero of the cross? Reprobate that thou art, answer thyself to thine own condemnation! Does not the church declare the claims of Edward to be just? and who dares gain-say her decrees?
"The voice of him you pretend to serve! He is no respecter of persons: he raises the poor from the dust; and by his arm thy tyrant and his host are plunged in the overwhelming waves! Bishop, I know in whom I trust. Is the minister greater than his lord, that I should believe the word of a synod against the declared will of God? Neither anathemas nor armed thousands shall make me acknowledge the supremacy of Edward. He may conquer the body, but the soul of a patriot he can never subdue."

"Then," cried Beck, suddenly rising with a face black with choler, and stretching his crosier over the head of Wallace, he exclaimed, "As the rod of Moses shed plagues, miseries, and death, over the land of Egypt, I invoke the like judgments to fall on this rebellious land and its blasphemous leader! And thus I leave it my curse."

Wallace smiled as the terrific words fell from the lips of this demon in sacred guise. Lord de Lisle observed him; "You despise this malediction, Sir William Wallace! I thought more piety had dwelt with so much military nobleness!"

"I should not regard the curses of a congregated world," replied Wallace, "when my conscience as loudly proclaims that God is on my side. And is he not omniscient, that he should be swayed by the prejudices of men? Does he not read the heart? Is he not master of all causes? And shall I shrink, when I know that I hold his commission? Shall I not regard these anathemas, even as the artillery with which the adversary would drive me from my post? But did the clouds rain fire, and the earth open beneath my feet, I would not stir; for I know who planted me here; and as long as he wills me to stand, neither men nor devils can move me hence."

"Thou art incorrigible!" cried Beck.

"I would say, firm;" rejoined De Lisle, overcome with the majesty of virtue; "could I regard, as he does, the course he has espoused. But, as it is, noble Wallace," continued he, "I must regret your infatuation; and instead of the peace I thought to leave with you, hurl war, never-ending, extirpating war, upon the
head of this devoted nation!" As he spoke, he threw his lance against the opposite wall, in which it stuck, and stood shivering; and taking up the casket, he replaced it, and its splendid contents, in his bosom.

Beck had turned away in wrath from the table; and advancing with a magisterial step to the door, he threw it open, as if he thought that longer to breathe the same air with the person he had excommunicated, would infect him with his own curses. At that instant a group of Scots, who awaited in the anti-chamber, hastened forward. At sight of the prelate they raised their bonnets, but hesitated to pass him, as he now stood, proudly neglectful of their respect, on the threshold of the hall door. In the next minute Wallace appeared with De Lisle.

"Brave knight," said the Earl, "the adieu of a man as sensible of your private worth, as he regrets the errors of your public opinions, abide with you!"

"Were Edward as sensible to virtue as his brave subjects are," replied the chief, "I should not fear that another drop of blood need be shed in Scotland, to convince him of his present injustice. Farewell, noble De Lisle; the generous candour of yourself, and your brother, will ever live in the remembrance of William Wallace."

While he yet spoke, a youth broke from the hold of a chieflain who stood amidst the group before them, and rushing towards the Regent, threw himself with a cry of joy at his feet. "My Edwin, my brother!" exclaimed Wallace, and immediately raising him, clasped him in his arms. The throng of Scots, who had accompanied their young leader from Stirling, now crowded about the chief, some kneeling and kissing his garments, and others ejaculating with uplifted hands, "Thanks be to the God of battles, who has returned our protector to us safe, and with a redoubled glory!"

"You forgive me, my master and friend?" cried Edwin, forgetting, in the happy agitation of his mind, the presence of the English ambassadors.

"It was only as a master, I condemned you, my brother!" returned Wallace; "every proof of your
affection, must render you dearer to me; and had it
been exerted against an offender not so totally in your
power, you would not have met my reprimand. But
ever remember, that the persons of prisoners are in-
violable; for they lie on the bosom of mercy; and who,
that has honour, would take them thence?"

De Lisle, who had lingered to observe this short,
but animated scene, now wanted to interrupt it: "May
I ask, noble Wallace," said he, "if this interesting
youth be the brave young Ruthven, who distinguished
himself at Dumbarton; and who, my brother told me,
incurred a severe, though just sentence from you,
in consequence of his attack upon one whom, as a sol-
dier, I blush to name."

"It is the same," replied Wallace, "The valour and
fidelity of such as he, are as sinews to my arms; and
bring a more grateful empire to my heart, than all the
crowns which may be in the power of Edward to be-
stow."

"I have often seen the homage of the body," said
De Lisle, "but here I see that of the soul; and were I
a king, I should envy Sir William Wallace!"

"You speak either as a courtier or a traitor!" sud-
denly exclaimed Beck, and turning with a threatening
brow on De Lisle; "Beware, Earl! for what has now
been said, must be repeated to the royal Edward: and
he will judge whether such flattery to this proud rebel
be consistent with your allegiance."

"Every word that has been uttered in this confer-
ence, (e) I will myself deliver to King Edward;" replied
De Lisle; "he shall know the man on whom he may
be forced by justice to denounce the sentence of rebel-
lion; and, when the puissance of his royal arm lays this
kingdom at his feet, the virtues of Sir William Wal-
lace may then find the mercy he now contemns."

Beck did not condescend to listen to the latter part
of this explanation; but, walking into the court-yard,
had mounted his horse before his worthier coadjutor
appeared from the hall. Taking a gracious leave of
Sir John Graham, who attended him to the door, the
Earl said, "What miracle is this that is before me?
Not only the mighty mover in this wide insurrection is

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in the bloom of manhood, but all the generals of his that I have yet seen, appear in the very morning of youth! And you conquer our veterans; you make yourselves names which, with us, are only purchased by long experience, and hairs grown grey in camps and battles!"

"Then by our morning, judge what our day will be," replied Graham, "and shew your monarch, that being young, we are likely to live the longer; and that as surely as the night of death will in some hour close upon prince and peasant, this land shall never again be over-shadowed by his darkness."

"Listen not to their bold treasons!" cried Beck; and setting spurs to his horse, in no very clerical style galloped out of the gates. De Lisle made some courteous reply to Graham; and bowing to the rest of the Scottish officers who stood around, turned his steed, and followed by his escort, pursued the steps of the bishop along the snow-covered banks of the Clyde.

When Wallace was left alone with Edwin, that affectionate boy, (after expressing his delight that his cousin Murray then held his head-quarters in Bothwell-castle) took from his bosom two large packets from Lord Mar and the Countess; and as he put them into his hand, said, "My dear cousin has sent you many blessings; but I could not persuade her to register even one on paper, while my uncle wrote all this. Almost ever since her own recovery, like a ministering angel, she has confined herself to the Earl's sick room; while her comely step-mother chose to devote her hours to his audience-chamber."

Wallace remarked on the indisposition of Mar, and the duty of his daughter, with tenderness. And Edwin proceeded to describe the regal style which the Countess affected, and with what magnificence she welcomed the Earls Badenoch and Athol to their native country. "Indeed, my dear lord," continued he, "I cannot guess what vain passion has taken possession of her; but the very day in which I went to Snawdoun to receive her commands for you, I found her seated on a kind of throne, with ladies standing in her presence, and the younger chieftains of the citadel thronging her anti-room, as if she were the Regent herself. Helen
entered for a moment; but she started, (for she had never before witnessed the morning courts of her stepmother,) and retreating, I followed.

But Edwin did not relate to his friend, all that passed between him and his gentle cousin, in the private saloon of the Countess, whither they retired.

Helen, blushing for her father's wife, would have proceeded immediately to her own apartments, to which she was now, for the first time, allowed to return since the Earl's convalescence; but Edwin drew her into one of Lady Mar's rooms; and seating her beside him, began to speak of his departure and anticipated meeting with Wallace. He held her hand in his. "My dearest cousin," said he, "will not this tender hand, which has suffered so much for our brave friend, write him one word of kind remembrance? Our queen here, will send him volumes."

"Then he would hardly have time to attend to one of mine," replied Helen, with a smile; "besides, he knows I bless him; and he requires no new assurances to convince him that Helen Mar can never cease to remember with the kindest thoughts, her benefactor."

"And is this all I am to say to him, Helen?"

"All, my Edwin."

"What! not one word of the life you have led since he quitted Stirling? Shall I not tell him, that when this lovely arm no longer wore the livery of its heroism in his behalf, instead of your appearing at the gay assemblies of the Countess; instead of your car being followed by the homage of our plumed chieftains; you remained immured within your oratory; or, in the more appropriate temple of nature, amid groves and incense-breathing flowers, invoking blessings on his head? Shall I not tell him, that since the sickness of my good old uncle, you have sat days and nights by his couch-side, listening to all the dispatches from the borders, and subscribing with smiles and tears to the Earl's praises of our matchless Regent? Shall I not tell of the sweet nun, who here lives the life of an anchorite for him? Or must I entertain him with the pomps and vanities of my most unsaintly aunt?"

Helen had in vain attempted to stop him in this
harangue, while, with an arch glance at her mantling
blushes, he half-whispered these insidious questions.
"Ah, my sweet cousin," said he, "there is something
more at the bottom of that beating heart of yours, than
you will allow your faithful Edwin to peep into!"

Helen's heart did beat violently both before and after
this remark; but conscious, whatever might be there,
of the determined purpose of her soul, she turned on
him a steady look. "Edwin," said she, "there is
nothing in my heart that you may not see. That it re-
veres Sir William Wallace beyond all other men, I do
not deny. But class not my deep veneration with a
sentiment which may be jested on! He has spoken to
me the language of friendship: you know what it is to
be his friend: And having tasted of heaven, I cannot
stoop to earth. What pleasure can I find in pageants?
What interest in the admiration of men? Is not he a
brighter object than I can any where look upon? Is not
his esteem of a value that puts to nought the homages
of all else in the world? Do me then justice, my Ed-
win! Believe me, I am no gloomy, no sighing recluse.
I am happy with my thoughts; and thrice happy at the
side of my father's couch; for there I meet the image
of the most exemplary of human beings; and there I
perform the duties of a child to the best of parents."

"Ah, Helen! Helen!" cried Edwin, "durst I speak
the wishes of my heart! But you and Sir William
Wallace would both frown on me, and I dare not!"

"Then never do!" exclaimed Helen, turning pale,
and trembling from head to foot; too well guessing by
the generous glow in his countenance, what would have
been that wish.

At this instant the door opened, and Lady Mar ap-
ppeared. Both rose at her entrance. She bowed her
head haughtily to Helen; the sight of whom had been
odious to her ever since the night she had seen her,
though bleeding and insensible, in the arms of Sir Wil-
liam Wallace. To Edwin she graciously extended her
hand as she seated herself. "Why, my dear nephew,
did you suffer yourself to be infected by this moping
girl, and not come into the audience chamber?"

Edwin answered, that as he did not know the go-
vernor of Stirling's lady living in the state of a queen, he hoped he should be excused for mistaking lords and ladies-in-waiting for company; and for that reason, having resolved to await an opportunity of bidding her adieu in a less public scene.

Lady Mar, with increased stateliness, replied; "Perhaps it is necessary to remind you, Edwin, that though Lord Mar's wife, I am a descendant of queens; a princess in my own right; and not only heiress to the sovereignty of the northern isles, but next in blood to the Earl of Badenoch, of the race of Scottish kings. Rely on it, I do not degenerate; and that I affect no state to which I may not pretend."

Edwin, to conceal an irrepressible smile at the absurd pride of his aunt, turned towards the window; but not before the Countess had observed the ridicule which played on his lips. Vexed, but afraid to reprimand one who might so soon resent it, by speaking of her disparagingly to Wallace, she unburthened the swelling of her anger upon the unoffending Helen. Not doubting that she felt as Edwin did, and fancying that she saw the same expression in her countenance; "Lady Helen," cried she, "I request an explanation of that look of derision which I now see on your face. I wish to know whether the intoxication of your vanity dare impel you to despise claims, which you may one day be made to smart under!"

This attack surprised Helen, who, absorbed in other meditations, had hardly attended to what had passed. "I neither deride you, Lady Mar, nor despise the claims of Lord Badenoch. But since you have descended to speak to me on the subject, I must, out of respect to yourself, and tenderness for my father, frankly say, that the assumption of honours not legally in your possession, may involve you in ridicule, and pluck danger on your nearest relatives. It is what my father would never approve, were he to know it. And by awakening the jealousy of other ladies of the royal houses, is not a probable mode to facilitate the succession of Lord Badenoch."

Lady Mar, provoked at the just reasoning and coolness of this reply; and at being misapprehended with
regard to the object with whom she was to share the splendors of a throne; answered rather inconsiderately, "Your father is an old man, and has out-lived every generous feeling. He neither understands my actions, nor shall he control them." Helen, struck dumb by this unexpected declaration, suffered her to proceed; "And as to Lord Badenoch giving me the rank to which my birth entitles me, that is a foolish dream—I look to a greater hand."

"What!" inquired Edwin, with an innocent laugh, "does your ladyship expect my uncle to die, and that Bruce will come hither to lay the crown of Scotland at your feet?"

"I expect nothing of Bruce, nor of your uncle," returned she, with a haughty throw of her head; "but I look for respect from the daughter of Lord Mar; and also from the friend of Sir William Wallace; else the time may come, when all who offend me shall rue the hour in which they have insulted the kindness that would have loaded them with honours."

She rose from her chair, and presenting Edwin with the packet for Wallace, told Helen she might retire to her own room.

"To my father's, I will, madam," returned she, "for Edwin, who sat with him last night, to receive his dispatches, now leaves him to my care."

Lady Mar coloured at this reproof, and turning to Edwin, said, "You know that the dignity of his situation must be maintained; and while others attend on his couch, I must to his reputation."

"I have often heard that Fame is better than life!" replied Edwin, "and I thank Lady Mar for shewing me how differently people may translate the same lesson. "Adieu, sweet Helen," said he, bending to kiss her hand. "Farewell, dear Edwin," returned she, "may good angels guard you!"

The substance of the latter part of this scene, Edwin did relate to Wallace. He smiled at the vain follies of the Countess, and broke the seal of her letter. It was in the same style with her conversations; at one moment declaring herself his disinterested friend; in the next, uttering wild professions of never-ending at-
attachment. She deplored the sacrifice that had been made of her, when quite a child, to the doting passion of Lord Mar; and complained of his want of sympathy with any of her feelings. Then picturing the happiness which must result from the reciprocal love of congenial hearts, she ventured to shew how truly hers would unite with Wallace's. The conclusion of this strange epistle told him, that the devoted gratitude of Lord Badenoch, and all her relations of the different houses of Cummin, were ready at any moment to relinquish their claims on the crown, to place it on brows so worthy to wear it.

The words of this letter were so artfully, and so persuasively penned, that had not Edwin described the inebriated vanity of Lady Mar, Wallace might have believed that she was ambitious only for him; and that, could she share his heart, his throne would be a secondary object. To establish this deception in his mind, she added—"I live here as at the head of a court, and fools around me think I take pleasure in it:—But did they look into my actions, they would see that I serve while I seem to reign. I am working in the hearts of men for your advancement."

But whether this were her real motive or not, it was the same to Wallace; he felt that she would always be not merely the last object in his thoughts, but ever one of his aversion. He might have esteemed her as a friend, he abhorred her as a lover; therefore hastily running over her letter, he recurred to a second perusal of Lord Mar's. In this he found most satisfactory details of the success of his dispositions. Lord Loch-awe had possessed himself of the whole of the western coast of Scotland, from the Mull of Kintyre, to the farthest mountains of Glenmore. There the victorious Lord Ruthven met him, and completed the recovery of the Highlands, by a range of conquests from the Spey to the Murray-Frith and Inverness-shire. Lord Bothwell, as his brave colleague, brought from the shores of Ross, and the hills of Caithness, every Southron banner which had waved on their embattled towers.

Graham was sent for by Wallace, to come and hear these pleasant tidings.
"Ah!" cried Edwin, in triumph, "not a spot north of the Forth now remains, that does not acknowledge the supremacy of the Scottish lion!"

"Nor south of it, either!" returned Graham, "from the Mull of Galloway, to my gallant father's government on the Tweed; from the Cheviots to the northern ocean, all now is our own. The door is locked against England; and Scotland must prove unfaithful to herself, before the Southrons can again set foot on her borders."

The more private accounts were not less satisfactory to Wallace; for he found that his plans for the disciplining, and bringing into order, the people, were everywhere adopted; and that, in consequence, alarm and penury had given way to peace and abundance. To witness the success of his comprehensive designs; and to settle a dispute relative to the government of Perth, between Lord Ruthven and the Earl of Athol; Lord Mar strongly urged him, (since he had driven the enemy so many hundred miles into their own country,) to repair to the scene of contest immediately. "Go," added the Earl, "through the Lothians, and across the queen's-ferry, directly into Perthshire. I would not have you come to Stirling, lest it should be supposed that you are influenced in your judgment either by myself or my wife. But I think there cannot be a question that Lord Ruthven's services to the great cause, give him a right to that for which he contends. Lord Athol has no claim, but that of his superior rank. And, I believe, being the near relation of my wife, she is anxious for his elevation. Therefore, come not near us, if you would avoid female importunity."

Wallace now recollected a passage in Lady Mar's letter, which, though not speaking out, insinuated how she should expect he would decide: she said,—"As your interest is mine, my noble friend, all that belongs to me is yours:—my kindred are not withheld in the gift my devoted heart bestows on you. Therefore, use them as your own: make them as bulwarks around your power, the creatures of your will, the instruments of your benevolence, the defenders of your rights."
Wallace, well pleased to avoid another rencontre with this lady’s love and ambition, sent off the substance of these dispatches to Murray; and then taking a tender leave of the venerable Gregory and his family, with Edwin and Sir John Graham set off next morning for the Frith of Forth.

CHAP. IV.

It was on the eve of St. Thomas, that the boat which contained Wallace, drew near to the coast of Fife. A little to the right of him towered the tremendous precipices of Kinghorn.

"Behold, Edwin," said he, "the cause of all our woe! From those horrible rocks fell the best of kings, the good Alexander. My father accompanied him in that fatal ride; and was one of the unhappy group who had the evil hap to find his mangled body lying amongst the rocks below."

"I have heard, observed Graham, "that the lord of Learmont prophesied that dreadful calamity to Scotland."

"He did prognosticate," replied Wallace, "that on the eighteenth of April a storm should burst over this land, which would lay the country in ruins. A fear in consequence seized the farmers: But it seems the prophecy regarded a nobler object than the harvest. The day came, but was unclouded: It continued perfectly serene; and Lord March, to whom the seer had presaged the event, at noon reproached him with the unlikeliness of its completion. But even at the moment he was ridiculing the sage, an express on a foaming steed knocked at his gate, to inform him that the king had accidentally fallen from the precipice of Kinghorn, and was slain. That, said the Lord of Learmont, is the scathing wind and dreadful tempest which shall long blow calamity and trouble on the realm of Scotland!—And surely his words have been verified, for still the storm rages around our borders; and will not end, I fear, till the dragon of England is laid low in the blast."(f)
The like discourse held the friends, till landing at Ro-
seyth castle; they lodged there for the night; and set-
ting off next morning by day-break, crossed the Lo-
monds before sun-rise and entered Perth at noon.

The news of the Regent's arrival was soon spread
throughout the province; and in less than an hour, the
halls of the castle were crowded with chieftains, come
to pay their respects to their benefactor. An army of
grateful peasantry from the hills filled the courts, beg-
ning only for one glance of their beloved lord. To
oblige them, Wallace mounted his horse, and between
the lords Ruthven and Athol, with his bonnet off, rode
from the castle, to the populace-covered plain which lay
to the west of the town. He gratified their affectionate
eagerness by this condescension, and received in return
the sincere homage of a thousand grateful hearts. The
snow-topped Grampians echoed with the proud acclama-
tions of Our deliverer—Our prince—The champion of
Scotland—The glorious William Wallace! and the
shores of the Tay resounded with similar rejoicings at
the sight of him who had made the Scottish seamen lords
of the Northern ocean.

Ruthven beheld this eloquence of nature with sym-
pathetic feelings. His just sense of the unequalled
merits of the Regent, had long internally acknowledged
him as his king; and he smiled with approbation at
every breathing amongst the people, which intimated
what would at last be their general shout. Wallace
had proved himself not only a warrior, but a legislator.
In the midst of war he had planted the fruits of peace,
and now the olive and the vine waved abundant on every
hill.

Different were the thoughts of the gloomy Athol as
he rode by the side of the Regent. Could he, by a look,
have blasted those valiant arms; and palsied that
youthful head, whose judgment shamed the hoariest
temples, gladly would he have made Scotland the sac-
ifice; so that he might never again find himself in the
triumphant train of one whom he deemed a boy and an
upstart! Thus did he muse; and thus did the fiend
envy open a way into his soul for all those demons to
enter, which were so soon to possess it to the destruc-
tion of the blooming Eden, over which, like the devil in Paradise, his destroying spirit now hovered.

The issue of Ruthven's claims, did not lessen Lord Athol's hatred of the Regent. Wallace simply stated the case to him, only changing the situations of the opponents: He supposed Athol to be in the place of Ruthven; and then asked the frowning Earl, if Ruthven had demanded a government which he, Athol, had bravely won and nobly secured, whether he should deem it just to be sentenced to relinquish it into the hands of his rival? By this question he was forced to decide against himself. But while Wallace generously hoped, that by having made him his own judge, he had found an expedient both to soften the pain of disappointment, and to lessen the humiliation of defeat, he had only re-doubled the hatred of Athol; who thought he had thus, been cajoled out of even the common privilege of complaint. He, however, affected to be reconciled to the issue of the affair; and taking a friendly leave of the Regent, retired to Blair; and there, amongst the numerous fortresses which owned his power, amongst the stupendous strong-holds of nature, the cloud-invested mountains, and the labyrinthian winding of the lochs and streams; he determined to pass his days and nights in devising the sure fall of this proud usurper. For so, the bitterness of an envy he durst not yet breathe to any, impelled him internally to designate the unpretending Wallace.

Meanwhile Wallace, being much oppressed by the crowds which were constantly assembling in Perth to do him homage, secluded himself for a few days in Hunting-tower, a castle of Lord Ruthven's, at a short distance from the town. He there arranged with the chiefs of several clans, matters of great consequence to the internal repose of the country; and receiving applications for similar regulations from the counties farther north, he decided on carrying them himself. Severe as the weather is at that season, he bade adieu to the warm hospitalities of Hunting-tower; and, accompanied by Graham and his young friend Edwin, with fifty of his Lanarkers as a small but faithful train,
he commenced a journey, which he intended should comprehend the circuit of the Highlands.

With the chieftain of almost every castle in his tour, he passed a day; and according to the interest which the situation of the surrounding peasantry created in his mind, he lengthened his sojourn. But everywhere he was welcomed with enthusiasm; and his glad eye beheld the festivities of Christmas, with a delight which recalled passed emotions till they wrung his heart.

The last day of the old year he spent with Lord Loch-awe in Kilchurn castle. After a bounteous feast, in which lord and vassal joined, the whole family, according to the custom of the country, sat up the night to hail the coming in of the new season. Wallace had passed that hour, twelve months ago, alone with his Marion! They sat together in the window of the western tower of Ellerslie; and while he listened to the cheerful lirts to which their servants were dancing, the hand of his lovely bride was clasped softly in his. Marion smiled, and talked of the happiness which should await them in the year to come. "Aye, my beloved," said he, "more than thy beauteous self will then fill these happy arms! Thy babe, my wife, will then hang at thy bosom, to bless with a parent's joys thy grateful husband!"—That time was now come round, and where was Marion?—cold in her grave. Where that smiling babe?—a murderer's steel had reached it ere it saw the light.

Wallace groaned at these recollections: He struck his hand forcibly on his bursting heart, and fled from the room. The noise of the harps, the laughing of the dancers, (for Loch-awe's beautiful daughters had assembled a gay bevy from the neighbouring castles, to welcome the year of glory to Scotland;) prevented his emotion from being observed.—And rushing far from the joyous tumult, till the sound died in the breeze, or was only brought to his ear by fitful gusts, he speeded along the margin of the lake, as if he would have also flown from himself. But memory, racking memory, followed him; and throwing himself exhausted on a bank, over which the ice hung in glittering pendants, he felt not the roughness of the ground, for all within him was disturbed and at war.
O! blessed saints," cried he, "why was I selected for this cruel sacrifice? Why was this heart, to whom the acclaim of multitudes could bring no selfish joy, why was it to be bereft of all that ever made it beat with transport? Companion of my days, partner of my soul! my lost, lost Marion! and are thine eyes for ever closed on me? shall I never more clasp that hand which ever thrilled my frame with every sense of rapture?—Gone, gone for ever, and I am alone?"

Long and agonizing was the pause which succeeded to this fearful tempest of feeling. In that hour of grief, renewed in all its former violence, he forgot country, friends, and all on earth. The recollection of his fame, was mockery to him; for where was she to whom the sound of his praises would have given such delight?

"Ah!" said he, "it was indeed happiness to be brightened in those eyes!—When the gratitude of our poor retainers met thine ear, how didst thou lay thy soft cheek to mine, and shoot its gentle warmth into my heart?" At that moment he turned his face on the gelid bank:—Starting with wild horror, he exclaimed, "Is it now so cold?—My Marion, my murdered wife!" and rushing from the spot, he again hastened along the margin of the loch. But there he still heard the distant sound of the pipes from the castle: He could not bear their gay notes; and darting up the hill which overhung Loch-awe's domains, ascended with swift and reckless steps the rocky sides of Ben Cruachon. Full of distracting thoughts, and impelled by a wild despair, he hurried from steep to steep; and rapidly descending the western side of the mountain, regardless of the piercing sleet which blew in his face, he was flying forward, when his course was suddenly checked by coming in violent contact with another human being, who, running as hastily through the storm, drove impetuously against Wallace, but being the weaker of the two, fell to the ground. The accident rallied the scattered senses of the chief. He now felt that he was out in the midst of a furious winter tempest; wandered, he knew not whither, and had probably materially injured some poor traveller by his intemperate motion.

He stooped to raise the fallen man, and hearing him
mutter something, asked whether he was hurt. The traveller, perceiving by the kind tone of the inquirer that no harm had been intended, answered that he believed not. But on Wallace assisting him to rise, he found himself a little lame; "I have only sprained my ankle," added he, "and all the recompense I ask of you for this unlucky upset, is to give me a helping hand to my father's cot, which is just by. I have been out at a neighbour's to dance in the new-year with a bonnie lass, who may be my wife before another."

As the honest lad went on telling his tale, with a great many particulars dear to his simple wishes, Wallace helped him along; and carefully conducted him, through the gathering snow, down the declivity which led to the shepherd's cottage. When they where within a few yards of it, Wallace heard the sound of singing: but it was not the gay caroling of mirth: the solemn chant of more serious music mingled with the roaring blast. "Aye I am not too late yet!" cried the communicative lad; "I should not have run so fast, had I not wanted to have got home time enough to make one in the new-year's hymn."

They had now arrived at the little door; and the youth, without the ceremony of knocking, opened the latch: as he did it, he turned and said to his companion, "We have no occasion to keep bolts on our doors, since the brave Lord Wallace has scoured the country of all the Southron robbers." He pushed the door as he spoke, and displayed to the eyes of the chief, a venerable old man on his knees before a table on which stood a crucifix, and around him knelt a family of young people and an aged dame, who were all joining in the sacred thanksgiving. The youth, without a word dropped on his knees near the door; and making a sign to his companion (whose more costly garments could not be discerned through the clinging snow) to do the same, Wallace complied; and as the anthems rose in succession on his ear, to which the low breathings of the lightly-touched harp echoed its heavenly strains, he felt the tumult of his bosom gradually subside; and when the venerable sire laid down the instrument, and clasped his hands in prayer, the natural pathos of his invocations,
and the grateful devotion with which the young people gave their responses, all tended to tranquillize his mind into a holy calm.

At the termination of the concluding prayer, how sweet were the emotions of Wallace when he heard these words uttered with augmented fervour by the aged petitioner!

"While we thus thank thee, O gracious God! for thy mercies bestowed upon us, we humbly implore thee to hold in thine almighty protection him by whose arm thou hast wrought the deliverance of Scotland. Let our preserver be saved from his sins by the blood of Christ! Let our benefactor be blest in mind, body, and estate, and all prosper with him that he takes in hand! May the good he has dispensed to his bleeding country, be returned four-fold into his own bosom;— and may he live to see a race of his own reaping the harvest of his virtues, and adding fresh honours to the already glorious name of Wallace!"

Every mouth echoed a fervent amen to this prayer: and Wallace himself, inwardly breathed, "And have I not even now sinned, All-gracious God! in the distraction of this night's remembrance? I mourned, I would not be comforted. But in thy mercy, thou hast led me hither to see the happy fruits of my labours, and I am resigned and thankful!"

The sacred rites over, the father of the family arose from his knees; and two girls jumping up, ran to the other side of the room, and between them brought forward a rough table covered with dishes and bread; while the mother, taking off a large pot, emptied its smoking contents into the different vessels. Meanwhile, the young man introducing the stranger to his father, related the accident of the meeting; and the good old shepherd bidding him a hearty welcome, desired him to draw near the fire, and partake of their new-year's supper.

"We need the fire, I assure you," cried the lad, "for we are both dripping."

Wallace now advanced from the shadowed part of the room where he had knelt, and drawing towards the light, certainly displayed to his host the truth of his
son's observation. Wallace had left the castle without his bonnet; and hurrying on regardless of the whelming storm, his hair was saturated with wet, and now streamed in water over his shoulders. The good old wife seeing that the stranger's situation was even worse than her son's, snatched from him the whiskey-bottle, out of which he was swallowing a hearty cordial, and poured it over the exposed head of her guest; then ordering one of her daughters to rub it dry, she took off his plaid, and wringing it, hung it to the fire.

During these various operations for the whole family seemed eager to shew their hospitality; the old man discovered, not so much by the costliness of the materials of his garments, as by the noble mien and gentle manners of the stranger, that he was some chieftain from the castle. "Your honour," said he, "must pardon the uncourtliness of our ways; but we give you the best we have; and the worthy Lord Loch-awe cannot do more."

Wallace gave smiling answers to all their remarks and offers of service. He partook of their broth, praised the good wife's cakes, and sat discoursing with the family with all the gayety and frankness of one of themselves. His unreserved manners opened every heart around him: and, with the most confidential freedom, the venerable shepherd related his domestic history; and mentioned to him the projected marriages of his children, which he said "should now take place, since the good Sir William Wallace had brought peace to the land."

Wallace gratified the worthy father, by appearing to take an interest in all his narratives; and then allowing the happy spirits of the young people to break in upon these graver discussions, he smiled with them; or looked serious with the garrulous matron, who turned the discourse to tales of other times. He listened with complacency to every legend of witch, fairy, and ghost; and his enlightened remarks, sometimes pointed out natural causes for the extraordinary appearances she described; or, at better attested and less equivocal accounts of supernatural apparitions, he ac-
knowledged, that there are more things in heaven and earth than are dreamt of in philosophy.

The morning dawned before the tranquillized, nay, happy Wallace,—happy in the cheerful innocence of the scene, discovered that the night was past. As the grey morning gleamed through the wooden casement, Wallace rose. "My friends, I must leave you:" said he, "there are those not far off, who may be alarmed at my disappearance; for none knew when I walked abroad; and unwittingly I have been charmed all these hours to remain, enjoying the happiness of your circle, forgetful of the anxiety I have perhaps occasioned in my own."

The old man declared his intention of seeing him over the hill. Wallace declined giving him that trouble; saying, that as it was day-light, and the snow had ceased, he could easily retrace his steps to the castle.

"No, no;" returned the shepherd, "and besides," said he, "as I hear the good Lord Regent is keeping the new-year with our noble Earl, who knows but I may get a glimpse of his noble countenance; and that will be a sight to tell of till I die!"

"Ah! God's blessing on his sweet face!" cried the old woman, "but I would give all the yarn in my muckle chest, to catch one look of his lucky eye! I warrant you, witch nor fairy could never have power to harm me more."

"Ah, father," cried the eldest of the girls, blushing; "if you go near enough to him! Do you know Madgie Grant told me, that if I could but get even the least bit of Sir William Wallace's hair, and give it to Donald Cameron to wear in a true-lover's knot on his breast, no Southron will be able to do him harm as long as he lives!"

"And do you believe that this would protect your lover, my pretty Jeannie? inquired Wallace, with a sweet smile.

"Surely," she replied, "for Madgie is a wise woman, and has the second sight."

"Well then," returned he, "you shall be gratified. For though I must for once contradict the testimony of a wise woman, and tell you that nothing can render..."
a man absolutely safe, but the protection of heaven, yet, if a hair from the head of Sir William Wallace would please you;—and a glance from his eye gratify your mother;—both shall be satisfied." And lifting up the old woman's sheers, which lay on a working stool before him he cut off a golden lock from the middle of his head, and put it into the hand of Jeannie. At this action, which was performed with such a noble grace that not one of the family now doubted who had been their guest, the good dame fell on her knees; and Jeannie, with a cry of joy, putting the beautiful lock into her bosom, followed her example; and in a moment all were clinging round him. The old man grasped his hand. "Bravest of men!" cried he, "the Lord has indeed blest this house, since he has honoured it with the presence of the deliverer of Scotland! My prayers, and the benedictions of all good men, friend or foe, must ever follow your footsteps!"

Tears of pleasure started into the eyes of Wallace. He raised the family one by one from the ground, and putting his purse into the hand of the dame, "There my kind hostess," said he, "let that fill the chests of your daughters on their bridal day; they must receive it as a brother's portion to his sisters; for it is with fraternal affection that William Wallace regards the sons and daughters of Scotland."

The happy sobs of the old woman stopped the expressions of her gratitude: But the youth, her son, fearing his freedom of the night before might have offended, stood abashed at a distance. Wallace stretched out his hand to him; "My good Archibald," cried he, "hesitate not to approach one who will always be your friend. I shall send from the castle this day, sufficient to fill your bridal coffers also."

Archibald now petitioned to be allowed to follow him in his army.—"No, my brave youth," replied the chief, "remain where you are, to defend the spot, should need be, where you were born. Lord Loch-awe will lead you forth whenever there is occasion; and, meanwhile, your duty is to imitate the domestic duties of your worthy father. Make the neighbouring valley
smile with the fruits of your industry; and raise a family to bless you, as you now bless him.”

Wallace, having wrapped himself in his plaid, now withdrew amidst the benedictions of the whole group; and swiftly re-crossing the mountain heights, was soon on the western brow of Ben Cruachan; and in ten minutes afterwards, entered the hall of Kilchurn Castle. A few servants, only, remained; all the rest of the family were gone to rest. The Earl and Graham, about an hour after their friend’s departure, had missed him; but supposing that whithersoever he was gone, he would soon return, they made no inquiries; and when the tempest began, on Edwin expressing his anxiety to know where he was, one of the servants said that he was gone to his own chamber.—This answer satisfied every one; and they all continued to enjoy the festivities until the Countess of Loch-awe made the signal for repose.

Next morning when the party met Wallace at the breakfast-table, they were not a little surprised to hear him recount the adventure of the night; and while Loch-awe promised every kindness to the shepherd’s family, and a messenger was dispatched with a purse to Archibald, Edwin learnt of the Earl’s servant, that his reason for supposing the Regent was gone to his room, arose from the sight of his bonnet in the outer hall. Wallace was glad that such an evidence had prevented his friends being alarmed; and retiring with Lord Loch-awe, with his usual equanimity of mind he resumed the graver errand of his tour.

The hospitable rites of the season being over, in the course of a few days the Earl accompanied his illustrious guest to make the circuit of Argyleshire. At Castle-Urghart they parted; and Wallace proceeding with Edwin and Graham and his faithful Lanarkers, performed his legislative visits from sea to sea. Having traversed, with perfect satisfaction, the whole of the northern parts of the kingdom, he returned to Hunting-tower (h) on the very morning that a messenger had reached it from Murray. That vigilant chieftain informed the Regent of King Edward’s arrival from Flanders, and that he was preparing a large army to march into Scotland.
"We must meet him, then," cried Wallace, "on his own shores; and let the horrors attending the seat of war fall on the country whose king would bring desolation to ours."

WALLACE sent messengers to the different chieftains in the Highlands, and to Stirling, to order a certain number of men to meet him in the vales of Clydesdale by that day week. And then proceeding to the coast of Fife, at Kinclavin Castle where he lodged for the night, he received another embassy from Edward; a herald, accompanied by that Sir Hugh le de Spencer who had conducted himself so insolently on his first embassage.

On his entering the chamber where the Regent sat, surrounded by the chieftains who had accompanied him from Perthshire, Le de Spencer walked forward; and before the herald had used the customary respects, the young Englishman advanced to Wallace, and in the pride of a little mind, elated at being empowered to insult with impunity, he broke forth: "Sir William Wallace, the contumely with which the ambassadors of Prince Edward were treated, is so resented by the King of England, that he invests his own majesty in my person, to tell you that your treasons have filled up their measure, and that now, in the plentitude of his continental victories, he descends upon you, to annihilate this rebellious nation, and—"

"Stop, Sir Hugh le de Spencer;" cried the herald, touching him with his sceptre; "whatever may be the denunciations with which the king has intrusted you, you must allow me to perform my duty before you declare them!—And thus I utter the gracious message which his majesty has put into my mouth."

He then addressed Wallace; and in the king's name accusing him of rebellion, and of unfair and cruel devastations made in Scotland and in England by himself and his followers, promised him pardon for all, if he
would immediately disband his followers and acknowledge his offence.

Wallace motioned with his hand for his friends to keep silence, (for he perceived that two or three of the most violent, were ready to break forth in fierce defiance of King Edward,) and being obeyed he calmly replied to the herald; "When we were desolate mourners, your king came to us as a comforter, and he put us in chains! While he is absent, I invade his country as an open enemy. I rifle your barns; but it is to feed a people whom his robberies had left to perish! I marched through your lands, I made your soldiers fly before me; but who that was unarmed, ever found the Scottish steel at his breast?—And what spot in all your shores have I made black with the smoke of ruin? I leave the people of Northumberland to judge between me and your monarch. And that he never shall be mine, or Scotland's, our deeds shall yet further prove!"

"If such be your determination," exclaimed Le de Spencer, "then hear your sentence. King Edward comes against you with an army that will reach from sea to sea. Wherever the hoofs of his war-horse strike, there grass never grows again. The sword and the fire shall make a desert of this devoted land; and your arrogant head, proud Scot, shall bleed upon the scaffold!"

"He shall first see my fires, and meet my sword, in his own fields;" returned Wallace; "and if God continue me life, I will keep my Easter in England, in despite of King Edward and of all who bear armour in his country!"

As he spoke he rose from his chair, and bowing his head to the herald, the Scottish marshals conducted the embassadors from his presence. Le de Spencer twice attempted to speak; but the marshals would not allow him; they said that the business of the embassy was now over, and that should he presume further to insult their Regent, the privilege of his official character should not protect him from the wrath of the Scots. Intimidated by the frowning brows and nervous arms of all around, he held his peace, and the doors were shut on him.
Wallace foresew a heavy tempest to Scotland, threatened by these repeated embassies; for he perceived that Edward, by sending overtures which he knew could not be accepted; by making a shew of pacific intentions; meant to throw the blame of the continuation of hostilities upon the Scots, and so overcome the reluctance of his more just nobility to further persecute a people whom he had made suffer so much; and likewise to change the aspect of the Scottish cause in the eyes of Philip of France, (who had lately sent congratulations to the Regent on the victory of Cambuskenneth,) and by that means, deprive them of a powerful ally and zealous negociator for an honourable peace.

To prevent this last injury, Wallace dispatched a quick-sailing vessel with Sir Alexander Ramsey, to inform King Philip of the particulars of Edward’s proposals, and of his consequent persisted warfare.

On the thirtieth of February, Sir William Wallace joined Lord Andrew Murray on Bothwell Moor, and had the happiness of knowing that his brave friend was again lord of the paternal mansion which he had so lately lost for him. He did not visit it. At such a crisis for Scotland, he forbore to unnerve his mind by awakening the griefs which lay slumbering at the bottom of his heart. Halbert came from his convent, once more to look upon the beloved face of his master. The meeting cost Wallace many agonizing sighs; but he smiled on his faithful servant. He pressed the venerable form in his youthful arms, and promised him news of his life and safety. “May I die,” cried the old man, “ere I hear it is otherwise! But youth is no warrant for life; the vigour of these arms cannot always assure themselves of victory; and then should you fall, where is our country?” “With better than mine;” returned the chief; “in the arms of God. He will fight for Scotland when Wallace is laid low, if my fall be the decree of Heaven.” Halbert wept. But the trumpet sounded for the field. He blessed his lord, and they parted for ever.

The troops from the Highlands had joined those from Sterling; and Wallace had the satisfaction of seeing himself at the head of thirty thousand well-ap-
pointed men, all eager for the fight. On the very even-
ing of his arrival at Bothwell, (for he would not delay
an hour) he set forth through a country now bud-
ding with all the charms of the cultivation he
had spread over it. He had hardly set out before he
was met by a courier from Sir Roger Kirkpatrick, who
informed him, that the Northumbrians being apprized
of King Edward’s approach, had assembled in immense
bodies, and having crossed the Debateable land in the
night, had driven his Eustace Maxwell with great loss,
into Carlavorock; had taken several minor fortes; and
though harassed by Kirkpatrick, (who sent this dis-
patch) were ravaging the country as far as Dumfries.
The letter of the brave knight added, “these Southron
thieves blow the name of Edward before them, and
with its sound have spell-bound the courage of every
soul I meet. Come then, valiant Wallace, and conjure
it down again; else I shall not be surprised if the men
of Annandale bind me hand and foot, and deliver me up
to Algernon Percy (a brother of the man you beat, and
who commands this inroad,) to purchase mercy to their
cowardice.”

Wallace made no reply to this message, but calling
to his men that the enemy was in Dumfriesshire, every
foot was then put to the speed, and in a short time they
arrived on the ridgy summits of the eastern mountains of
Clydesdale. His troops halted for rest near the village
of Biggar; and it being night, he ascended to the top
of the highest craig, and lit a fire, whose far-streaming
light he hoped would send the news of his approach to
Annandale. The air being calm and clear, the signal
rose in such a long pyramid of flame, that distant shouts
of rejoicing were heard breaking the deep silence of
the prospect. A moment after, a hundred answering
beacons burnt along the horizon. Torthorald saw the
propitious blaze; he shewed it to his terrified follow-
ers;—and, from that hour, the mountain from which it
streamed has been called Tinto, the hill of fire, and is
regarded by the people with a devotion almost amount-
ing to idolatry. (i)

The day dawned upon Wallace as he crossed the
heights over Drumlanrig; and pouring down his thou-
sands over the almost deserted vallies of Annandale, like a torrent he swept the invaders back upon their steps; and taking young Percy prisoner, left him shut up in Lochmaben, while he drove his flying vassals far beyond the Cheviots.

Annandale again free, he went into its various quarters; and summoning the people, (who now crept from their caves and woods, to shelter under his shield) he reproved them for their cowardice, and shewed them, that unless every man possess a courage equal to his general, he must expect, before long, to fall again under the yoke of the enemy. "Faith in a leader is good," said he, "but not such a faith as leaves him all to do, without yourselves rendering that assistance to your own preservation which Heaven itself commands. I am but the head of the battle, you are the arms: If you shrink, I fall, and the cause is ruined. When absent from you in person, I left my guiding mind with you; I gave the lords of Carlavorock and Torthoral directions how to repel the foe, and yet you fled. Had I been here, and you done the same, the like must have been the consequence. What think you is in my arm, that I should alone stem your enemies? The expectation is extravagant and false. You follow my call to battle, you fight valiantly, and I win the day. Respect, then, yourselves. And believe, that you are the sinews, the nerves, the strength of Sir William Wallace! Dishonour not the God who gave you to your country, by flying from your post; but be confident that while the standard of liberty is before you, you fight under his banner. See how I, in that faith, drove these conquering Northumbrians before me like frightened roes! You might, and must do the same, or the sword of Wallace is drawn in vain. Partake my spirit, brethren of Annandale, fight as stoutly over my grave as by my side, or before the year ends, you will again be the slaves of Edward."

Such language, while it covered the cheeks of the Annandalers with shame, awoke a general emulation in every heart to efface with honourable deeds the memory of their disgrace. With augmented forces he therefore marched into Cumberland; and having drawn
up his array between a river, and a high ground which he covered with arches, he stood prepared to meet the approach of King Edward. But Edward did not appear till late in the next day; and then the Scots descried his glittering legions advancing from the horizon, to pitch their vanguard on the plain of Stanmore. The aim of Wallace was to draw the king towards the Scottish lines, where, at certain distances, he had dug deep pits, and covering them lightly with twigs and loose grass, had left them as traps for the Southron cavalry; for in cavalry, he was told by his spies, would consist the chief strength of Edward's army. The waste in which Wallace had laid the adjoining counties, rendered the provisioning of so large a host very difficult; and as it was composed of a mixed multitude from every land on which the king of England had set his invading foot, harmony could not be expected to continue long amongst its leaders. Therefore, as the Scottish Regent saw that his enemy held back, as if he wished to draw him from his advantageous position, he determined to shew him that he would not stir, although he might seem to be struck with awe of so great an adversary.

To this end he offered him peace, hoping, either to obtain what he asked, (which he did not deem very probable) or by filling Edward with the idea of his fear, urge him to precipitate himself forward, to avoid the dangers of a prolonged sojourn in so barren a country; and to take Wallace, as he might think, in his panic. Instructing his heralds what to say, he sent them on to Roycross, (k) near which the tent of the King of England was pitched. Edward, supposing that his enemy was now at his feet, and ready to beg the terms he had before rejected, admitted the ambassadors, and bade them deliver their message. Without farther parley the chief herald spoke.

"Thus saith Sir William Wallace: Were it not that the kings and the nobles of the realm of Scotland, have ever sought redress of injuries, before they sought to take revenge, you, King of England and invader of our country, should not now behold orators in your camp talking of concord, but a mighty army in battle array
advancing to the onset. Our Lord Regent being of the ancient opinion of his renowned predecessors, that the greatest victories are never of such advantage to a conqueror, as an honourable and bloodlessly-obtained peace; sends to offer this peace to you, at the price of restitution. The lives you have rifled from us, you cannot restore; but the noble Lord Douglass, whom you now unjustly detain a prisoner, we demand; and that your majesty will retract those claims on our monarchy which never had existence, till ambition begot them on the basest treachery. Grant these just requisitions and we lay down our arms; but continue to deny them, and our nation is ready to rise to a man, and with heart and hand avenge the injuries we have sustained. You have wasted our lands, burnt our towns, and imprisoned our nobility. Without consideration of age or condition, women, children, and feeble old men, have, unresisting, fallen by your sword. And why was all this? Did our confidence in your honour offend you, that you put our chieftains in durance, and deprived our yeomanry of their lives? Did the benedictions with which our prelates hailed your arrival as the respected arbitrator between our princes, raise your ire, that you burnt the churches over their heads, and slew them on their own altars? These, O! king, were thy deeds; and for these, William Wallace is in arms. But yield us the peace we ask; withdraw from our quarters; relinquish your unjust pretensions; and we will once more consider Edward of England as the kinsman of Alexander the third, and his subjects as the friends and allies of our realm.”

Edward, not in the least moved with this speech, turned towards De Valence, who stood on his right hand, and giving him a glance which spoke the contempt in which he held the embassy, coolly answered, “Your leader, intoxicated by a transitory success, is vain enough to suppose that he can discomfit the King of England, as he has done his unworthy officers, by fierce and insolent words; but we are not so weak as to be overthrown by a breath, nor so base as to bear argument from a rebel. I come to claim my own; to assert my
supremacy over Scotland:—and it shall acknowledge 
its liege lord, or be left a desert without a living crea-
ture to say this was a kingdom. Depart, this is my an-
swer to you; your leader shall receive his at the point 
of my lance.”

Wallace, who did not expect a more temperate re-
ply, had already arranged his men for the onset. 
Lord Bothwell, and Murry his valiant son, took the lead 
on the left wing; Sir Eustace Maxwell and Kirkpa-
trick commanded on the right. Graham held the re-
serve behind the woods; and the Regent himself, with 
Edwin and his brave standard-bearer, occupied the 
centre. On the return of his embassadors, he repeated 
to his troops the message they brought: and while he 
stood at the head of the lines, he exhorted them to re-
member that on that day the eyes of all Scotland would 
be upon them. They were the first of their country 
who had gone forth to meet the tyrant in a pitched bat-
tle; and in proportion to the danger they confronted, 
the greater would be their meed of glory. “But it is 
not merely for renown that you are called upon to fight 
this day,” said he, “your rights, your homes are at 
stake. You have no hope of security for your lives, 
but in an unswerving determination to keep the field; 
and let the world see how much more might lies in the 
arms of a few men contending for their country and 
hereditary liberties, than in hosts which seek for blood 
and spoil. Slavery and freedom lie before you! Shrink 
but one backward step, and yourselves are in bondage, 
your wives become the prey of violence. Be firm: 
Trust him who blesses the righteous cause, and victory 
will crown your toils!”

Edward, though affecting to despise his young oppo-
nent, was too good a general really to connem any 
enemy who had so often proved himself worthy of re-
spect: and, therefore, when he placed himself in the 
vain of his numerous army, he did not fail to set before 
them not only the spoil they should gain on the first 
defeat of the Scots, but also the property they might 
acquire by the sequestration of the country. By de-
claring it his determination to put all the Scottish 
chieftains to death, and to transfer their estates to his
conquering officers, he stimulated their avarice as well as love of fame; and with every passion in arms, they rushed to the combat.

Wallace stood unmoved.—Not a bow was drawn till the impetuous squadrons, in full charge towards the flanks of the Scottish army, fell into the pits: then it was that the archers on the hill launched their arrows; the first fallen horses were instantly overwhelmed by others, who, in their career, could not be checked, but were precipitated over their companions. New showers of darts rained upon them, and sticking into their flesh, made them plunge, and roll upon their riders; while others, who were wounded, but had not fallen, flew back in rage of pain, upon the advancing infantry. The confusion now became so threatening, that the king thought it necessary immediately in person to attack the main body of his adversary, which yet stood inactive. Spurring his horse, he ordered his troops to press on over the struggling heaps before them; and being obeyed with much difficulty and great loss, he passed the first range of pits; but a second and a wider awaited him; and there seeing his men sink into them by hundreds, he beheld the whole army of Wallace close in upon them. Terrific was now the havoc.—The very numbers of the Southrons, and the mixed discipline of their army, proved its bane. In the tumult they hardly understood the orders which were given; and some mistaking them, acted so entirely contrary to the movements intended, that Edward, galloping from one end of the field to the other, (while his officers trembled at every step he took, for fear that some of the secret pits should ingulf him,) appeared like a frantic man, regardless of every personal danger, so that he could but fix others to front the same tempest of death with himself. But at this juncture, when, making a desperate attempt to recover the day, he rallied part of his distracted army, and drove it with all its force against the centre, where the white plume of Wallace shewed that he commanded; the reserve under Graham charged him in flank: and the Scottish archers redoubling their discharge of artillery, the Flanderkins, who were in the van of Ed-
ward, suddenly giving way with cries of terror, the amazed king found himself obliged to retreat, or to run the risk of being taken. He gave a signal, the first of the kind he had ever sounded in his life; and drawing his English troops about him, fell back in tolerable order beyond the confines of his camp.

The Scots were eager to pursue him, but Wallace said, "Let us not hunt the lion till he stand at bay. He will retire far enough from the Scottish borders, without our leaving this vantage ground to drive him."

What Wallace said, came to pass. Soon no vestige of a Southron soldier, but the dead which strewed the road was to be seen from side to side, of the wide horizon. And a detachment of the Scots proceeding to the royal camp, brought away spoil of great variety and value. The tent of King Edward, and its costly furniture, was that day sent to Stirling as a trophy of the victory.

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CHAP. VI.

Most of the chieftains from the north, and around, had drawn to Stirling to be nearer intelligence from the borders. They were aware that this meeting between Wallace and Edward was the crisis of their fate. The few who remained in the citadel, of those who had borne the brunt of the opening of this glorious revolution for their country, were full of spirits, and the most sanguine expectations. They had seen the prowess of their leader, they had shared the glory of his destiny, and they feared not that Edward would deprive him of one ray. But they who at the utmost wilds of the Highlands had only heard his fame, though they had afterwards seen him amongst themselves, reducing the mountain savage to be a civilized man and a disciplined soldier, though they had felt the effects of his military successes, yet they doubted how his fortunes might stand the shock of Edward's happy star. The lords whom he had released from the Southron prisons were all of the same dismayed opinion; for
they knew what numbers Edward could bring against the Scottish power, and how hitherto unrivalled was his skill in the field. "Now," thought Lord Bade-

noch, "will this brave Scot find the difference between fighting with the officers of a king, and a king himself, contending for what he determines shall be a part of his dominions!" And resolving never to fall into the hands of Edward again, (for the conduct of Wallace had made the Earl ashamed of his long submission to the usurpation of rights to which he had a claim,) he ordered a vessel to be ready in the mouth of the Forth, to take him, as soon as the news of the Regent's defeat should arrive, far from the sad consequences, to the quiet asylum of France.

The meditations of Athol, Buchan, and March, were of a different tendency. It was their design, on the earliest intimation of such intelligence, to set forth, and be the first to throw themselves at the feet of Edward and acknowledge him their sovereign. Thus with various projects in their heads, which none but the three last, breathed to each other, were several hundred chieftains assembled round the Earl of Mar at the moment when Edwin Ruthven, glowing with all the effulgence of his general's glory and his own, rush-
ed into the hall, and throwing the royal standard of England on the ground, exclaimed, "There lies the supremacy of King Edward!"

Every man started on his feet. "You do not mean," cried Athol, "that King Edward has been beaten?" "He has been beaten, and driven off the field!" re-
turned Edwin. "These dispatches, added he, laying them on the table before his uncle, who stood in speech-

less gratitude looking up to heaven; "will relate every particular. A hard battle our Regent has fought, for our enemies were numberless; but a thousand good angels were his allies; and Edward himself fled. I saw the king, after he had thrice rallied his troops and brought them to the charge, turn his steed to fly. It was at that moment, I wounded his standard-bearer, and seized this dragon."

"Thou art worthy of thy general, brave Ruthven;" said Badenoch to Edwin; "by the calling forth of such spirits, I augur that great things are intended by hea-
ven for this nation!" "James," added he, addressing his eldest son, who had just arrived from France, "you must equal this boy in warlike deeds, or you will dis-grace your royal blood."

The younger chieftains crowded round to congratu-
late Edwin, and to ask him many questions. Lord Mar opened the dispatches, and finding a circumstan-
tial narrative of the battle, with accounts of the previ-
ous embassies, he read them aloud. Their contents ex-
cited a varity of emotions. When the nobles heard that Edward had offered Wallace the crown; when they found that he had, by vanquishing that powerful mo-
narch, subdued even the soul of the man who had hi-
thero held them all in awe; though in the same breath they read that their Regent had refused royalty, and was now, as a servant of the people, preparing to strengthen the borders, before he would return to what he deemed the capital of the kingdom; yet the most unreasonable suspicions awoke in almost every breast. The eagle flight of his glory, seemed to have raised him so above their heads, so beyond their power to re-
strain or to elevate, that an envy, dark as Erebus; a jealousy which at once annihilated every grateful sen-
timent, passed like electricity from heart to heart. The eye turning from one to the other, explained what no lip dared yet to utter. A dead silence reigned, while the fell daemon of hatred was taking possession of every breast; and none but the lords Mar, Badenoch, and Loch-awe, escaped the black contagion.

When the meeting broke up, and Lord Mar, at the head of the officers of the garrison, with a herald holding the banner of Edward beneath the colours of Scot-
land, rode forth to proclaim to the country the decisive victory of its Regent, Badenoch and Loch-awe hasten-
ed to carry the tidings to Snawdoun. The rest of the chiefs dispersed. But, as if actuated by one spirit, they soon grew together in groups, whispering among themselves; "He refused the crown offered to him in the field by the people; he rejected it from Edward; because he would reign uncontrolled. He will now seize it as a conqueror, and we shall have an upstart's foot upon our necks. If we are to be slaves, let us have a tyrant of our own choosing."
As the trumpets before Lord Mar blew the loud acclaim of triumph, Athol said to Buchan, "Cousin, that is but the forerunner of what we shall hear to announce the usurpation of this Wallace. And shall we sit tamely by, and have our birthright wrested from us by a man of yesterday?—No, if the race of Alexander be not to occupy the throne of Scotland, let us not hesitate between the monarch of a mighty nation and a low-born tyrant; between him who will at least gild our chains with chivalric honours, and the upstart whose domination will be as debasing as severe!"

Murmurings such as these, went from chief to chief, and descended to the minor barons, who held lands in fee of these more sovereign lords. Petty interests extinguished gratitude for general benefits; and by secret meetings, at the heads of which were Athol, Buchan, and March, a conspiracy was soon formed to overset the power of Wallace. Their design was to invite Edward once more to take possession of the kingdom; and to accomplish this with certainty, they determined to affect a warm zeal for the Regent; and March, as a proof of his, was to ask Wallace to send him to Dunbar, as governor of the Lothians, and to hold the ever refractory Soulis in check. He was to offer his service as an alleviation to the cares of Lord Dundaff who held Berwick, and who must find that place a sufficient charge for his age and comparative inactivity; "And then," cried the false Cospatrick⁵⁰ "when I am fixed at Dunbar, Edward may come round from Newcastle to that port; and by my management he shall march unmolested to Stirling, and may seize the usurper on his very throne."

This advice met with full approval from these dark incendiaries; and as their meetings were usually held at night, they walked forth in the day with cheerful countenances, and joined in the general rejoicings. They feared to hint even a word of their intentions to the Lord Badenoch; for, on Buchan expressing to him his discontent at such homage being paid to a man so much their inferior, his answer was; "Had we acted worthy of our birth, Sir William Wallace never could have had the opportunity to rise upon our disgrace. But, as it is, we must submit, or bow to treachery in-
stead of virtue.” This reply determined them to keep their proceedings secret from him; and also from Lady Mar; for both Lord Buchan and Lord Athol had at different times listened to the fond dreams of her love and ambition. They had flattered her with entering into her designs: Athol, gloomily affected acquiescence, that he might render himself master of all that was in her mind, and perhaps in that of her lover; for he did not doubt that Wallace was as guilty as her wishes would have made him: and Buchan, ever ready to yield to the persuasions of women, was not likely to refuse, when his fair cousin promised him, in case of success, all the pleasures of the gayest court in Europe.

Thus were they situated, when the news of Wallace’s decisive victory, distancing all their means to raise him who was now at the pinnacle of power, determined the dubious, at once to be his mortal enemies.

Lord Badenoch had listened with a different temper, to the first breathings of Lady Mar on her favorite subject. He told her, if the nation chose to make their benefactor, king, he should not oppose it; because he thought that none of the blood-royal deserved to wear the crown, which they had all consented to hold in fee of Edward. But that he would never promote by intrigue, an election which would rob his own posterity of their inheritance. And to the hints she gave of her being one day the wife of Wallace, he turned on her with a frown at the intimation, and said, “Cousin, beware how you allow so guilty an idea to take possession of your heart! It is the parent of dishonour and death. And did I think that Sir William Wallace were capable of sharing your wishes, I would be the first to abandon his standard. But I believe him too virtuous to look on a married woman with the eyes of passion; and to hold the houses of Mar and Cummin in too high a respect, to breathe an illicit sigh in the ear of my kinswoman.”

Lady Mar, seeing that she could not make the impression she desired on the mind of this severe relative, spoke to him no more on the subject. And Lord Badenoch, ignorant that she had imparted her criminal project to his brother and cousin, from this silence,
believed that his reproof had performed her cure, and therefore made no hesitation to be the first who should go to Snawdoun to communicate to her the brilliant dispatches of the Regent, and to declare the freedom of Scotland to be now almost absolutely secured. He and Lord Loch-awe went together; but the fleet steps of Edwin would have out-run them, had not the latter caught him by the cloak, and exclaimed, "Hold, my young friend; let us at least witness the sweet smiles your news will spread over so many lovely mouths."

Edwin joined them, and in a few minutes they arrived at the palace. The moment the Countess heard the name of her nephew announced, she made a sign to her ladies to withdraw; and starting forward at his entrance, "Speak!" cried she, "tell me, Edwin, is the Regent still a conqueror?" "Where are my mother and Helen," replied he, "to share my tidings?" "Then they are good!" exclaimed Lady Mar; and sending a person in waiting, for Lady Ruthven and her daughter-in-law, she turned again towards Edwin with one of her most bewitching smiles; for the proud anticipation of all her wishes now triumphed in her eyes; and patting him on the head, said, "Ah! you sly one, like your chief, you know your power!" "And like him I exercise it," replied he, laughing, "and therefore I keep not your ladyship a moment longer in suspense, for here is a letter from the Regent himself." He presented it as he spoke, and she catching it from him, turned round, and pressing it rapturously to her lips (it being the first time she had ever received a line from him) she eagerly ran over its brief contents. While she was re-perusing and re-perusing it, for she could not tear her eyes from the beloved characters, Lady Ruthven and Helen entered the room. The former hastened forward; the latter trembled as she moved, for she did not yet know the information which her cousin brought. But the first glance of his face told her that all was safe; and as he broke from his mother's embrace, to clasp Helen in his arms, she fell upon his neck, and with a shower of tears, whispered, "Wallace lives? Is well?"—"As you would wish him;" re-whispered he, "and with Edward at his feet."—"Thank
God, thank God!" As she spoke in a louder tone, Lady Ruthven, with her arms folded round them both, with affectionate impatience exclaimed,—" But how is our Regent? Speak, Edwin! How is the delight of all hearts?"—"Still the Lord of Scotland;" answered he, "the invincible dictator of her enemies!—The puissant Edward has acknowledged the power of Sir William Wallace; and after being beaten on the plain of Stanmore, is now making the best of his way towards his own capital."

Lady Mar again and again pressed the cold letter of Wallace to her burning bosom:—"The Regent does not mention these matters in his letter to me," said she, casting an exulting glance over the glowing face of Helen. She, without observing it, continued to listen to Edwin, who, with joyous animation, related every particular that had befallen Wallace, from the time of his rejoining him, to that very moment. The Countess heard all with complacency, till he mentioned the issue of the conference with Edward's first embassadors. "Fool!" exclaimed she to herself, "thus to throw away a golden opportunity that may never return!"—Edwin, not seeing her disturbance, went on with his narrative, every word of which spread the eloquent countenance of Helen with admiration and joy.

Since her heroic heart had wrung from it all selfish wishes with regard to Wallace, she now allowed herself openly to rejoice in his success, and to look up, unabashed, when the resplendent glories of his character were brought before her. None, but Edwin, made her feel her exclusion from her soul's only home, by dwelling on his gentle virtues; by portraying the exquisite tendernesses of his nature, which seemed to enfold the objects of his love in his heart of hearts. When Helen thought on these discourses, she would sigh; but it was a sigh of resignation; and she loved to meditate on the words with a serious design, which Edwin had spoken in jest;—that she made herself a nun for Wallace! "And so I will;" said she to herself; "and that resolution stills every wild emotion. All is innocence in Heaven, Wallace! you will there read my soul, and love me as a sister."
In such a frame of mind did she listen to the relation of Edwin; did her animated eye welcome the enthusiastic encomiums of Badenoch and Loch-awe. Then sounded the trumpet; and the herald's voice in the streets proclaimed the victory of the Regent. Lady Mar rushed to the window, as if there she would see himself. Lady Ruthven followed; and as the loud acclamations of the people echoed through the air, Helen, pressing Wallace's precious cross close to her heart, hastily left the room to enjoy the rapture of her thoughts before the altar of Heaven.

The Countess, in less than an hour, paid an unusual visit to her daughter-in-law's apartment; and on Helen leaving her closet to know her ladyship's commands, she learnt that Lord Mar had just informed his wife that the Regent was expected to arrive in the course of a few days. As all the nobility in Stirling would be present to hail his re-entrance into that town, the Countess said, she came to advise her, in consideration of what had passed in the chapel before his departure, not to submit herself to the observation of so many eyes. Lady Helen could not help perceiving, that the constant drift of her step-mother was, as much as possible, to prevent her seeing Wallace; but being of too pure a nature to suspect the nature of her motive, she calmly answered, "that she would obey her."

This was sufficient for the Countess; she had gained her point. For though she did not seriously think, (what she had affected to believe) that any thing more had passed between Wallace and Helen than what they had both openly declared; yet she could not but discern the harmony of their minds; and she feared that frequent intercourse might draw such sympathy to something dearer. She had understanding to perceive his virtues; but they found no answering qualities in her breast. The matchless beauty of his person, the penetrating tenderness of his manner, the splendor of his fame, the magnitude of his power, all united to set her impure and ambitious soul in a blaze. Every opposing duty seemed only a vapour through which she could easily leap to gain the goal of her desires. Hence art of every kind appeared to her to be no more than a
means of acquiring the object most valuable to her in life. Education had not given her any principle by which she might have checked the headlong impulse of her now aroused passions.—Brought up by her mother, a princess of Norway, (who had ran away with the Earl of Strathearn from her father’s court,) she gained nothing essentially good from her. That young princess endowed her husband with the sovereignty of the Orkneys, and lived with him there in all the pomp of northern magnificence. But her person and rank were all that was valuable in the union; she was weak and vain, and unguarded by any fixed ideas of right and wrong. Her daughter, the fair Joanna, inherited her faults with her graces; and came from her hands just as nature had formed her, with no acquired ideas but those of a high notion of her own beauty and hereditary consequence. Though distractedly fond of admiration, the Lady Joanna held her charms in too great estimation to bestow them on any man beneath the rank of a prince; and while she passed her time in a crowd of gallant young knights, all striving who could make themselves the most agreeable to this gay and disdainful beauty, her mother died. The young and lovely Countess of Mar, then only two years married, and the happy parent of the sweet Helen, pitying the sorrow of the lately dissipated Joanna, sent over to Kirkwall, to beg the widowed Earl of Strathearn to allow his daughter to pass a few months with her at Braemar. The sprightly graces of the youthful mourner quickly broke through her clouds of grief. Lady Mar thought the transitoriness of her before vehement laments, excusable in a girl of sixteen; and she loved her for her beauty and gayety of heart. And, alas, for the frailty of human nature! the Earl, her husband, then hardly turned of forty, in the full meridian of manhood and of feeling; from being interested in the sadness of his fair charge, now became too sensible to the enchantments of her sportive mirth. His Countess’s second confinement approached; and as her delicate frame frequently required rest, the lively Joanna was left alone to amuse the Earl. She sang, she danced, she captivated his senses in every possible way. He
forgot his wife, his honour, all the world, in the lovely syren;—and hours of lonely converse, in which his enamoured soul poured forth a language, so much more ardent than any she had ever heard before, (for which of her admirers ever had such opportunities of drinking in the poison which set his heart on fire?) that she became bewildered, entranced. Instead of revolting at the idea of the husband of her friend addressing her with the voice of passion, she only contemplated her triumph in having rivalled the charms of so beautiful a woman as Lady Mar; and thus listening day after day to the breath of vice, her soul caught the infection, and she fell. From that moment all her high-flown hopes of a royal union fled. The infatuation of the Earl increased; and while the intoxication of vanity subdued her to his ill-legal passion, his injured wife brought forth a daughter, and happily died. Before three months expired, the criminal Joanna had awoke from her dream of folly: she found that she had sacrificed her hopes to the silly gratifications of rivalry; she had greedily listened to an adulation which seemed to raise her to divinity, when, in reality, it reduced her to the most abject situation of her sex, and made her a mark for contempt to point at, should ever discovery unveil her conduct to the world. At this crisis, while her soul was torn with scorn of herself, and indignation against the Earl for the advantage he had taken of her youth and innocence, she found herself in a state which threatened to proclaim her disgrace to every eye. This humbled her at once; and no longer meeting the fond solicitations of the widowed Mar with disdain or reproaches, she yielded to his entreaties, and ere the Countess was four months dead, became his wife. The child, which she soon after brought into the world, died the moment it was born; and every succeeding babe which she carried, met with the same fate, till the birth of those twins, the survivor of which had been saved from a watery grave by Wallace. Ill as Lord Mar had behaved in this transaction, it was his first derelection from virtue; and his remorse for having betrayed innocence, and, perhaps, by his too-apparent infidelity, hastened the death of the most trusting of wives, so wrung
his heart, that his continued repentance made such an impression on his young Countess as to excite in her mind some idea of moral and religious distinctions. To check any rumours to which her prompt marriage and the early birth of her child might have given rise, she persuaded her husband to take her over to France; where, throwing off all her gayety, and assuming a high demeanour, which she thought more becoming her royal descent, she resided several years. Gratified by the admiration which such gravity in one so young, called forth, she changed her ambition from pre-eminence in beauty, to that of being deemed the most perfect model of conjugal decorum, and of every majestic grace which belongs to princely blood. With this character she returned to Scotland. She found the suspicion of her former indiscretion faded from all minds; and passing her time in the stately hospitalities of her lord's castles, conducted herself with a matronly dignity, that made him the envy of all the married chieftains in the kingdom. Soon after her arrival she took the Lady Helen from her grandfather at Thirlestane, where both children had been left on the departure of their father and his bride for France. Though hardly passed the period of absolute childhood, the Lord Soulis at this time offered the young heiress of Mar his hand. The Countess had then no interest in wishing the union, therefore she permitted her daughter-in-law to decide as she pleased. A second time he presented himself, and Lady Mar, still indifferent, allowed Helen a second time to refuse him—Years flew over the heads of the once guilty pair; but while they whitened the raven locks of the Earl, and withered his manly brow, the beauty of his Countess blew into fuller luxuriance. Yet it was her mirror alone that told her she was fairer than all the ladies around; for none durst invade the severe decorum of her manners with so light a whisper. Such was her state when she first heard of the rise of Sir William Wallace: and when she thought that husband, by joining him, might not only lose his life, but risk the forfeiture of his family honours—for her own sake, and for her children, she determined, if it were necessary, to make the outlawed chief a sacrifice. To this end
she became willing to bribe Soulis's participation in her scheme, by the hand of Helen. She knew that her daughter-in-law abhorred his character; but love, indifference, or hatred, she thought of little consequence in a marriage which brought sufficient antidotes in rank and wealth. She had never felt what real love was; and her personal vanity being no longer agitated by the raptures of a frantic lover, she now lived tranquilly with Lord Mar; though she had for a time hated him, after his having betrayed her; and at best had only regarded him with an indifference, a little moved by her evanescent pleasure in his idolatry. What then was her astonishment, what the wild distraction of her heart, when she first beheld Sir William Wallace; and found in her breast for him, all which, in the moment of the most unreflecting intoxication, she had ever felt for her lord; with the addition of feelings and sentiments, the existence of which she had never believed, but now knew in all their force?—Love, for the first time, penetrated through every nerve of her body, and possessed her whole mind. Taught a theory of virtue by her husband, she was startled at wishes which militated against his honour; but no principles being grounded in her mind, they soon disappeared before the furious charge of her passions, and, after a short struggle, she surrendered herself to the lawless power of a guilty and ambitious love. Wishes, hopes, and designs, which, two years before, she would have shuddered at, as not only sinful, but derogatory to female delicacy, she now embraced with ardour; and nought seemed dreadful to her but disappointment. The prolonged life of Lord Mar cost her many tears; for the master passions of her nature, which she had laid asleep on her marriage with the Earl, broke out with redoubled violence at the sight of Wallace. His was the most perfect of manly forms; and she loved: He was great; and her ambition blazed into an unextinguishable flame. These two strong passions meeting in a breast weakened by the crime of her youth, their rule was absolute, and neither virtue, honour, nor humanity, could stand before them. Her husband was abhorred, her son forgotten, and nothing but Wallace and a crown could find a place in her thoughts.
Helen, not apprehending any one of the occult devices which were working in her step-mother's heart when she came to exhort her against being present at the triumphal reception of Wallace, retired once more to her closet, with this sentiment;—"I, who know the heroism of his soul, need not pageants, nor acclamations of the multitude, to tell me what he is. He is already too bright for my dazzled senses to support; and with his image pressing on my heart, it is mercy to let me shrink from his too-glorious presence!"

CHAP. VII.

THE few chieftains who had remained on their estates during the suspense before the battle, thinking that if the issue proved unfavourable, they should be safest amongst their native glens, now came with numerous trains to greet the return of their victorious Regent. The ladies brought forth their most splendid apparels, and the houses of Stirling were hung with tapestry, to hail with due respect the benefactor of the land.

At last the hour arrived, when a messenger, whom Lord Mar had sent out for the purpose, returned on full speed with the information that the Regent was passing the Carron. At these tidings, the animated old Earl called out his retinue, mounted his coal-black steed, and ordered a sumptuous charger to be caprisoned with housings wrought in gold by the hands of Lady Mar and her ladies. This horse was intended to meet Wallace, and to bring him into the city. Edwin led it forward. And behind the Earls Mar and Badenoch, came all the chieftains of the country with their retainers, in gallant array. Their ladies on splendid palfrenys, followed the superb car of the Countess of Mar, and preceding the multitudes of Stirling, left the town a desert.—Not a living being seemed now within its walls, excepting the Soubiron prisoners, who were assembled on the top of the citadel to view the return of their conqueror.

Helen remained alone in Snawdoun, believing that
she was the only soul left in that vast palace. But
while she sat in her room, musing on the extraordinary
fate of Wallace; a few months ago a despised outlaw;
at this moment the idol of the nation!—And then
turning to herself; she, the wooed of many a gallant
heart; and now devoted to one, who, like the sun, she
must ever contemplate with admiration, while he should
pass on above her sphere, unconscious of the devotion
which filled her soul.

The distant murmur of the populace thronging out
of the streets towards the carse, gradually subsided,
and at last she was left in profound silence. "He must
be near," thought she; "he whose smile is more preci-
ous to me than the adulation of all the world besides,
now smiles upon every one! All look upon him, all
hear him but I—and I—Ah, Wallace, did Marion love
thee dearer?" As her devoted heart demanded this
question, her tender and delicate soul shrunk within
herself, and deeply blushing, she hid her face in her
hands. A pause of a few minutes;—and a sound as if
the skies were rent, tore the air; a noise like the dis-
tant roar of the sea succeeded; and soon after, the
shouts of an approaching multitude shook the palace to
its foundations. Helen started on her feet; the tumult
of voices augmented; and the sound of coming squad-
rons thundered over the ground. At this instant every
bell in the city began its peals;—and the door of He-
len's room suddenly opened—Lady Ruthven hurried in.
"Helen," cried she, "I would not disturb you before;
but if you were to be absent, I would not make one in
Lady Mar's train; and I come to enjoy with you the
return of our beloved Regent!

Helen did not speak, but her eloquent countenance
amply told her aunt what were the emotions of her
heart; and Lady Ruthven taking her by the hand, at-
tempted to draw her towards a balustraded window
which opened to a view of the high-street; but Helen
sinking into a chair, begged to be excused.—"I hear
enough," said she, "my dear aunt; sights like these
overcome me; let me remain where I am."

Lady Ruthven was going to remonstrate, when the
loud huzzas of the people and soldiers, accompanied by
acclamations of "Long live victorious Wallace, our Prince and King!" struck Helen, half fainting, back into her seat, and Lady Ruthven darting towards the window, cried aloud, "He comes, Helen, he comes!—His bonnet off his noble brow—Oh! how princely does he look!—And now he bows—Ah, they shower flowers upon him from the houses on each side the street;—and how sweetly he smiles and bows to the ladies as they lean from their windows! Come, Helen, come, if you would see the perfection of majesty and modesty united in one!"

Helen did not move, but Lady Ruthven, stretching out her arm, plucked her of her chair, and in a moment had drawn her within view of Wallace. Helen saw him attended as a conqueror and a king; but with the eyes of a benefactor and a brother he looked on all around. The very memory of war seemed to vanish before his presence, for all there was love and gentleness. Helen drew a quick sigh, and closing her eyes, dropped against the casement. She now heard the buzz of many voices, the rolling peal of acclamations, but she distinguished nothing; her senses were in tumults; and had not Lady Ruthven, by an accidental glance, discovered her disorder, she would soon have fallen motionless to the floor. The good matron was not so forgetful of the feelings of a virtuous youthful heart, not to have discovered something of what was passing in that of her niece. From the moment in which she suspected that Wallace had made a serious impression there, she dropped all trifling with his name. And now that she saw the distressing effects of that impression, with revulsed feelings she took the fainting Helen in her arms, and laying her on a couch, by the aid of volatiles, soon restored her to recollection. Seeing her quite recovered, she made no observation on this emotion; and Helen leaned her head, and wept upon the bosom of her aunt. Lady Ruthven's tears silently mingled with hers; but she said within herself, "Wallace cannot be always insensible to so much sweetness!"

As the acclaiming populace passed the palace in their way to the citadel whither they were escorting their Re-
gent, Helen remained quiet in her leaning position; but when the noise died away into hoarse murmurs, she raised her head, and glancing on the tear-bathed face of her affectionate aunt, said, with a forced smile, "My more than mother, fear me not! I am grateful to Sir William Wallace; I venerate him as the Southrons do their St. George; but I need not your tender pity." As she spoke her beautiful lip quivered, but her voice was steady. "My sweetest Helen," replied Lady Ruthven, "how can I pity her for whom I hope every thing!" "Hope nothing for me," returned Helen, understanding by her looks what her tongue had left unsaid; "but to see me a vestal here, and a saint in Heaven."— "What can my Helen mean?" replied Lady Ruthven, "Who would talk of being a vestal, with such a heart in view as that of the Regent of Scotland? and that it will be yours, does not his eloquent gratitude declare?" "No; my aunt," answerd Helen, casting down her eyes; "gratitude is eloquent where love would be silent. I am not so sacrilegious as to wish that Sir William Wallace should transfer that heart to me which the blood of Marion for ever purchased. No; should these people compel him to be their king, I will retire to Dumfermline monastery, where the ashes of his parents sleep, and for ever devote myself to God and to prayers for my country."

The holy composure which spread over the countenance and figure of Helen as she uttered this, seemed to extend itself to the before eager mind of Lady Ruthven; she pressed her tenderly in her arms, and kissing her; "Gentlest of human beings!" cried she, "whatever be thy lot, it must be happy!" "Whatever it be," answered Helen, "I know that there is an Almighty reason for it: I shall understand it in the world to come, and I cheerfully acquiesce in this."—"Oh! that the ears of Wallace could hear thee!" cried Lady Ruthven. "They will, sometime, my gracious aunt," answered she with an angelic smile.—"When? where? dearest!" asked Lady Ruthven, hoping that she began to have fairer anticipations for herself. Helen answered not, but pointing to the sky, rose from her seat with an air as if she were really going to ascend to those regions
which seemed best fitted to receive her pure spirit. Lady Ruthven gazed on her in speechless admiration; and without a word, or an impeding motion, saw Helen softly kiss her hand to her, and with another seraphic smile, glide gently from her into her closet, and close the door.

Far different were the emotions which agitated the bosoms of every person present at the entry of Sir William Wallace. All but himself regarded it as the triumph of the King of Scotland; and while some of the nobles exulted in their future monarch, the major part felt the daemon of envy so possess their souls, that they who, before his arrival, were ready to worship his name, now looked on the empire with which he seemed to ride, borne on the hearts of the people, with a rancorous jealousy, which, from that moment, vowed his humiliation or the fall of Scotland. The very tongues, which in the general acclaim called loudest "Long live our King," belonged to those who, in the secret recesses of their souls, swore to work his ruin, and to make these full-blown honours the means of his destruction. He in vain had tried to check what his moderate desires deemed the extravagant gratitude of the people: but finding his efforts only excited still louder demonstrations of their love; and knowing himself immoveable in his resolution to remain a subject of the crown, he moved on composedly; and proceeded to the citadel, where a royal banquet was prepared by the orders of the Countess, to greet his arrival.

Those ladies who had not retired from the cavalcade to greet their Regent a second time from their windows, preceded him in Lady Mar's train to the grand hall, where she had caused a feast to be spread that might have graced the harem of an eastern satrap. Two seats were placed under a canopy of cloth of gold at the head of the board. The Countess stood there in all the splendor of her ideal rank, and would have seated Wallace in the royal chair on her right hand, but he drew back;—"I am only a guest in this citadel," returned he, "and it would ill become me to take place of the master of the banquet." As he spoke, he looked on Lord Mar, who understanding the language of his eyes,
which never said the thing he would not, without a word took the kingly seat, and disappointed the Countess, who, by this refusal, still found herself regarded as no more than the wife of the governor of Stirling; when, she had hoped that a compliance with her cunning arrangement, would have hinted to all that she was to be the future queen of their acknowledged sovereign. They who knew Wallace, saw his immoveable resolution in this apparently slight action: But others, who read his design in their own ambition, translated it differently, and thought it only an artful rejection of the appendages of royalty, to excite the impatience of the people to crown him in reality.

As the ladies took their seats at the resplendent board, Edwin, who stood by the chair of his beloved lord, whispered, "Our Helen is not here: That sweet lily of the valley, shrunk from such garish sunshine!"

Lady Mar over heard the name of Helen, but she could not distinguish Wallace's reply; and fearing that some second assignation, of more happy termination than that of the chapel, might be designed, she determined, that if Edwin were to be the bearer of a secret correspondence between the man she loved, and the daughter she hated, to deprive them speedily of so ready an assistant.

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CHAP. VIII.

In the collected council the following day, the Earl of March made his treacherous request: and Wallace trusting his vehement oaths of fidelity, (because he thought that the versatile Earl had now discovered his true interest,) granted him, without suspicion, charge of the Lothians. The Lords Athol and Buchan, were not backward in offering their services to the Regent; and the rest of the discontented nobles following the base example, with equal deceit bade him command their lives and fortunes. While asseverations of loyalty filled the walls of the council-hall; and the lauding
rejoicings of the people still sounded from without, all spoke of security and confidence to Wallace; and never, perhaps, did he think himself so absolute in the hearts of all Scotland, as at the very moment when three-fourths of its nobility were plotting his destruction.

Lord Loch-awe, who, from the extent of his domains on the western coast, and from his tried valour, might well have assumed the title of his great ancestor Fin-gal, and been called king of woody Morven, rose from his seat; and having, (previous to the entrance of the Regent,) opened his intentions to the assembled lords; part of whom had assented with real satisfaction, and the remainder readily acquiesced in what they had laid so sure a plan to circumvent; he stood forth, and in a long and persuasive speech, once more declared to Wallace the wishes of the nation, that he would strike the decisive blow on the pretensions of Edward, by himself accepting the crown. The Bishop of Dunkeld, with all the eloquence of learning, and the most animated devotion to what he believed the interest of Scotland, seconded the petition. Mar and Bothwell enforced it. The disaffected lords thought proper to throw in their conjurations also; and every voice, but that of Badenoch, poured forth fervent entreaties that he would grant the prayers of the supplicating nation.

Wallace rose, and every tongue was mute. "My gratitude to Scotland, increases with my life: but my answer must still be the same—I cannot be its king."

At these words the venerable Loch-awe threw himself on his knees before him; "In my person," cried he, "see Scotland at your feet! still bleeding with the effects of former struggles for empire, she would throw off all claims but those of virtue, and receive as her anointed sovereign, her father and deliverer! She has no more arguments to deliver: These are her prayers; and thus I offer them."

"Kneel not to me, brave Loch-awe!" cried Wall-ace, "nor believe that the might of these victories lies so thoroughly in this arm, that I dare outrage its maker? Were I to comply with your wishes, I should disobey him who has hitherto made me his happy agent,
and how could I then guard my kingdom from his vengeance? Your rightful king yet lives; he is an alien from his country, but Heaven may return him to your prayers. Meanwhile, as his representative, as your soldier and protector, I shall be blest in wearing out my life. My ancestors were ever faithful to the blood of Alexander, and in the same fidelity I will die."

The firmness with which he spoke, and the determined expression of his noble countenance, convinced Loch-awe that he was not to be shaken; and rising from his knee, he bowed in silence. March whispered to Buchan, "Behold the hypocrite! But we will unmask him. He thinks to blind us to his towering ambition, by this affected moderation. He will not be called a king, because, with our crown, certain limitations are laid on the prerogative; but he will be our Regent, that he may be our dictator, and every day demand gratitude for voluntary services, which, performed by a king, could only be considered as his duty."

These sentiments, when the council broke up, were actively disseminated amongst the disaffected throng; and each gloomy recess in the woods murmured with their seditious meetings; while every lip in the country at large, breathed the name of Wallace as they would have done a god's; and the land that he had blessed, bloomed on every hill and valley like a garden.

Stirling now exhibited a constant carnival; peace was in every heart, and joy its companion. As Wallace had commanded in the field, he decided in the judgment-hall; and while all his behests were obeyed with a promptitude, which kept the machine of state constantly moving in the most beautiful order, his bitterest enemies could not but secretly acknowledge the perfection they were determined to destroy.

His munificent hand stretched itself far and near, that all who had shared the sufferings of Scotland, might drink largely of her prosperity. The good Abbot of Scone was invited from his hermitage; and when he heard from the ambassadors sent to him, that the brave young warrior whom he had entertained, was
the resistless Wallace, he no longer thought of the distant and supine Bruce, but centered every wish for his country in the authority of her deliverer. A few days brought him to Stirling and wishing to remain near the most constant residence of his noble friend, he requested that instead of being restored to Scone, he might be installed in the vacant monastery of Cambuskenneth. Wallace gladly acquiesced; and the venerable Abbot being told that his late charge, the Lady Helen, was in the palace, went to visit her next day; and as he communicated his exultation and happiness, she rejoiced in the benedictions which his grateful spirit invoked on the head of her almost worshipped sovereign. Her heart gave him this title, which she believed the not to be repressed affection of the people, would at last force him to assume.

The wives and families of his brave Lanarkers, were brought from Loch-Doine, and again planted in their native vallies; and nought in the kingdom appeared different from its most prosperous days, but the widowed heart of the dispenser of all this good. And yet, so fully did he engage himself in the creation of these benefits, that no time seemed left to him for regrets; but they haunted him like persecuting spirits, invisible to all but himself.

During the performance of these things, the Countess of Mar, though apparently lost to all other pursuits than the peaceable enjoyment of her reflected dignities, was absorbed in the one great object of her passion; and eager to be rid of so dangerous a spy and adversary as she deemed Edwin to be, she was labouring day and night to effect by clandestine schemes his banishment, when an unforeseen circumstance carried him far away. Lord Ruthven, being on an embassy to her father the Earl of Strathearn and Prince of the Orkneys, had fallen ill; and as his disorder was attended with extreme danger, he had sent for his wife; and Edwin, impelled by love for his father, and anxiety to soothe the terrified suspense of his mother, readily left the side of his friend to accompany her to the isles. Lady Mar had now no scrutinizing eye to fear: her nephew Murray was still on duty in Clydesdale.
the Earl, her husband, trusted her too implicitly, ever to turn on her a suspicious look; and Helen, she contrived, should be as little in her presence as possible.

Busy as she was, the enemies of the Regent were not less active in the prosecution of their plans. The Earl of March had arrived at Dunbar; and having dispatched his treasonable proposals to Edward, had received letters from that monarch by sea, accepting his services, and promising every reward that could satisfy his ambition, and the cupidity of those whom he could draw over to his cause. The wary king then told the Earl, that if he would send his wife and family to London as hostages for his faith, he was ready to bring a mighty army to Dunbar, and by that gate, once more enter Scotland. These negotiations backwards and forward, from London to Dunbar, and from Dunbar to the treacherous Lords at Stirling, occupied much time; and the more, as great precaution was necessary, to escape the vigilant eyes of Wallace, which seemed to be present in every part of the kingdom at once; for, so careful was he in overlooking, by his well-chosen officers civil and military, every transaction, that the slightest dereliction from the straight order of things was immediately seen and examined into. Many of these trusty magistrates having been placed in the Lothians before March took the government, he could not now remove them without exciting suspicion; and therefore, as they remained, great circumspection was used to elude their watchfulness.

From the time that Edward had again entered into terms with the Scottish Chieftains, Lord March sent regular tidings to Lord Soulis of the progress of their negotiation. He knew that that nobleman would gladly welcome the recall of the king of England; for ever since the revolution in favour of Scotland, he had remained obstinately shut up within his castle of Hermitage. Chagrin at having lost Helen, was not the least of his mortifications; and the wounds he had received from the invisible hand which had released her, having been given with all the might of the valiant arm which directed the blow, were not even now healed; his passions kept them still inflamed; and
their smart made his vengeance burn the fiercer against Wallace, who, he now learnt, was the mysterious agent of her rescue.

While treason secretly menaced to spring its mine beneath the feet of the Regent, he, unsuspicous that any could be discontented where all were rendered free and prosperous, thought of no enemy to the tranquil fulfilment of his duties, but the minor persecutions of Lady Mar. No day escaped without bringing him letters, either to invite him to Snawdoun; or to lead her to the citadel, where he resided. In every one of these epistles, she declared that it was no longer the wildness of passion which impelled her to seek his society, but the moderated regard of a friend. And though perfectly aware of all that was behind these asseverations, (for she had deceived him once into a belief of this plea, and had made him feel its falseness) he found himself forced at times, out of the common civility due to her sex, to comply with her invitations. Indeed her conduct never gave him reason to hold her in any higher respect, for whenever they happened to be left alone, her behaviour exhibited any thing but the chaste affection to which she made pretensions. The frequency of these scenes, at last made him never go to Snawdoun unaccompanied, (for she rarely allowed him to have even a glimpse of Helen) and by this precaution he avoided much of her solicitations. But, strange to say, even at the time that this conduct, by driving her to despair, almost excited her to some desperate act; her wayward heart threw the blame of his coldness upon her trammels with Lord Mar; and flattering herself that, were he dead all would happen as she wished, she panted for that hour with an impatience which often tempted her to precipitate the event.

Things were in this situation when Wallace one night was hastily summoned from his pillow by a page of Lord Mar's, requesting him immediately to repair to his chamber. Concluding that something alarming must have happened, to occasion so extraordinary a summons, he threw on his Gambeson, and in a few minutes entered the apartments of the governor. Mar met him with a countenance that was indeed the herald
of a dreadful matter. "What has happened?" inquired Wallace. "Treason," answered Mar, "and from what point I cannot guess: but my daughter has braved a midnight and lonely walk from Snawdoun, to bring the proofs." As he spoke he led the chief into the room where Helen sat. Her long hair disordered by the winds of the night mingled with the grey folds of the plaid which enveloped her. He hastened forward—she no longer flitted before him, scared away from his approach by the frowning glances of her stepmother. He had once attempted to express his grateful sentiments of what she had suffered in her lovely person for his sake, but the Countess had interrupted him, and Helen disappeared. Now he beheld her in a presence where he could declare all his gratitude without subjecting its gentle object to one harsh word in consequence; and almost forgetting his errand to the governor, and the tidings he had just heard, he remembered only the manner in which she had shielded his life with her tender arms; and as she rose as he drew near, he bent his knee respectfully before her. Blushing and silent, she extended her hand to him to rise. He pressed it warmly, "Sweet excellence!" said he, "I am happy in this opportunity, however gained, again to pour out my acknowledgments to you; and though I have been denied that pleasure until now, yet the memory of your generous interest in the friend of your father, is one of the most cherished sentiments of my heart." "It is my own happiness, as well as my duty, Sir William Wallace," replied she, "to regard you and my country as one: and that I hope will excuse the, perhaps, unsexual action of this night?" As she spoke, he again gently pressed her hand, and rising, looked at Lord Mar for further explanation.

The Earl held a roll of vellum towards him. "This writing," said he, "was found to-night by my daughter. She was walking with my wife and some ladies to enjoy the moon-light on the sequestered shores of the Forth, behind the palace: and having strayed at some distance from her friends, she had an opportunity of examining uninterrupted this packet, which she saw lying in the path before her, as if it had just been dropt.
Thinking to discover its owner that she might restore it, she opened the cover, and part of the contents soon told her that she must keep the other within her own bosom till she could reveal them to me. Not even to my wife did she intrust the dangerous secret; nor would she run any risk of accidents by sending it by a messenger. As soon as the family were gone to rest, she wrapped herself in her plaid, and finding a passage through one of the low embrasures of Snawdoun, with a fleet step made her way to the citadel and to me. She gave me this letter; read it, my brave friend, and judge if we do not owe much to heaven for so critical a discovery.”

Wallace took the scroll, and read as follows:

“Our trusty fellows will bring you this, and deliver copies of the same to the rest. As we shall be with you in four-and-twenty hours after it arrives, you need not return us an answer. The army of our liege lord is now in the Lothians, and passes through those cheated counties under the appellation of succours for the Regent, from the Orkney-Isles. Keep all safe, and neither himself nor any of his adherents shall have a head on their shoulders by this day week.”

Neither superscription, name, nor date, was to this letter, but Wallace immediately knew the hand writing to be that of the faithless Lord March. “Then we must have traitors even within these walls!” exclaimed Mar, “none but the most powerful chiefs, would the proud Cospatrick admit into his conspiracies: and what are we to do? for by to-morrow’s evening, the army this traitor has let into the heart of the country, will be at our gates!”

“No,” cried Wallace, “thanks to God and this guardian angel,” fervently clasping her hand as he spoke, “we are not to be intimidated by treachery! Let us but be faithful ourselves, my veteran friend, and all will go well. It matters not who the other traitors are; they will soon discover themselves, and shall find us prepared to counteract their machinations. Blow your trumpet, my lord, to summon the heads of your council.”
Helen at this command arose; but Wallace replacing her in her chair, "stay Lady Helen," said he, "let, the sight of such virgin delicacy, braving the terrors of the night to warn betrayed Scotland, nerve every heart with redoubled courage to breast this insidious foe!"

Helen did indeed feel her soul awake to all its ancient patriotic enthusiasm; and thus with a countenance pale, but resplendent with the light of her thoughts, she sat, the angel of heroic inspiration. Wallace often turned to look on her, while her eyes, unconscious of the adoring admiration which spoke in their beams, followed his godlike figure as it moved through the room, with a step that declared the undisturbed determination of his soul.

The lords Bothwell, Loch-awe, and Badenoch, were the first that obeyed the call. They started at sight of Helen; but Wallace, in a few words, related the cause of her appearance; and the portentous letter was laid before them. All were acquainted with the hand-writing of Lord March; and all agreed in attributing to its real motive, his late solicitude to obtain the command of the Lothians; "What!" cried Bothwell, "but to open his castle-gates to the enemy!"

"And to repel him before he reaches ours, my brave chiefs!" replied Wallace, "I have summoned you. Edward will not make this attempt without tremendous powers. He knows what he risques; his men, his life, and his honor. We must therefore expect a stand adequate to his danger. Lose not then a moment; even to-night, this instant, go out, and bring in your followers; I will call up mine from the banks of the Clyde, and be ready to meet him ere he crosses the Carron."

While he gave these orders, other nobles thronged in; and Helen, as the story of her conduct was repeated, being severally thanked by them all, became so agitated, that, stretching out her hand to Wallace, who was nearest to her, she softly whispered, "take me hence." He read in her blushing face the oppression which her modesty sustained in such a scene; and with faltering steps she leaned upon his arm, and he conducted her through an anti-room into an interior cham-
her of the governor's apartments. Here Helen, overcome by her former fears, and the emotions of the last hour, sunk into a chair and burst into tears. Wallace stood over her: as he looked on her he thought "If ought on earth ever resembled the beloved of my soul, it is Helen Mar!" And all the tenderness which memory gave to his ever-adored wife, and all the grateful complacency with which he regarded Helen, beamed at once from his eyes. She raised her head—she felt that look—it thrilled to her soul. For a moment every former thought seemed lost in the one perception, that he then gazed on her as he had never looked on any woman since his Marion. Was she then beloved?

The impression was evanescent: "No, no!" said she to herself; and waving her hand gently to him, with her head bent down; "Leave me, Sir William Wallace.—Forgive me,—but I am exhausted; my frame is weaker than my mind." She spoke this by snatches; and Wallace respectfully touching the hand she extended, pressed it to his breast. "I obey you, dear Lady Helen; and when next we meet, it will be, I hope, to dispel every fear in this gentle bosom, and to say that heaven has again blessed the arms of Scotland!" With a beating heart she bowed her head without looking up; and Wallace left the room.

CHAP. IX.

BEFORE the sun rose, every brave Scot within a few hours march of Stirling, were assembled on the carse; and Lord Andrew Murray with his veteran Clydesdale men, was already resting on his arms in view of the city walls. The messengers of Wallace hastened with the speed of the winds, east and west; and the noon of the day saw him at the head of 30,000 men, determined to fight or to die for their country.

The surrounding landscape shone in the brightness of midsummer; for it was the eve of St. Magdalen, and sky and earth, both bore witness to the luxuriant month of July. The heavens were clear, the waters of the
Forth danced in the sun-beams; and the flower-enamelled green of the extended plain, breathing fragrance, stretched its beautiful borders to the deepening woods. All nature smiled; and all seemed in harmony and peace but the breast of man. He who was made lord of this paradise, moved forward to disturb its repose, to disfigure its loveliness! As the thronging legions poured upon the plain, the sheep which had been feeding there, fled, scared to the hills; the plover and heath-fowl which nestled in the brakes, rose affrighted from their infant broods, and flew in screaming multitudes far over the receding vallies. The peace of Scotland was again broken, and its flocks and herds were to share its misery!

When the conspiring lords appeared upon the carse, and Mar communicated to them the lately discovered treason, they so well affected surprise at the contents of the scroll, that it is probable Wallace might not have suspected their connexion with it, had not Lord Athol declared it as his belief, that it was altogether a forgery of some wanton person, and that to gather an army on such authority was ridiculous. While he spoke, Wallace regarded him with a look which, Athol meeting, pierced him to the centre; and the blood rushing into his guilty heart, for once in his life he trembled before the eye of a man. "Whoever be the degenerate Scot to whom this writing is addressed," said Wallace, "his baseness shall not betray us farther." The troops of Scotland shall be in the Lothians to-morrow; and woe be to the man who that day deserts his country!"—"Amen!" cried Lord Mar.—"Amen!" sounded from every lip: for, when the conscience embraces treason against its earthly rulers, allegiance to its heavenly king is abandoned with ease;—and the words and oaths of the traitor are equally unstable.

Badenoch's eye followed that of Wallace, and his suspicions fixed where the Regent's fell. For the honour of his blood, he forbore to accuse the Earl, but for the same reason he determined to watch his proceedings. However, the hypocrisy of Athol baffled even the penetration of his brother; and on his retiring from the ground to call forth his men for the expedition, in an
affected chafe he complained to Badenoch of the stigma cast upon their house by the Regent's implied charge. "But," said he, "he shall this day see my fidelity to Scotland written in blood on the sands of the Forth! His towering pride heeds not where it strikes; and this comes of raising men of low estate to rule over princes!"—"His birth is noble, if not royal;" replied Badenoch, "and, before this, the posterity of kings have not disdained to recover their liberty by the sword of a brave subject."—"True;" answered Athol; "but is it customary for princes to allow that subject to sit on their throne? It is nonsense to talk of Wallace having refused a coronation. He laughs at the name; but see you not that he openly affects supreme power, and that he rules the nobles of the land like a despot? His word, his nod, is sufficient. Look at the brave Mack Callanmore, the lord of the west of Scotland from sea to sea; he stands unbonneted before this mighty Wallace, with a more abject homage than ever he paid to the house of Alexander! And then again, hear how the upstart commands the sons of our most venerable nobility: Go here, go there!—as if he were absolute, and there was no voice in Scotland but his own!—Can you behold this, Lord Badenoch, and not find the royal blood of your descent boil in your veins? Does not every look of your wife, the sister of a king; and your own rights knocking at your heart, reproach you? He is greater by your strength. Humble him, my brother; be faithful to Scotland, but humble its proud dictator!"

Lord Badenoch replied to this rough exhortation, with the tranquillity belonging to his nature. "I see not the least foundations for any of your charges against Sir William Wallace. He has delivered Scotland, and the people are grateful. The nation with one voice made him their Regent; and he fulfils the duties of his office:—but with a moderation and modesty, Lord Athol, which, I must affirm, I never saw equalled. I must dissent from you in all you have said;—And I confess that I did fear that the blandishing arguments of the faithless Cospatrick had persuaded you to embrace his pernicious treason. You deny it:—that is
The Scottish Chiefs.

well. Prove your innocence this day in the field, against Scotland's enemies, and John of Badenoch will then see no impending cloud to darken the honour of the name of Cummin!"

The brothers immediately separated; and Athol calling his cousin Buchan, laid a new plot to counteract the vigilance of the Regent: one means was, to baffle him in his measures, by stimulating the less treasonable, but yet discontented chieftains, to thwart him in every point. At the head of these was John Stewart, Earl of Bute. He had been in Norway during the last year, and returned to Scotland just on the triumphal entry of Wallace into Stirling. Athol, aware of the consequence Stewart's name would attach to a cause, gained his ear before he was introduced to the Regent, and so poisoned his mind against Wallace, that all that was well in him, he deemed ill; and ever spoke of his bravery with coldness, and of his patriotism with disgust: He believed him a hypocrite; and as such, despised and abhorred him.

While Athol marshalled his rebellious ranks, Wallace led forth his loyal barons to take their stations at the heads of their different clans. Sir Alexander Scrymgeour, with the proudest expectations for Scotland, unfurled his golden standard to the sun. The lords Lochawe and Bothwell, with others, rode on the right of the Regent. Lord Andrew Murray, with the brave Sir John Graham, and a bevy of young knights, kept the ground on his left. Wallace looked around: Edwin was far away, (he who stood firmly by him in every tumult; and he felt but half appointed for the battle when he wanted his youthful sword-bearer. That faithful friend did not even know of the threatened hostility; for, to have intimated to Lord Ruthven a danger to Scotland which he could not assist to repel, would only have inflamed his disorder by anxiety, and perhaps have hurried him to dissolution.

As the Regent moved forward, with these private affections chequering his public cares, the heralds blew the trumpets of his approach, and a hundred embattled clans appeared in the middle of the plain, ready to receive their valiant leaders. Each chieftain advanced to
the head of his line, and stood to hear the charge of Wallace.

"Brave Scots!" cried he, "I hope this day will be the last of Southeron invasion! Treachery has admitted the enemy whom God had driven from our borders.—Be steady in your fidelity to Scotland, and he who has hitherto protected the just cause, will nerve your arms to lay treason and its base coadjutor in the dust!"

"Lead us to victory!" cried the eager soldiers, throwing up their caps at the ever-inspiring voice of their leader. Wallace waved his sword in token to the chieftains to fall back towards their legions; and while some appeared to linger, Athol, armed cap-a-pie, and spurring his roan steed into the centre of the area before the Regent, demanded, in a haughty tone, "Which of the Scots then in the field, were to lead the vanguard?"

"The Regent of Scotland," replied Wallace, for once asserting the majesty of his station; "and you, Lord Athol, with the Lord Buchan, are to defend your country under the command of the brave head of your house, the princely Badenoch." "I stir not from this spot," returned Athol, fiercely striking his lance into its rest, "till I see the honour of my country established in the eyes of the world by a leader worthy of her rank in the nations being placed in her vanguard."

"What he says," cried Buchan, "I second." "And in the same spirit, chieftain of Ellerslie," exclaimed Lord Bute, "do I offer to Scotland, myself and my people. Another must lead the van, or I retire from her ranks."

"Speak on!" cried Wallace, more surprised than confounded by this extraordinary attack.

"What these illustrious chiefs have uttered, is the voice of us all!" was the general exclamation from a band of warriors who now thronged around the incendiary nobles.

"Your reign is over, proud chieftain!" rejoined Athol, "the Scottish ranks are no longer to be cajoled by your affected moderation. We see the tyrant in your insidious smile, we feel him in the despotism of your decrees. To be thus ridden by a man of vulgar
blood; to present him as the head of our nation to the king of England, is beneath the dignity of our country, is an insult to her nobles; and therefore in the power of her consequence I speak, and again demand of you to yield the vanguard to one more worthy of the station. Before God and St. Magdalen, I swear,” added he, holding up his sword to the heavens, “that I will not stir an inch this day towards the enemy, unless a Cummin or a Stewart lead our army!”

“And is this your resolution, Lord Bute?” said Wallace, looking on Stewart. “It is,” was the reply; “a foe like Edward ought to be met as becomes a great and independent kingdom! We go in the array of an unanimous nation, to repel him; not as a band of insurgents, headed by a general, however brave, yet drawn from the common ranks of the people. I therefore demand to follow a more illustrious leader to the field.”

“I am of the same opinion,” cried Buchan, “and I think that the eagles have long enough followed their owl in peacock’s feathers; and, being tired of the game, I, like the rest, soar upward again!”

“Give place to a more honourable leader,” repeated Athol, supposing that he had intimidated Wallace: but Wallace, raising the visor of his helmet, which he had closed on his last commands to his generals, looked on Athol with all the majesty of his truly royal soul in his eyes; “Earl,” said he, “the voice of the three estates of Scotland declared me their Regent and protector. God ratified their election by the victory with which he crowned me: and if in ought I have betrayed my trust, let them speak. Four pitched battles have I fought and gained for this country. Twice I beat the representatives of King Edward on the plains of Scotland; and last of all, I made him fly before me over the fields of Northumberland! What then has befallen me, that I am to be afraid to meet this man? Has the oil of the Lord with which the blessed hands of the Saint of Dunkeld anointed my brows, lost its virtue, that I should shrink before any king in Christendom? I neither tremble at the name of Edward, nor will I so disgrace my own (which, though not royal, never man who bore it ever degraded by swearing fealty to a foreign prince)
as to abandon at such a crisis the power with which Scotland has invested me. Whoever leaves the cause of their country, let them go, and so manifest themselves of noble blood; I remain, and I lead the vanguard!—Soldiers, to your duty!"

As he spoke with a voice of unanswerable command, several chieftains fell back into their ranks; and Wallace, riding past the frowning Lord Bute, (who hardly knew what to think, so was he startled by the appeal of the accused Regent, and with the noble frankness with which he maintained its rights) turned to him, and said, "Do you, my lord, follow these violent men? or am I to consider a chief who, notwithstanding his hostility to me, was yet generous in his ire, still so candid as to be faithful to Scotland in spite of his prejudice against her leader? Will you fight her battles?"

"I shall never desert her cause," replied Stewart, "tis truth I seek: therefore, be it to you, Wallace, this day, according to your conscience!" Wallace bowed his head, and presented him the truncheon round which his orders were wrapped. On opening it, he found that he was appointed to the command of the third division; Badenoch and Bothwell had the first and second, while Wallace himself now led on the vanguard.

Scouts at that instant came up, and informed the Regent that the English army were near the boundary of Linlithgow, and would be on the Carron in the course of a few hours. On this intelligence Wallace put his troops to their speed; and before the sun had declined far towards its western descent, he was within view of Falkirk. He had not communicated to the rest of his chieftains the subject of his conference with the tumultuous lords on the carse of Stirling: They were out of hearing of what was said; and Wallace, hoping that the dispute was now ended, thought it best not to disturb his friends on this momentous day with the knowledge of so refractory a beginning. But just at the instant when he had crossed the Carron, and the Southron banners appeared in sight, Lord Athol, at the head of his rebellious colleagues, rode up to him. Stewart kept his station with his division; and Badenoch, though ignorant of his brother's design, yet ashamed

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of such disorder, in vain called after him to keep his line. The obstinate chief, regardless of all check, galloped on, and extending his bold accomplices across the path of the Regent, demanded of him on the penalty of his life, that moment to relinquish his pretensions to the vanguard.

"I am not come here," replied Wallace, indignantly, "to betray my country! I know you, Lord Athol: and your conduct and mine will this day prove who is most worthy the confidence of Scotland." "This day," cried Athol, "shall see you lay down the power you have usurped." "It shall see me maintain it to your confusion," replied Wallace, "and were you not surrounded by Scots of too tried a worth to suspect their being influenced by your rebellious example, I would this moment make you feel the weight of my justice. But the foe is in sight: do your duty now, Lord Athol, and for the sake of the house to which you belong, even this intemperate conduct shall be forgotten." At this instant Sir John Graham, galloping forward, exclaimed, "The Southerns are bearing down upon us!" and Athol, turning proudly round on Wallace, with a sarcastic smile, "My actions," cried he, "shall indeed decide the day!" and setting his spurs furiously into his horse, he re-joined Lord Badenoch's legion.

Edward did indeed advance in most terrible battle-array. Above a hundred thousand men swelled his numerous ranks; and with him were united all from the Lothians and Tiviotdale, whom the influence of the faithless March and the vindictive Soulis, could bring into the field. With this augmented host, and a determination to conquer or to die, the Southrons marched rapidly forward.

Wallace had drawn himself up on the ascent of the hill of Falkirk to meet him; and having planted his archers on a covering eminence, flanked by the legions of Badenoch, Lord Athol, who knew the integrity of his brother, and who cared not in so great a cause (for so his ambition termed it) how he removed an adversary from Edward, and a censor from himself, had given orders to his emissaries; and on the moment when the trumpet of Wallace sounded the charge, and
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the arrows from the hill darkened the air, the virtuous Badenoch, by a secret hand, was stabbed through the back to the heart. Athol, who had placed himself near for the purpose, immediately threw himself upon the man who had committed the deed, and wounding him in the same vital part, exclaimed, holding up his dagger, "Behold the weapon that has slain the assassin hired by Sir William Wallace!"—Thus it is that his ambition would rob Scotland of her native princes. Let us fly from his steel, to the shield of a king and a hero."

The poison took.—The men had seen their leader fall; they doubted not the words of his brother; and with a shout, exclaiming, "Whither you lead we follow!" they at once turned towards him. "Seize the traitor's artillery!" At this command they mounted the hill; and the archers, little expecting an assault from their countrymen, being unguarded, were either instantly cut down on the spot, or the few that remained, hurried away prisoners by Athol and Buchan; who, now at the head of the whole division of the Cummins, galloped towards the thickest of the enemy, and with loud cries of "Long live King Edward!" threw themselves at once into the bosom of the Southrons. The squadrons which followed Stewart, not knowing but they might be hurried into similar desertion, hesitated in the charge he commanded them to make; and while thus undecisive, as some obeyed in broken ranks, and others lingered, the enemy perceiving his advantage, advanced briskly up, surrounded the division of Bute, and on the first onset slew him. His (ο) Brandanes immediately fell into the most disastrous confusion, and sunk under the shock of the Southrons as if touched by a spell. The legions of Bothwell were fiercely engaged with those of the Earl of Lincoln, amid the swamps of a deep morass which lay in that part of the field; and being involved by a reciprocal impetuosity, equal peril seemed to engulf them both. The firm battalion of the vanguard alone remained unbroken, and stood before the pressing and now victorious thousands of Edward without receding a step. The archers being lost by the treachery of the Cummins, all hope lay on the strength of the spear and sword; and
Wallace, standing as immovable as the rock of Stirling, rank after rank of his dauntless infantry were mowed down by the Southron arrows; but as fast as they fell, their comrades closed over them, and still presented the same impenetrable front of steady valour. The king of England, indignant at this pause in his conquering onset, accompanied by his natural brother, the valiant Frere de Briangy, and a whole squadron of resolute knights, charged full against the Scottish pikemen. Wallace, descrying the jewelled crest of Edward amidst the cloud of battle, rushed forward, and hand to hand engaged the king. Edward knew his adversary, not so much by his snow-white plume, as by the prowess of his arm. Twice did the heavy claymore of Wallace strike fire from the steely helmet of the monarch; but at the third stroke, the glittering diadem fell in shivers to the ground, and the royal blood of Edward followed the blow. The monarch reeled, and another stroke would have settled the freedom of Scotland for ever, had not the strong arm of Frere de Briangy passed between Wallace and the swooning king. The combat thickened: blow followed blow; blood gushed at each fall of the sword; and the yawning mouths of the hacked armour shewed a grisly wound in every aperture. A hundred weapons seemed directed against the breast of the Regent of Scotland, when, raising his sword with a determined stroke, it cleft the visor and brain of De Briangy, and he fell lifeless to the ground. The cry of dismay that issued from the Southron troops at this sight, again nerved the vengeful Edward; and ordering the signal to be given for his reserve under Bruce, to advance by a circuitous path round the hill, he renewed the attack; and assaulting Wallace with all the fury of his heart in his eyes and arms, tore the earth with the trampling of disappointed vengeance, when he found that the invincible phalanx still stood firm. "I will reach him yet!" cried he, and turning to De Valence, he commanded that the new artillery should be brought into action. A general blast of all the trumpets in the Southron army blew, and immediately the war-wolfs sent forth showers of red-hot stones into the midst of the Scottish battalions, and, at the same mo-
ment, the reserve charging round the hill, attacked them in flank; and accomplished what the fiery torrent had begun. The field was heaped with the dead; the brooks which flowed down the heights, ran with blood; but no confusion was there; no, not even in the mind of Wallace, though he was struck with amazement and horror, when he beheld the royal lion of Scotland, the banner of Bruce, lead onward the exterminating division. Scot now contended with Scot, brother with brother. Those valiant spirits who had left their country twenty years before, to accompany their chief to the Holy-Land, now re-entered Scotland to wound her in her vital part; to wrest from her her liberties; to make her mourn in ashes, that she had been the mother of such matricides. A horrid mingling of tartans with tartans, in the direful grasp of reciprocal death; a tremendous hissing of the flaming artillery, which fell amongst the Scottish ranks like blasting lightning, for a moment seemed to make the reason of the patriot Regent stagger. Arrows winged with fire flashed through the air, and sticking in the men and beasts, drove them against each other in maddening pain. Twice was the horse of Wallace shot under him; and on every side were his closest friends wounded and dispersed. But his terrific horror at the scene passed away almost in the moment of its perception; and though the Southron and the Bruce pressed on him in overwhelming numbers, his few remaining ranks obeyed his call, and with a presence of mind and military skill that was exhaustless, he maintained the fight till darkness parted the combatants. When Edward gave command for his troops to cease till morning, Wallace, slowly, and with the residue of his faithful band, recrossed the Carron, intending that they should there repose themselves, till the approaching dawn should renew the conflict.

Lonely was the sound of his bugle, as sitting on a fragment of the druidical ruins of Dunipacis, he blew its melancholy blast to summon his chieftains around him.—Its penetrating voice pierced the hills; but no answering notes came upon his ear: the leaders of his divisions were slain.—A cold conviction of the re-
ality seized upon his heart. But they might have fled far distant!—He blushed as the thought crossed him; and hopeless again, dropped the horn which he had raised to blow a second summons. At this instant he saw a shadow darken the moon-light ruins, and Scrymgeour, who had gladly heard his commander's bugle hastened forward with a few chieftains of lesser note.

"What has been the fate of this dismal day?" asked Wallace, looking onward as if he expected others still to come up: "Where are my friends?—Where Graham, Badenoch, and Bothwell?—Where all, brave Scrymgeour that I do not now see?" He rose from his seat at sight of another advancing group.—It approached near, and laid a dead body at his feet. "Thus," cried one of the supporters, in stifled sounds, "has my father proved his love for Scotland!"—It was Murray who spoke; it was the Earl of Bothwell that lay a breathless corpse before him!

"Grievous has been the havoc of Scot on Scot!" cried the intrepid Graham, who had valiantly assisted Murray in the contest for his father's body; "Your steadiness, Wallace, would have retrieved the day, but for the parricide of his country; that Bruce for whom you refused to be our king, has thus destroyed the flower of its sons. Their blood be on his head, Oh, power of justice!" cried he, extending his martial arms towards heaven; "and let his days be troubled, and his death covered with dishonour!"

"My brave friend!" replied Wallace, "his deeds will avenge themselves; he needs not further malediction. Let us rather turn to bless the remains of him who has just gone before us, in glory, to his heavenly rest!—Ah! better is it thus to be laid in the bed of honour, than, by surviving, to witness the calamities which the double treason of this day will bring upon our martyred country!—Murray, my friend!" cried he, to Lord Andrew who, kneeling by his father gazed in silence on his pallid face; "we must not let the brave dead perish in vain! Their monument shall yet be Scotland's liberties."

Tears were now coursing each other in mute woe down the cheeks of the affectionate son. He could not
for some time answer Wallace, but he grasped his hand, and at last rapidly articulated; "Others may have fallen, but not mortally like him. Life may yet be preserved in some of our brave companions. Leave me, then, to mourn over my dead alone!"

Wallace saw that filial tenderness yearned for the moment when it might unburthen its grief unchecked by observation. He arose, and making a sign to his friends, withdrew towards his men. Having sent a small detachment to watch at some little distance around the sacred enclosure of Dunipacis, he dispatched Graham on the dangerous duty of seeking a reinforcement for the morning; and sending Scrymgeour with a resolute band across the Carron to bring in the wounded, (for the main body of Edward's army had encamped themselves about a mile south of the field of action;) he took his solitary course along the northern bank towards a shallow ford near which he supposed the squadrons of Lord Loch-awe must have fought, and where he hoped he might gain some accounts of him from some straggling survivor of his clan. When he arrived at the spot where the river is narrowest and winds its still stream beneath impending heights overhung with hazels and weeping birch, he blew the Campbell pibroch: the notes reverbrated from rock to rock, and, unanswered, died away in distant echoes. But still he would not relinquish hope; and pursuing his course, he emerged on an open glade which lay under the full light of the moon. Across the river, at some distance, a division of the Southron tents whitened the deep shadows of the bordering woods; and before them, on the opposite bank, he thought he described a warrior walking alone.—Wallace stopped.—The man approached the margin of the stream, and looked towards the Scottish chief.—The visor of Wallace being up, discovered his heroic countenance bright in the moon-beams; and the majesty of his mien, seemed to declare him to the Southron knight, to be no other than the Regent of Scotland.

"Who art thou?" cried the warrior, with a voice of command that better became his lips, than it was adapted to the man to whom he spoke.
"The enemy of England!" cried the chief.
"Thou art Wallace!" was the immediate reply;
"None else dare answer the Lord of Carrick with such
a haughty boldness."

"Every Scot in this land," returned Wallace, inflam-
ed with a vehement indignation he did not attempt to
repress; "would thus answer Bruce, not only in refer-
ence to England, but to himself! to that Bruce, who,
not satisfied with having abandoned his people to their
enemies, has stolen like a base fratricide to slay his
brethren in their home! To have met them on the
plain of Stanmore, would have been a deed his posteri-
ty might have bewailed; but what horror, what shame
will be theirs when they know that he came to ruin his
own rights, to stab his people in the very bosom of his
country!—I am just come from gazing on the dead
body of the virtuous Earl of Bothwell! The Lords Bute
and Fife, and perhaps Loch-awe, have fallen beneath
the Southron sword and your unnatural arm; and yet
do you demand what Scot would dare to tell you that
he holds the Earl of Carrick and his coadjutors, as his
most mortal foes?"

"Ambitious man! Dost thou flatter thyself with the
belief that I am to be deceived by thy pompous decla-
mation? I know the motive of all this pretended patriot-
ism.—I am well informed of the aim of all this vaunted
prowess; and I came, not to fight the battles of King
Edward, but to punish the proud usurper of the rights
of Bruce.—I have gained my point.—My brave follow-
ers slew the Lord Bothwell; my brave followers made
the hitherto invincible Wallace retreat!—I came in
the power of my birth-right; and I command you, as
your lawful king, this hour to lay down your arms be-
fore me.—Obey, proud knight, or the day that puts you
into Edward’s hands will see you die the death of a
traitor."

"Unhappy prince;" cried Wallace, now suspecting
that Bruce had been deceived; "was it over the necks
of your most loyal and bleeding subjects, that you would
mount your throne?—How have you been mistaken!—
How have you strengthened the hands of your enemy,
and weakened your own, by this day’s action!—The
cause is now probably lost for ever:—and from whom are we to date its ruin, but from him to whom the nation looked as to its appointed deliverer! From him, whose once honoured name will now be regarded with execration!"

"Burthen not my name, rash young man," replied Bruce, "with the charges belonging to your own mad ambition,—Who disturbed the peace in which Scotland lay after the battle of Dunbar, but William Wallace? Who raised the country in arms but William Wallace? Who stole from me my birth-right, and fastened the people's love on himself, but William Wallace? Who affected to repel a crown, that he might the more certainly fix it on his head, but William Wallace? And who dares now taunt me with his errors and mishaps, but the same traitor to his lawful sovereign?"

"Shall I answer thee, Lord of Carrick," replied Wallace, "with a similar appeal?—Who, when the Southron tyrant preferred a false claim to the supremacy of this realm, subscribed to the falsehood, and by that action did all in his power to make a free people slaves?—Who when the brand of cruelty swept this kingdom from shore to shore, lay in luxurious indolence in the usurper's court and heard of these oppressions of his country without a sigh? Who, horror on horror! brought a vast power into his own inheritance, to lay it desolate before his most mortal foe?—Thy heart will tell thee, Bruce, who is this man; and if honour yet remain in that iron region, thou wilt not disbelieve the asseverations of an honest Scot, who declares, that it was to save them whom thou didst abandon, that he appeared in the armies of Scotland. It was to supply the place of thy desertion, that he assumed the rule with which a grateful people, rescued from bondage, invested him."

"Bold chieftain!" exclaimed Bruce, "is it thus you continue to brave your offended prince? But in pity to your youth, in admiration of a prowess, which would have been godlike, had it been exerted for your sovereign and not used as a bait to satisfy an ambition as wild as it is towering, I would expostulate with you;
if you yet are not lost to all sober considerations. I would even deign to tell you, that the royal Bruce, in granting the supremacy of Edward, submits, not to the mere wish of a despot, but to the necessity of the times. This is not an era of so great loyalty, that any sovereign may venture to contend against such an imperial arm as Edward's. And would you, a boy in years, a novice in politics; and though brave, and till this day successful, would you pretend to prolong a war with the dictator of kingdoms? As a Scot, and in the grace of my royal clemency, I warn you against pursuing so vain and ruinous an enterprise. If you have sense or reason left, endeavour to bend your inflexible spirit to submit to superior power, superior fortune, and superior rights. Can rational discrimination be united with the valour you possess, and you not perceive the unequal contest between a weak state deprived of its head and agitated by intestine commotions, and a mighty nation conducted by the ablest and most martial monarch of his age? A man, who is not only determined to maintain his pretensions to the supremacy over Scotland, but is master of every resource, either for protracting the war; or for pushing it with vigour. If the love of your country be indeed your motive for perseverance, your obstinacy tends only to lengthen her misery. But if, as I believe is the case, you carry your views to private aggrandizement, reflect on their probable issue. Should Edward, by a miracle withdraw his armies, is it not evident, from recent experience, that so many haughty nobles, proud of the pre-eminence of their families, would never submit to a personal merit whose superiority they would less regard as an object of deference, than as a reproach to themselves. As the general of a King of Scotland, you would be a blessing to your country; as the usurper of its sovereign's rights, you are a curse; for war, foreign and intestine, must follow your footsteps till you sink into the grave."

"To usurp any man's rights, and least of all, my king's," replied Wallace, "never came within the range of my thoughts. Though lowly born, Lord Carrick, I am not so base as to require assumption to
give me dignity. I saw my country turned into a gar-
rison; and the miserable inhabitants pillaged, murder-
ed, and outraged in every relation that is dear to man.
Who heard their cry?—Where was Bruce?—Where
the proud nobles of Scotland; that none were near to
extinguish the flames of the burning villages, to shel-
ter the mother and the child, to rescue purity from vi-
olation, to defend the bleeding father and son?—The
shrieks of despair resounded through the land, and none
arose. The hand of violence fell on my own house!
the wife of my bosom was stabbed to the heart by
a magistrate of the fell usurper! I then drew the sword!
—I took pity on those who suffered as I had suffered;
I espoused their cause, and never will I forsake it till
life forsake me. Therefore, that I became the cham-
pion of Scotland, Lord of Carrick, blame not my am-
bition, but rather the supineness of the nobility, and
chiefly yourself:—You, who uniting personal me-
rit to dignity of descent, had deserted the post
which both nature and circumstance called upon you
to occupy!—Had the Scots, from the time of Baliol’s
abdication, possessed such a leader as yourself, (for
what is the necessity of the times, but the pusillani-
mity of those who contend with Edward?) by your valour
and their union, you must have surmounted every diffi-
culty under which we now struggle; and might have justly
hoped to have closed the contest with success and honour.
If you now start from your guilty delusion, it may not
be too late to rescue Scotland from the perils which sur-
round her. Listen then to my voice, prince of the blood
of Alexander! forswear the tyrant who has cajoled
you to this abandonment of your country, and resolve
to be her deliverer. Another blow I yet meditate to
strike, that this tyrant of the earth shall not return
with boasts over the country he betrayed, over the pa-
triot band whom his treachery and the treason of
March and the two Cummins have brought into this
strait. The bravest of the Scots are ready to acknow-
ledge you for their lord, to reign as did your forefa-
thers, untrammeled by any foreign yoke. Exchange
then a base vassalage for freedom and a throne! Awake
to yourself, noble Bruce, and behold what it is that I
propose! Heaven itself cannot set a more glorious prize before the eyes of virtue or ambition, than to join in one object the acquisition of royalty, with the maintenance of national independence!—Such is my last appeal to you. For myself, as I am well convinced that the real welfare of my country can never subsist with the sacrifice of her liberties, I am determined, as far as in me lies, to prolong, not her miseries, but her integrity, by preserving her from the contamination of slavery. But, should mysterious fate decree her fall, may that power, which knows the vice and horrors which accompany a tyrant's reign, terminate the existence of a people who can no longer preserve their lives but by receiving laws from usurpation."

The truth and gallantry of these sentiments struck the awakened mind of Bruce with the force of conviction. Another auditor was nigh, who also lost not a syllable; 'and the flame was conveyed from the breast of one hero to that of the other.'

Lord Carrick secretly repented of all that he had done, but being too proud to acknowledge as much, he briefly answered—"Wallace, your words have made an impression on me that may one day still more brighten the glory of your fame. Be silent respecting this conference:—Be faithful to the principles you have declared, and ere long you shall hear royally of Bruce."

As he spoke he turned abruptly away, and was lost amongst the trees. (p)

Wallace had stood for some minutes musing on what had passed, when he heard a footstep behind him, and turning round, he beheld a young and ethereal form habited in a white hacqueton wrought with gold, with golden sandals on his feet, and a helmet of the same costly metal on his head crested with white feathers. The moment the eyes of Wallace fell on him the stranger threw himself on one knee before him with so noble a grace, that the chief was lost in wonder what this beautiful apparition could mean, till the youth, bowing his head, exclaimed, "pardon this intrusion, bravest of men! I come to offer to you my heart, my life! To wash out by your side, in the blood of the enemies of Scotland, the stigma which now dishonors
the name of Bruce!" "And who are you, noble youth? cried Wallace, raising him from the ground, "Surely my prayers are at last answered; and I hear these sentiments from one of Alexander's race!"

"I am indeed of his blood," replied he, "and it must now be my study to prove my descent by deeds worthy of my ancestor. I am Robert Bruce, the eldest son of the Earl of Carrick and Annandale. My father, grieving over the slaughter that his valiant arm has made of his own people, (although till you taught him otherwise, he believed that they fought to maintain the usurpation of an ambitious subject;) walked out in melancholy. I followed him at a distance; and I heard unseen, all that has passed between you and him. He has retired to his tent; and unknown to him I hastened across the Carron to avow my loyalty to virtue, and to declare my determination to live for Scotland, or to die for her; to follow the arms of Sir William Wallace till he plants my father in the throne of his ancestors."

"I take you at your word, brave prince!" replied the Regent, "and this night shall give you an opportunity to redeem to Scotland what your father's sword has this day wrested from her. What I mean to do, must be effected in the course of a few hours. That done, it will be prudent for you to return to the Carrick camp, and there take the most effectual means to persuade your father to throw himself at once into the arms of Scotland. The whole nation will then rally round their king, and as his weapon of war, I shall rejoice to fulfil the commission with which God has intrusted me!" He then briefly unfolded to the eagerly-listening Bruce, (whose aspiring spirit, inflamed by the fervor of youth, and buoyed up by his natural courage, saw the glory alone of the enterprise) an attack which he meant immediately to make on the sleeping camp of Edward, while his victorious troops deemed themselves secure of any chance of disturbance.

He had sent Sir John Graham to Stirling to call out its garrison; and Ker he had dispatched on a similar errand to Dumbarton; and expecting that by this time
the troops would be arrived on the southern extremity of the carse, he threw his plaid over the prince's gay apparel, to conceal him from notice, (for a discovery of his being in the Scottish camp, might endanger the life of his father,) and returning to his men who lay on the northern bank of the river, the Regent ordered one of the young soldiers, who seemed particularly fatigued, to give him his armour, as he had a use for it, and then retire to his repose in the adjoining village. The brave Scot, not being aware that his general meditated another attack, cheerfully acquiesced; and Wallace retiring amongst the trees with his royal companion, Bruce soon covered his splendid haberdress with this rough armour, and placing the Scottish bonnet on his head, put a large stone into his golden helmet, and sunk it in the waters of the Carron. Being thus completely armed, when Wallace put the trusty claymore of his country into his hand he clasped him with a soldier's warm embrace to his heart. — "Now it is," cried he, "that William Wallace lives anew, since he has seen this hour!"

They re-emerged together from the wood, and met Sir John Graham, who had just arrived with five hundred fugitives from Lord Bute's slaughtered division whom he had collected on the Carse. He informed his friend that the Earl of Mar was within half a mile of the Carron, with three thousand men, and that he was joined by the garrison from Dumbarton and other reinforcements to a similar amount. While he yet spoke, a squadron of armed men approached from the Forth side, and Wallace advancing towards them, beheld the Bishop of Dunkeld in his sacerdotal robes at their head, with a corselet on his breast, and instead of his crozier, he carried a drawn sword; "We come to you, champion of Scotland," cried the prelate, "with the prayers and the arms of the church. The swords of the Levites of old smote the enemies of Israel: and in the same faith, that the God of justice will go before us this night, we come to fight for Scotland's liberties."

His followers were the young brethren of the monastery of Cambuskenneth, and other neighboring con-
vents, altogether making a stout and well-appointed legion.

"With this handful," cried Wallace, "heaven-direct ed we shall yet strike our Goliath on the forehead!"

Lord Mar and Lord Lenox now came up: and Wallace, marshalling his train, found that he had nearly ten thousand men. His plan of the attack was immediately given to the different commanders, and placing Bruce with Graham in the van, before he joined them, he retired to the ruins near Dunipacis, to see whether the mourning solitude of Murray had continued uninvaded. The pious youth sat silent and motionless by the side of his dead parent: And Wallace, without arousing the violence of grief by any reference to the sight before him, briefly related his project. Lord Andrew started on his feet; "I will share all the dangers of this night! I shall find comfort in again meeting the foe that has thus bereaved me. This dark mantle," cried he, turning towards the breathless corpse, and throwing his plaid over it, "will shroud thy hallowed remains till I return.—I go where thou wouldst direct me—Oh, my father!" suddenly exclaimed he, in a burst of grief, "the trumpet shall sound, and thou wilt not hear!—But I go to take vengeance for thy blood!" So saying he sprung from the place; and accompanying Wallace to the plain, took his station in the silent but swiftly moving army.

CHAP. X.

The troops of King Edward lay overpowered with wine. Elated with victory, they had drank largely, the royal pavilion setting them the example; for though Edward was temperate, yet to flatter his recovered friends, the inordinate Buchan and Soulis, he had allowed a greater excess that night, than he was accustomed to sanction. The banquet over, every knight retired to his tent, every soldier to his pallet, and a deep sleep lay upon every man. The king himself,
whose many thoughts had long kept waking, now fell into a slumber.

Guards had been placed around the camp, more for military ceremony than with an idea of its being requisite. The strength of Wallace, they believed broken for ever, and that they should have nothing to do next morning, but to chase him into Stirling and take him there. But the spirit of the Regent was not so easily subdued: He ever thought that it was shameful to despair while it was possible to succeed. And now leading his determined followers through the lower grounds of Cumbernauld, he detached half his force under Mar to take the Southron camp in the rear, while he should attack the front, and pierce his way to the royal tent.

With soundless caution the battalion of Mar wound round by the banks of the Forth to reach the point of its destination. And Wallace, proceeding with as noiseless a step, gained the hill which overlooked his sleeping enemies. Each of his men in front, shrouded by a branch, which in his march by Torwood he had torn from the trees, now stood still.—Without this precaution, had any eye looked up, they must have been perceived; but as it was, their figures were so blended with the adjoining thickets, that their appearance might easily be mistaken. As the moon, the signal of the attack, sunk in the horizon, they stole gently down the hill, and scarcely drawing breath, were within a few paces of the first outpost when one of the sentinels starting from his reclining position, suddenly cried "What is that?" "Only the wind amongst the trees;" returned his comrade, "I see their branches waving.—Let me sleep, for Wallace yet lives, and we may have hot work to-morrow." Wallace did live, and the men slept to wake no more; for a Scottish brand was through every Southron heart on the outpost. That done, he threw away his bough, leaped the narrow dyke which lay in front of the camp, and with Bruce and Graham at the head of a thousand men, cautiously proceeded onward to reach the pavilion. At the moment when he should blow his bugle, the divisions he had left with Lennox and Murray and with Lord Mar, were to press forward to gain the same point.
Still all lay in profound repose;—and the dauntless Scots, guided by the lamps which burnt around the royal quarters, reached the tent. Wallace had already laid his hand upon the curtain which was its door when an armed man with a presented pike demanded, "Who comes here?" the Regent's answer laid the interrogator's head at his feet: But the voice had awakened the ever-watchful king; and in one instant perceiving the fate of his guard, he snatched his sword, and calling aloud on his sleeping train, sprung from his couch; and was immediately surrounded by half a score knights, who had started on their feet before Wallace could reach the spot. But short would have been their protection; they fell before his arm and that of Graham, and left a vacant place; for Edward had disappeared. Foreseeing, from the prowess of these midnight invaders, the consequence to his guards, he had made a timely escape by a passage which he cut for himself through the canvass of his tent. Wallace perceived that his prize had escaped his hands; but yet he hoped to drive him altogether from the field; and immediately sounding his bugle, he caught one of the torches from the monarch's table, and setting fire to the adjoining drapery, rushed from its blazing volumes to meet his brave colleagues amongst the disordered lines. Graham and his followers, with fire-brands in their hands, threw conflagration into the camp in a thousand directions, and with the fearful war-cries of their country, seemed to assail the terrified enemy from as many points. Men, half dressed, and unarmed, flew out of their tents, upon the pikes of their enemies; thousands fell without striking a blow; and they who were stationed nearest the out-posts, panic-struck, betook themselves to flight, and scattered themselves in scared throngs over the amazed plains of Linlithgow.

The king in vain sought to rally his men, and to remind them of their late victory. The English alone stood by him; superstition had laid her petrifying hand on all the rest:—The Irish believed that a terrible judgment had fallen upon them for appearing in arms against their sister people; and the Welsh, as they descried the un-likable bishop of Dunkeld issuing from the
mists of the river, and charging on his foaming steed along their flying defiles, could not persuade themselves that Merlin had not arisen to chastise their obedience to the ravager of their country. Every superstitious, every panic fear, took possession of the half intoxicated, half dreaming wretches; and falling in bloody and unresisting heaps all around, it was rather a slaughter than a battle. Opposition seemed abandoned excepting where the King of England stood amongst his brave countrymen, and the faithless Scots who had followed the Cummins to the field, and who now fought with the fury of desperation. But where despair, and the madness of wine were the impulses which impelled his adversaries, Wallace perceived that steadiness would ultimately make them give ground; and Graham having seized some of their war-engines, he directed him to discharge on the Southron phalanx, a shower of those blazing arrows which had wrought such dire effects amongst the Scottish legions.

The camp was now on fire in every direction: and Edward, putting all to the hazard of one decisive blow, ordered his men fiercely to charge the assailants, and to make at once to the point where, by the light of the flaming tents, he could perceive the waving plumes of Wallace. With his ponderous mace held terribly in the air, the king himself bore down to the shock, and breaking through the intervening combatants, assaulted the chief. The might of ten thousand souls seemed then to be in the arm of the Regent of Scotland. The puissant Edward wondered at himself as he shrunk from before his strokes; as he shuddered at the heroic fierceness of a countenance which seemed more than mortal. Was it indeed the Scottish chieftain? or some armed angel that had descended to fight the battles of the oppressed?—Edward trembled: His mace was struck from his hand;—but immediately a glittering faulchion supplied its place, and with recovering presence of mind, and redoubled determination, he renewed the combat.

At this instant, the young Bruce who, in his humble armour, might have been passed by as an enemy to be left to meaner swords, checking the onward speed of
March, pierced him at once through the heart: "Die, thou disgrace to the name of Scot," cried he, "and with thy blood wipe off my stains!" His sword now laid hundreds at his feet; and while the tempest of death blew around, the groans of the dying, the shrieks of the wounded, and the outcries of those who were perishing in the flames, raised such distraction in the king's ranks, and so great a fear in the minds of the Cummin clan, that, breaking from the royal line with horrible yells of dismay, they fled in all directions after their already fugitive allies.

Edward seeing the Earl of March fall, and finding himself wounded in many places, with a backward step received the blows of Wallace; but that determined chief following up his advantage, made a stroke at his head which threw him astounded into the arms of his followers just as Lincoln aimed his dagger at the back of Wallace, and was sent by the valiant arm of Graham a motionless body to the earth. The Southrons ranks closed immediately before their insensible monarch, and a contest more desperate than any that had preceded it, took place. Hosts seemed to fall on both sides; and at last the Southrons, (having stood their ground till Edward was carried far from farther danger,) suddenly wheeling about, fled precipitately towards the east. Wallace pursued them on full charge; and driving them across the Lowlands of Linlithgow; learnt from some prisoners he took, that the earl of Carrick had retreated towards the Lothians as soon as tidings of the attack had reached his camp.

"Now is your time," said Wallace to Bruce, "to rejoin your father. Bring him to Scotland, and a free crown awaits him. Your actions of this night are a pledge to your country of the virtues which will support his throne!"

The young warrior throwing off his rugged hauberk, appeared again in his princely garb; and embracing the Regent, "If a messenger from myself, or from my father," said he, "meet you not at Stirling, you may be sure that some evil has betided us; for, if God speed us, our ambassador shall be there to-morrow night. Meanwhile, farewell!"
Bruce remounted his horse, and spurring over the banks of the Almond, was soon out of sight.

The pursuit Wallace still led; and pouring his troops through Ettrick Forest; (for now the rising sun shone on those thronging auxiliaries from the adjoining counties, which his provident orders had prepared to turn out on the first appearance of this martial chase;) he drove the flying host of England across Tweedale far into Northumberland;—and there checking his triumphant squadrons, returned with abated speed into his own country. Sending off those which belonged to the border castles, he marched leisurely, that his brave soldiers, who had sustained the weight of the battle, might recover their exhausted strength.

At Peebles he was agreeably surprised by the sight of Edwin. Lord Ruthven, though ignorant of the recommenced hostilities of Edward, had been so impatient to resume his duties, that as soon as he was able to move, he set off on his return to Perth. On arriving at Hunting-tower he was told of the treachery of March; that the Regent had beaten the enemy on the banks of the Carron, and was pursuing him through Ettrick Forest into Northumberland. Ruthven was inadequate to the exertion of following the successful troops; but Edwin, rejoicing at this new victory, would not be detained; and crossing the Forth into Mid-Lothian, sped his eager way until the happy moment when he again found himself by the side of his first and dearest friend.

As they continued their route together, Edwin inquired the events of the past time; and heard them related with wonder, horror, and gratitude. Grateful for the preservation of Wallace in all these dreadful scenes of carnage, grateful for the rescue of his country from the very jaws of destruction; for some time he could only clasp his friend's hand with strong emotion fervently and often to his heart. The death of his uncle Bothwell made it tremble within him, at the thought of how much severer might have been his deprivation: At last extricating his powers of speech from the spell of contradictory feelings which bound them up, he said—"But if my uncle Mar, and our brave friend Graham, were in the last conflict; where are they, that
I do not see them share your victory?"—"I hope," returned Wallace, "that we shall rejoin them in safety at Stirling! Our troops parted in the pursuit; and after having sent back the Lowland chieftains, you see I have none with me now but my own particular followers, and our dear Murray with his."

According to the Regent's expectations that he should soon fall in with some of the chasing squadrons, the next morning, on crossing the Bathgate Hills, he met the returning battalions of Lennox and Lord Mar, and also Sir John Graham's. Lord Lennox was thanked by Wallace for his good services; and immediately dispatched to re-occupy his jurisdiction over Dumbarton. But the captains of Mar and of Graham could give no other account of their leaders, than that they last saw them fighting valiantly in the Southron camp; and had since supposed that when the pursuit sounded, they had joined the Regent's squadron. A cold dew fell over the limbs of Wallace at these tidings: He looked on Murray and on Edwin. The expression of the former's face told him what were his fears; but Edwin, ever sanguine, strove to encourage him with the hope that all might yet be well. "They may not have yet returned from the pursuit; and most likely are in the Bishop of Dunkeld's company, as he is not here! Or they may have arrived, and gone into Stirling!"

But these comfortings were soon dispelled by the appearance of Lord Ruthven himself, (who having been apprized of the Regent's approach) came forth to meet him. The pleasure of seeing the Earl so far recovered as to have been enabled to leave Hunting-tower, was checked by the first glance of his face on which was deeply characterized some tale of grief. Edwin thought that it was the recent disasters of Scotland he mourned, and with a cheering voice he exclaimed,—"Courage, my father! our Regent again comes a conqueror! Edward has once more recrossed the plains of Northumberland?"

"Thanks be to God, for that!" replied Ruthven; "but, my dear son, what has not these last conflicts cost our country? Lord Mar is wounded unto death; and lies in a chamber next to the yet unburied corpses.
of Lord Bute and the dauntless Graham."—Wallace turned deadly pale, a mist passed over his eyes, and staggering, he breathlessly supported himself on the arm of Edwin. Murray looked on him; but all was still in his heart: his own beloved father had fallen, and in that stroke fate seemed to have emptied all her quiver.

"Lead me to the spot!" cried Wallace; "shew me where my friends lie; and let me hear the last prayer for Scotland, from the lips of the bravest of her veterans!"

Ruthven turned the head of his horse; and as he rode along, he informed the Regent, that Edwin had not left Hunting-tower for the Forth half an hour, when an express arrived there from Falkirk. By it he learnt, that as soon as the inhabitants of Stirling saw the fire of the Southron camp, they had hastened thither in crowds to enjoy the spectacle. Some, bolder than the rest, entered its deserted confines, (for the retreating squadrons were then flying over the plain,) and amidst the dreadful slaughter-house they thought they distinguished groans. Whether friend or foe, they stooped to render assistance to the sufferer, and soon found it to be Lord Mar. He begged to be carried to some shelter, that he might see his wife and daughter before he died. The people drew him out from under his horse and a mangled heap, where he had lain pierced with wounds and crushed almost to death. He was conveyed to Falkirk as the nearest place, and lodged with the friars in the convent. "A messenger was instantly dispatched to me;" continued Ruthven, "and indifferent to all personal considerations, when so summoned, I set out immediately. I saw my dying brother-in-law. At his request, that others might not suffer, by neglect, what he had endured under the pressure of the slain, the field had been sought for the wounded. Many were conveyed into the neighbouring houses; and the dead were consigned to the earth. Deep has been dug the graves of mingled Scot and English on the banks of the Carron. Many of our fallen nobles, amongst whom was the princely Badenoch, have been conveyed to the cemetery of their ancestors; others are
entombed in the church of Falkirk: But the bodies of Sir John Graham and my brother Bothwell," said he, in a lower tone, "I have retained till you return."—

"You have done right," replied Wallace, and spurring forward, in a few minutes he ascended the hill of Falkirk, and soon after entered the monastery where the Earl of Mar lay.

He stopped before the cell which contained the dying nobleman, and desired the Abbot to apprise the Earl of his arrival. The sound of that voice, whose heart-consoling tones could be matched by none other on earth, penetrated to the ear of his almost insensible friend. Mar started from his pillow, and Wallace, through the half open door, heard him say—"Let him come in, Joanna! All my mortal hopes now hang on him."

Wallace instantly stepped forward, and beheld the veteran stretched on a couch, the image of that death to which he was so rapidly approaching. He hastened towards him; and the dying man, who found friendship, and the hopes which still agitated him, give to his debilitated nerves a momentary revival, astretched forth his arms, and exclaimed,—"Come to me Wallace, my son: the only hope of Scotland, the only human trust of this anxious paternal heart!"

Wallace threw himself on his knees beside him, and taking his hand, pressed it in speechless anguish to his lips; every present grief was then weighing on his soul, and denied him the power of utterance. Lady Mar sat by the pillow of her husband; but she bore no marks of the sorrow which convulsed the frame of Wallace. She looked serious; but her cheek wore its freshest bloom. She spoke not; and the veteran allowed the tears of enfeebled nature to fall on the bent head of his friend. "Mourn not for me;" cried he, "nor think that these are regretful drops. I have died as I have wished, in the field of battle for Scotland. Time must have soon laid my grey hairs ignobly in the grave; and to enter it thus, covered with honourable wounds, is glory;—and it has long been my prayer! But, dearest, most unwearied of friends! Still the tears of mortality will flow, for I leave my children fatherless in this
faithless world—And my Helen! Oh, Wallace, the angel who exposed her precious self through the dangers of that midnight walk, to save Scotland, her father, and his friend, is lost to me! Joanna, tell the rest," said he gasping, "for I cannot."

Wallace turned to Lady Mar with an inquiring look of such wild horror, that she found her tongue cleave to the roof of her mouth, and her complexion faded into the pallidness of his. "Surely," exclaimed he, "there is not to be a wreck of all that is estimable on earth? The Lady Helen is not dead?"—"No," said the Earl, "but—" he could proceed no farther, and Lady Mar forced herself to speak.—"She has fallen into the hands of the enemy. My lord, on being brought to this place, sent for myself and Lady Helen; we obeyed his summons; but in passing by Dunipacis a squadron issued from behind the mound, and putting our attendants to flight, seized Helen. I escaped hither. The reason of this attack was explained an hour afterwards by one of the Southrons, who having been wounded by our escort, and incapacitated from following his comrades, was taken and brought to Falkirk. He said, that Lord Aymer de Valence having been sent by his beset monarch to call Lord Carrick to his assistance, found the Bruce’s camp deserted; but a confidant of his bringing him information that he had overheard some men who were going to bring Lady Helen to Falkirk, he immediately stationed himself in ambuscade behind Dunipacis, and springing out as soon as our cavalcade was in view, seized her. She obtained, the rest were allowed to escape. And, it seems, by what Lord Mar has lately told me, that De Valence loved Helen; hence I cannot doubt that he will have honour enough not to insult the fame of her family, but to make her his wife.”

"God forbid!" ejaculated Mar, holding up his trembling hands, "God forbid that my blood should ever mingle with that of any one of the people who have wrought such woe to Scotland: Swear to me, valiant Wallace, by the virtues of her virgin heart, by your own immaculate honour, that you will rescue my Helen from the power of this Southron lord!"
"So help me Heaven!" answered Wallace, looking steadfastly upwards. A groan burst from the lips of Lady Mar, and her head sunk on the side of the couch.

"What?—Who is that?" exclaimed Mar, starting a little from his pillow. "Believe it your country, Donald!" replied she, "to what do you bind its only defender? Are you not throwing him into the very centre of his enemies, by making him swear to rescue Helen? Think you that De Valence will not foresee a pursuit, and take her into the heart of England? And thither must our Regent follow him!—Oh, my lord, retract your demand! Release Sir William Wallace from a vow that will destroy him!"—"Wallace!" cried the now soul-struck Earl, "What have I done? Has a father's anxiety asked of you amiss? If so, pardon me! But if my daughter also must be sacrificed for Scotland, take her, O God! uncontaminated, and let us meet in heaven! Wallace, I dare not accept your vow!" "But I will fulfil it," cried he. "Let thy paternal heart rest in peace; and by Jesus' help, Lady Helen shall again be in her own country as free from Southron taint, as she is from all mortal sins! De Valence dare not approach her heavenly innocence with violence; and her faithful Scottish heart will never consent to give him a lawful claim to her precious self. Edward's legions are far beyond the borders; but yet I will reach him; for the demands of the morning at Falkirk, are now to be answered in the halls of Stirling."

Lord Ruthven, followed by Edwin and Murray, entered the room. The two nephews held each a hand of their dying uncle in theirs, when Lady Ruthven, who, exhausted with fatigue and anxiety, had retired about an hour before to take some rest, appeared at the door of the apartment. She had been informed of the arrival of the Regent with her son, and she now hastened to give them a sorrowful welcome.—"Ah, my lord!" cried she, as Wallace pressed her matron cheek to his; "this is not as your triumphs are wont to be greeted! You are still a conqueror; and yet death, dreadful death, lies all around us! And our Helen too!" "Shall be restored to you," returned he. "What is yet left for me to do, shall be done; and then——" he paused...
added, “The time is not far distant, Lady Ruthven, when we shall all meet in the realms to which so many of our dearest friends have hastened.”

Edwin with swimming eyes drew towards his master. —“ My uncle would sleep,” said he, “he is exhausted, and will recall us when he awakes from his rest.” The eyes of the veteran were at that moment closed with heavy slumber. And Lady Ruthven remaining with the Countess to watch by him, Wallace led the way, and Ruthven, with the two young men, followed him out of the room.

Lord Loch-awe, with the Bishop of Dunkeld, and other nobles, lay in different cells, pierced with many wounds, but not so grievous as those of Lord Mar.—Wallace visited them all. And having gone through the numerous places in the neighbourhood which were filled with his wounded men, at the glooming of evening he returned to Falkirk. Edwin, he sent forward to inquire after the repose of his uncle; and on re-entering the monastery himself, he requested the abbot who met him, to conduct him to the apartment where lay the remains of Sir John Graham. The father obeyed, and leading him along a dark passage, opened a door and discovered the slain hero lying on a bier covered with a shroud. Two monks sat at his head, with tapers in their hands. Wallace, on entering, waved them to withdraw; they set down the lights, and obeyed.

He stood for some time with clasped hands, looking intently on the body as it lay extended before him. “Graham! Graham!” cried he at last, in a voice of unutterable grief, “dost thou not rise at thy general’s voice? Oh! Is this to be the tidings I am to send to the brave father that intrusted to me his son? Lost in the prime of youth, in the opening of thy renown, is it thus that all which is good is to be martyred by the enemies of Scotland?” He sunk gradually on his knees beside him.—“ And shall I not look once more on that face,” said he, “which ever turned towards mine with looks of faith and love?” The shroud was drawn down by his hand. He started on his feet at the sight. The changing touch of death had altered every feature;
and deepened the paleness of the bloodless corse into an ashy hue. "Where is the countenance of my friend!" cried he, "where the spirit which once moved in beauty and animating light over this face?—Gone; and all I see before me is a mass of moulded clay. Graham! Graham!" cried he, looking upwards, "thou art not here. No more can I recognise my friend in this deserted habitation of thy soul. Thine own proper self, thine immortal spirit, is ascended up above; and there my fond remembrance shall ever seek thee!" Again he knelt; but it was in devotion; a devotion which drew the sting from death, and opened to his view the victory of the Lord of Life over the king of terrors.

Edwin having learnt from his father that Lord Mar still slept, and being told by the Abbot where the Regent was, followed him to the consecrated chamber. On entering, he perceived him kneeling in prayer over the body of his friend. Edwin drew near.—He loved the brave Graham, and he almost adored Wallace. The scene, therefore, smote upon his heart.—He dropped down by the side of the Regent; and throwing his arms around his neck, in a convulsive voice exclaimed, "Our friend is gone—but I yet live, and only in your smiles, my friend and brother!" Wallace strained him to his breast: he was silent for some minutes; and then said, "To every dispensation of God I am resigned, my Edwin. While I bow to this stroke, I acknowledge the blessing I still hold in you and Murray. But, did we not feel these visitations from our Maker, they would not be decreed us. To behold the dead, is the penalty of man for sin; for more pain is it to witness and to occasion death, than for ourselves to die. It is also a lesson which God teaches his sons; and in the moment that he shews us death, he convinces us of immortality. Look on that face, Edwin!" continued he, turning his eyes on the breathless clay. His youthful auditor, awe-struck, and with the tears which were flowing from his eyes, checked by the solemnity of this address, looked as he directed him; "Doth not that inanimate mould of earth testify that nothing less than an immortal spirit could have lit up its marble substance to the life and godlike actions we have seen it perform?"
Edwin shuddered; and Wallace, letting the shroud fall over the face, said, "Never more will I look at it; for it no longer wears the characters of my friend: they are pictured on my soul. And himself, my Edwin, still effulgent in beauty, and glowing with life, looks down on us from heaven!" He rose as he spoke, and opening the door, the monks re-entered; and placing themselves at the head of the bier, chanted forth the vesper requiem. When it was ended, Wallace kissed the crucifix they laid on his friend's breast, and left the cell.

CHAP. XI.

No eye closed that night in the monastery of Falkirk. The Earl of Mar, who awaked about the twelfth hour, sent to call Lord Ruthven, Sir William Wallace, and his nephews, to attend him. As they approached, the priests, who had just anointed his dying head with the sacred unction, drew back. The Countess and Lady Ruthven supported his pillow. He smiled as he heard the advancing steps of those so dear to him. "I send for you," said he, "to give you the blessing of a true Scot and a christian! May all who are here in thy blessed presence, Father of Righteousness," cried he, looking up with a supernatural brightness in his eye; "die as I do, rather than live to see Scotland enslaved! But rather may they live under that liberty, perpetuated, which Wallace has again given to his country: peaceful will then be their last moments on earth, and full of joy their entrance into heaven!" His eyes closed as the concluding word died upon his tongue. Lady Ruthven looked intently on him: she bent her face to feel if he breathed; and then starting, with a feeble cry, fell back in a swoon.

The soul of the veteran Earl was indeed fled. The Countess was taken shrieking out of the apartment: but Wallace, Edwin, and Murray, remained kneeling around the corse. Anthems for the departed were now raised over the body; and the priests throwing over it a cloud of incense, the mourners withdrew, and separated to their chambers.
By day-break next morning, Wallace, who had never slept, met Murray by appointment in the cloisters. The remains of his beloved father had been discovered at Dunipacis by the detachment sent out by the dying Mar to bring in the wounded: and being carried to the convent, Murray now prepared to take them to Bothwell Castle, there to be interred in the cemetery of his ancestors. Wallace who had approved his design, entered with him into the solitary court-yard where the war-carriage stood which was to convey the deceased Earl to Clydesdale. A party of his men brought the sacred corse of their lord from his cell, and laid him on his martial bier. His bed was the sweet heather of Falkirk, spread on the rugged couch by the hands of his son. As Wallace laid the venerable chieftain's sword and helmet on his bier, he covered the whole with a flag which he had taken from the standard of England, seized in the last victory. "Only this shroud is worthy of thy virtues!" cried he, "dying for Scotland, thus let the memorial of her glory, be the witness of thine!"

"Oh! my friend," answered Murray, looking on him with a smile, which beamed the fairer, shining through sorrow, "thy gracious spirit can divest even death of its gloom!—My father yet lives in his fame!"

The solemn procession, with Murray at its head, moved away towards the heights of Clydesdale; and Wallace returned to his chamber. Two hours before noon, he was summoned to the chapel of the monastery to see the Earl of Bute, and his dearer friend, laid in their tombs. With a spirit that did not murmur, he saw the earth closed over both graves: but at Graham's he lingered; and when the large funeral stone shut even the sod that covered him from his eyes,—with his sword's point he drew on the surface these memorable words:

"Mente manuque potens, et Walli fidus Achates,
Conditus hic Gramus, bello interfectus ab Anglis."(s)

While he yet leaned on the stone which gently gave way to the registering pen of friendship, a monk approached him attended by a Scottish youth. Wallace...
turned round at the sound of their steps. "This "young man," said the father, "brings dispatches to the Lord Regent." Wallace rose; and the youth bowing, presented to him a packet.—Approaching the light, he broke the seal, and read to this effect:

"The messenger who takes this is a simple border shepherd; he knows not who gave him the packet; neither is he acquainted that it is of farther importance than to solicit your exertions for the exchange of prisoners in the hands of the Southrons: therefore, when you have read it, dismiss him with what reward you please; but he can bring me no answer.

"My father and myself are in the castle of Durham, and both under an arrest; in which situation we shall remain till our arrival in London renders its sovereign in opinion more secure. You are not less his prisoner than ourselves, though his conqueror, and apparently free. The gold of Edward has found its way into the hearts of your councils. Beware of them who with patriotism in their mouths, are purchased to betray you and their country into the hands of your enemy! Truest, noblest, best of Scots, farewell! I must not write more explicitly."

Wallace closed the packet; and putting his purse into the shepherd's hand, left the chapel. Ruthven met him in the cloisters. He had just returned from Stirling, whither he had gone early in the morning to inform the lords there of the arrival of the Regent.

"When I summoned them to the council-hall," said Ruthven, "and informed them that you had not only defeated Edward on the Carron but had driven him over the borders, and so had gained a double victory over a foreign usurper and domestic traitors; instead of the usual gratulations at such tidings, a low whisper murmured through the hall; and the young Bade-noch rising from his seat, gave utterance to so many invectives against the assassin of his father, as he chose to call you, that I should deem it treason to your sacred person even to repeat them. But, suffice it to say, that out of above five hundred chieftains who were present, not one of those parasites who used to fawn on you a week ago, and make the love of honest men seem
doubtful, now breathes one word for Sir William Wallace. But this ingratitude, vile as it was, I bore with patience, till Badenoch, growing in insolency declared that late last night, Sir Alexander Ramsay had arrived with dispatches from the King of France to the Regent; and that he, assuming to himself, in right of his birth, that dignity, had put Sir Alexander under confinement in the Keep, for having dared to dispute his authority and determination to withhold them altogether from your view."

"I will release Ramsay;" replied Wallace, "and meet these violent men. But it must be alone, my dear lord;" continued he, "you and my chieftains may wait my return at the city gates; but the sword of Edward, if need be, shall defend me against his gold." — As he spoke he laid his hand on the jewelled weapon which hung at his side, and which he had wrested from that monarch in the last conflict.

Aware that this treason aimed at him, would strike his country, unless timely warded off, he took his resolution; and requesting Ruthven not to communicate to any one what had passed, he mounted his horse, and struck into the road to Stirling. He took the plume from his crest, and closing his visor, enveloped himself in his plaid, that as he went along the people might not know him. But at the door of the Keep, casting away his cloak, and unclasping his helmet, he entered the council-hall openly and abruptly. By an instantaneous impulse of respect, which even the base pay to virtue, almost every man arose at his appearance. He bowed to the assembly, and walked with a composed but severe air up to his station, as Regent, at the head of the room. Young Badenoch stood there; and as Wallace approached, he fiercely grasped his sword, and said,—"Proud upstart! Betrayer of my father! set a foot further towards this chair, and the chastisement of every arm in this council shall fall on you for your presumption!"

"It is not in the arms of thousands to put me from my right," replied Wallace, calmly putting forth his hand, and drawing the Regent's chair towards him.

"Will ye bear this?" cried Badenoch, stamping with
his foot, and dashing out his sword; "is the man to exist who thus braves the assembled lords of Scotland?" As he spoke, he made a desperate lunge at him: Wallace caught the blade in his hands, and wrenching it from his intemperate adversary, broke it into shivers, and cast the pieces down at his feet; then turning resolutely towards the chieftains, who stood looking appalled on each other, he said, "I, your duly elected Regent, left you only a few days ago, to repel the enemy, whom the treason of Lord March would have introduced to these very walls. Many brave chieftains followed me: and more, whom I see now, loaded me, as I passed from the gates, with benedictions. The late lord Badenoch stood his ground like a true Scot; but Athol and Buchan deserted to Edward. Young lord," said he, addressing the furious Badenoch, who stood gnashing his teeth in impotent rage, and listening to the inflaming whispers of Macdougal of Lorn; "from their treachery date the fall of your brave father, and the whole of our grievous loss of that day. But the deaths of all I have avenged: more than chief for chief have perish'd in the Southron ranks, and thousands of the meaner sort now swell the banks of Carron. Edward himself fell wounded beneath my arm; and was taken by his flying squadrons, far over the wastes of Northumberland. Thus then have I returned to you, with my duties achieved in a manner worthy of your Regent!—And what means the arrest of my ambassador? what this silence, when the representative of your power is thus insulted to your face?"

"They mean," cried Badenoch, "that my words are the utterance of their sentiments."—"they mean," cried Lorn, "that the prowess of the haughty boaster, whom their intoxicated gratitude has raised from the dust, shall not avail him against the indignation of a nation over which he dares to arrogate a right.

"Mean they what they will," returned Wallace, "they cannot dispossess me of the rights with which the assembled kingdom of Scotland invested me on the plains of Stirling.—And again I demand, by what authority do you and they presume to imprison my offi-
cer, and withhold from me the papers sent by king Philip to the Regent of Scotland?"

"By an authority that we will maintain;" replied Badenoch; "by the right of my royal blood; and by the sword of every brave Scot who spurns at the name of William Wallace!"—"And as a proof that we speak not more than we will act," cried Lorn, making a sign to some of the boldest chieftains; "your are our prisoner!" Several weapons were unsheathed at that moment, and their bearers hurried towards the side of Badenoch and Lorn, who attempted to lay hands on Wallace; but he, drawing the broad sword of Edward, with a sweep of his valiant arm, which made the glittering blade seem a brand of fire, he set his back against the wall, and exclaimed—"He that first makes a stroke at me shall find his death on this Southron steel!—This sword I made the puissant arm of Edward yield to me; and this sword shall defend the Regent of Scotland against his ungrateful countrymen!"

The chieftains who pressed on him, recoiled at these words; but their leaders, Badenoch and Lorn, waved them forward with vehement exhortations:—"Desist, young men!" continued he, "and provoke me not beyond my bearing. In one moment, with a single blast of my bugle, I could surround this building with a band of warriors, who, at the first sight of their chief being thus assaulted, would lay you a breathless corpse at their feet.—Let me pass, then, or abide the consequence!"

"Through my breast you must make your way;" exclaimed Badenoch, "for with my consent you pass not here but upon your bier. What is in the arm of a single man," cried he to the lords, "that ye cannot fall on him at once, and cut him down."

"I would not hurt the son of the virtuous Badenoch;" returned Wallace, "but his life be on your heads," said he, turning to the chieftains, "if one of you point a sword to impede my passage."—"And wilt thou dare it? usurper of my power and honours!" cried Badenoch, "Lorn, stand by your friend:—all here who are true to the Cummin and Macdougal, hem in the tyrant."
Many a traitor hand now drew forth its dagger; and the intemperate Badenoch, drunk with choler and mad ambition, made another violent plunge at Wallace with a sword he had snatched from one of his accomplices. But its metal, less approved than that which Wallace held, flew in splinters on the guard stroke of the Regent, and left Badenoch at his mercy. "Defend me, chieftains, or I am slain!" cried he. But Wallace did not let his hand follow its advantage: with the dignity of his own conscious desert he turned away, and exclaimed while he threw the enraged Lorn from him—"That arm will wither which dares to point its steel at me."—The pressing crowd, struck in astonishment, parted before him as they would have done in the path of a thunderbolt, and, unimpeded, he passed to the door.

That their Regent had entered the Keep, was soon rumoured through the city; and when he appeared from the gate, he was hailed by the acclamations of the people. Again he found his empire in the hearts of the lowly: they whom he had restored to their cottages, knelt to him in the streets, and called for blessings on his name; while they,—Oh! blasting touch of envy!—whom he had restored to castles, and had elevated from a state of vassalage to the power of princes, raised against him that very power, to lay him in the dust.

Now it was, that when surrounded by the grateful citizens of Stirling, whom it would have been as easy for him to have inflamed to the massacre of Badenoch and his council, as to have lifted his bugle to his lips,—that he blew the summons for his chieftains. Every man in the Keep now flew to arms, expecting that Wallace was returning upon them with the host he threatened. In a few minutes the Lord Ruthven with his brave followers entered the inner ballium gate. Wallace smiled proudly as they drew near.—"My lords," said he, "you come to witness the last act of my delegated power! Sir Alexander Scrymgeour, enter into that hall, which was once the seat of council, and tell the violent men who fill it, that for the sake of the peace of Scotland, which I value more than my life, I allow them to stand unpunished of the offence against me.
But the outrage they have committed on the freedom of one of her bravest sons, I will not pardon, unless he be immediately set at liberty: let them deliver to you Sir Alexander Ramsay, and then I permit them to hear my final decision. If they refuse obedience, they are all my prisoners, and but for my pity for their blindness, should perish by the laws."

Scrymgeour, eager to open the prison doors of his friend Ramsay, and little suspecting to what he was calling the insurgents, hastened to obey. Lorn and Badenoch gave him a very rough reception; and uttered such a rebellious defiance of the Regent and his power, that the brave standard-bearer lost all patience, and denounced the immediate deaths of the whole refractory assembly. "The court-yard," cried he, "is armed with thousands of the Regent's followers; his foot therefore is on your necks; obey, or this will be a more grievous day for Scotland than that of Falkirk, for the Castle of Stirling will run with Scottish blood!" Badenoch only became more enraged at this menace; and Scrymgeour sending a messenger privately to tell the result to Wallace. The Regent placed himself at the head of twenty men, and re-entering the Keep, made direct to the warder, and ordering him on pain of death to deliver to him Sir Alexander Ramsay; he was obeyed, and Wallace, with his recovered chieftain, returned to the platform. Scrymgeour soon being apprized that the knight was at liberty, turned to Badenoch, with whom he was still contending in furious argument; and said—"Will you, or will you not attend me to the Regent to hear your final sentence? He of you all," added he, addressing the chieftains, "who in this simple duty disobeys, will receive the severer doom."

Badenoch and Lorn both affected to laugh at this menace, and replied, that they would not for an empire do the usurper the homage of a moment's voluntary attention, but if any of their followers choose to view the mockery, they were at liberty. A very few, and those of the least turbulent spirits, ventured forth: they began to fear that they had embarked in a desperate cause; and by their acquiescence, they were willing to
deprecate the wrath of Wallace, while they should escape exciting the resentment of Badenoch.

When Wallace looked around him, and saw the plain before the Keep, to the ballium wall, filled with armed men and citizens, he mounted an elevated piece of ground which rose a little to the left, and waving his hand in token that he intended to speak, a profound silence took place of the buzz of admiration and gratitude. He then addressed the people by the names of "Brother soldiers! Friends! And am I so to distinguish Scots? Enemies!" At this word, a loud cry of "Perish all who are the enemies of our glorious Regent!" shook the foundation of the Keep to its centre.

Badenoch, believing that the few of his partisans who had ventured out, were falling under the vengeance of Wallace, with a brandished weapon, and followed by the rest, sallied towards the door: but there he stopped, for he saw his friends standing unmolested.

Wallace proceeded, and narrated the hatred that was now poured upon him by a large part of that nobility which had been so eager to invest him with the dignity he then held;—"Though they have broken their oaths," cried he, "I have fulfilled mine! They vowed to me all lawful obedience: I swore to free Scotland or to die. God has enabled me so to do. Every castle in this kingdom is restored to its ancient lord: every fortress is filled with a native garrison: the sea is covered with our ships: and the kingdom, one in itself, sits secure behind her well defended bulwarks. Such have I, through the strength of the Almighty-arm, made Scotland!—Beloved by a grateful people, I could wield half her power to the destruction of the rest, but I would not pluck one stone out of the building I have raised. To-day I deliver up my commission, since its design is accomplished. I resign the regency." As he spoke he took off his helmet, and stood uncovered before the people.

"No, no!" resounded from every lip, "be our prince and king! We will acknowledge no other power, we will obey no other leader!"

Wallace expressed his sense of their attachment, but repeating to them that he had fulfilled the end of
his office by setting them free, he explained that his retaining it was no longer necessary.—"Should I remain your Regent," continued he, "the country would be involved in ruinous dissensions. The majority of your nobles find a vice in the virtue they once extolled; and seeing its power no longer needful, even now seek to destroy my upholders with myself. I therefore remove the cause of contention. I quit the regency, and I bequeath your liberty to the care of your chieftains. But should it be again in danger, remember, that while life breathes in this heart, the spirit of Wallace will be with you still!"

With these words, he descended the mound, and mounted his horse amidst the cries and tears of the populace.—They clung to his garments as he rode along; and the women, with their children in their arms, throwing themselves on their knees in his path, implored him not to leave them to the inroads of a ra\’ager; or to the tyranny of their own lords, who unrestrained by a king or a regent like himself, would soon subvert his good laws, and reign despots over every district in the country. Wallace replied to their entreaties with the language of encouragement; and adding, that he was not their prince, to lawfully maintain a disputed power over the legitimate chieftains of the land, he said, "but a rightful sovereign may yet be yielded to your prayers; and to procure that blessing, daughters of Scotland, night and day invoke the giver of every good and perfect gift."

When Wallace and his weeping train stopped to separate at the foot of Falkirk Hill, he was met by Ker and his brave Lanarkers, who, having heard of what had passed in the citadel, advanced towards him to declare with one voice, that they never would fight under any other commander. "Wherever you are," returned Wallace, "my faithful friends, you shall still obey my word." This assurance quieted their fears that he was going to consign them over to the turbulent lords in the castle. But when he entered the monastery, the opposition that was made to his resignation of the regency, by the Bishop of Dunkeld, Loch-awe, and others, was so vehement, so persuasive, that had not
Wallace been steadily principled not to involve his country in domestic war, he must have yielded, if not to their reasoning, to the affectionate eloquence of their pleading. But seeing the public danger attendant on his provoking the wild ambition of the Cummins and their clamorous adherents; with arguments, which their sober judgment saw conclusive, he at last ended the debate, saying "I have yet to perform my vow to our lamented friend. I shall seek his daughter, and then, my brave companions, you shall hear of me and see me again!"

CHAP. XII.

IT being Lady Ruthven's wish that the remains of her brother should be entombed with his ancestors, preparations were made for the mournful cavalcade to set forth the next morning towards Braemar Castle. The Countess, supposing that Wallace would accompany them, did not object to this proposal, which Lady Ruthven enforced with floods of tears. Had any one seen the two, and been called upon to judge by their deportment, of the relationship in which each lady stood to the deceased, he must have decided that the sister was the widow. Lady Mar, at the moment of her husband's death, had felt a shock, but it was not that of sorrow for her loss: she had long looked forward to this event, as to the seal of her happiness: it was the sight of mortality that appalled her. The man she now doted on, nay, even herself, would one day lie as he—dead! insensible to all earthly joys or pains! but awake, perhaps fearfully awake, to the judgments of another world! This conviction caused her shrieks when she saw him expire. But the impression was evanescent. Every obstacle between her and Wallace, she now believed removed. Her husband was dead: Helen was carried away by a man devotedly enamoured of her, and most probably was at that time his wife. The spectres of conscience passed from her eyes, she no longer thought of death
and judgment; and entirely estranging herself from the bier of her husband, under an excuse that her feelings could not bear the sight, she determined to seclude herself in her own chamber for a day or two, till the freshness of Wallace's grief for his friend should also pass away. But when she heard from the indignant Edwin, of the rebellious conduct of her kinsman, the young Lord Badenoch, and that the consequence was, the Regent's abdication of his dignity, her consternation superseded all caution, and rising from her chair in a horror of disappointment, she commanded Edwin to send Wallace to her. "I will soon humble this proud boy!" exclaimed she, "and let him know, that in opposing the elevation of Sir William Wallace, he treads down his own interest. You are beloved by the Regent, Edwin!" cried she, interrupting herself, and turning to him with one of her most persuasive looks, "teach his enthusiastic heart the true interests of his country!—I am the first woman of the blood of Cummin; and is not that family the most powerful in the kingdom? By the adherence of one branch to Edward, the battle of Falkirk was lost; by the rebellion of another, the Regent of Scotland is obliged to relinquish that dignity! It is in my power, at any moment, to move the whole race to my will: and if Wallace would mingle his blood with theirs, would espouse me, (an overture which the love I bear my country impells me to make,) every nerve would then be strained to promote the elevation of their nearest kinswoman—Wallace would reign in Scotland, and the whole land lie at peace."

Edwin eyed her with astonishment as she spoke. All her late conduct to his cousin Helen, to his uncle, and to Wallace, was now explained; and he saw in her flushed cheek, that it was not the patriot who desired this match, but the enamoured woman.

"You do not answer me?" said she, "Have you any apprehension that Sir William Wallace would reject the hand that would give him a crown? that would dispense happiness to so many thousand people?" "No;" replied he, "I believe, that much as he is devoted to the memory of her whom alone he can ever love; could he purchase true happiness to Scotland by the sacrifice,
he would marry any honest woman who could bring him so blest a dowry. But in your case, my dear aunt, I can see no probability of such a consequence. In the first place, I know that now the virtuous Earl of Badenoch is no more, he neither respects nor fears the Cummins, and that he would scorn even to purchase a crown, or the people's happiness, by any baseness in himself. To rise by their means who will at any time immolate all that is sacred to man, to their caprices and fancied interests, would be unworthy of him; therefore I am sure, that if you wish to marry Sir William Wallace, you must not urge the use he can make of the Cummins, as an argument. He need not stoop to cajole the men he can command. Did he not drive the one half of their clan, with the English host, to seek a shelter from his vengeance? And for them in the citadel; had he chosen to give the word, they would now be all numbered with the dust! He lays down his power, lady; it is not taken from him. Earthly crowns are dross to him who looks for a heavenly one. Therefore, dear aunt, I may hope that you now think it no longer necessary to wound your delicacy by offering him a hand which cannot produce the good you meditate!"

The complexion of the Countess varied a thousand times during this answer:—her reason assented to many parts of it; but the passion she could not acknowledge to her nephew, urged her to persist. "You may be right, my dear Edwin:" replied she, "but still, as there is nothing very repugnant in me, the project is surely worth trying! At any rate, a marriage with me would, by allying your noble friend to every illustrious house in the kingdom, make his interest theirs; and though he disclaims a higher honour, yet they would all unite to maintain him in the regency. In short, I am certain that Scotland will be wrecked when he leaves the helm. And also, as you love your friend; though your young heart is yet unacquainted with the strange inconsistencies of the tenderer passion; allow me to whisper to you, that your friend will never be happy till he again lives in the bosom of domestic affection."—"Ah! but where is he to find it?"—cried Edwin; "what will ever restore his Marion to his arms?"
"I," cried she, "I will be more than ever Marion was to him; for she knew not, O! she could not, the boundless love that fills my heart for him!" Edwin's blushes at this wild declaration, told her that she had betrayed herself. She next attempted to palliate what she would, at this period, have wished to conceal; and covering her face with her hand, she drew several heavy sighs, and then said; "You who love Sir William Wallace, cannot be surprised that all who adore human excellence, should participate the sentiment. How could I see him, the benefactor of my family, the blessing to all Scotland, and not love him?"—"True," replied Edwin, "but not as a wife would love her husband!—Were you not married? And was it possible for you to feel thus when my good uncle lived? So strong a passion cannot have grown in your breast since he died; for love, surely, could not enter the lamenting widow's heart at the moment when her husband lay an unburied corse before her!"—"Edwin!" replied she, "you who never felt the throbs of this tyrant, judge with a severity you will one day regret: when you love yourself, and struggle with a passion that drinks your very life, you will pity Joanna of Mar, and forgive her!"—"I pity you now, aunt;" replied he, "but you bewilder me—I cannot understand the possibility of a virtuous married woman suffering any passion of this kind to get such domination over her, as to cause her one guilty sigh. For guilty must every wish be that militates against the honour of her husband. Surely love comes not in a whirlwind to seize the soul at once; but grows by degrees according to the development of the virtues of the object, and in consequence of the reins we give ourselves in indulging in their contemplation:—and if it be virtue that you love in Sir William Wallace, had you not virtues amounting to a saint in your noble husband?"

The Countess perceived by the remarks of Edwin that he was deeper read in the human heart than she had suspected; that he was neither ignorant of the feelings of the passion, nor of what ought to be its source; and therefore, with a deep blush, she replied—"Think for a moment before you condemn me. I
acknowledge every virtue that your uncle possessed; but, Oh! Edwin! he had frailties that you know not of, frailties that reduced me to be, what the world never saw, the most unhappy of women."—Edwin turned pale at this charge against his uncle, which she enforced with tears; and while he forbore to draw aside the veil which covered the sacred dead, by inquiring what those frailties were, little did he think that the artful woman meant a frailty in which she had equally shared, and the consequences of which had constrained her to become his wife. She proceeded; "I married your uncle when I was a girl, and knew not that I had a heart. I then saw Wallace; his virtues stole me from myself; and I found—In short, Edwin, your uncle was of too advanced an age to sympathize with my younger heart. How could I then defend myself against the more congenial soul of your friend?—He was cold during Mar's life; but he did not repulse me with unkindness; I therefore hope; and do you, my Edwin, gently influence him in my favour, and I will for ever bless you!"—"Aunt," answered he, looking at her attentively; "can you, without displeasure, hear me speak a few, perhaps ungrateful truths?" "Say what you will," said she, trembling; "only be my advocate with the noblest of human beings, and nought can I take amiss."

"I answer you, Lady Mar," resumed he, "with unqualified sincerity, because I love you, and venerate the memory of my uncle, whose frailties, whatever they might be, were visible to you alone. I answer you with sincerity, because I would spare you much future pain, and Sir William Wallace a task that would pierce him to the soul. And as I know his heart, perhaps better than I do my own, I venture to answer for him. You confess that he already knows you love him; that he has received such demonstrations with coldness. Recollect what it is you love him for, and then judge if he could do otherwise. Could he approve affections which a wife transferred to him from her husband, and that husband his friend?"—"Ah! but he is now dead!" interrupted she, "that obstacle is removed." "But the other, which you raised yourself!" replied Edwin; "while a wife, you shewed to Sir William Wallace that
you could not only indulge yourself in wishes inimical to your nuptial faith, but you divulged them to him. Ah! my aunt! what could you look for as the consequence of this? My uncle yet lived; and you threw yourself into the arms of another man! That act, were you youthful as Hebe, and more tender than ever was fabled of the queen of love, I am sure the virtue of Wallace would never pardon. He never could pledge his faith to one whose passions could silence her sense of duty; and did he even love you; he would not, for the empire of the world, repose his honour in your keeping."

"Edwin!" cried she, at last summoning power to speak; for she had sat during the latter part of this address, gasping with unutterable disappointment and rage; and turning on him a lurid look of hate, "are you not afraid to breathe all this to me? I have given you my confidence, and do you abuse it? Do you stab, me when I ask you to heal?"—"No, my dear aunt;" replied he, "I speak the truth to you, ungrateful as it is, to prevent you hearing it in perhaps a more painful form from Wallace himself."—"O! no;" cried she, with contemptuous haughtiness; "he is a man, and he knows how to pardon the excesses of love! Look around you, foolish boy, and see how many of our proudest lords have united their fates with women, who, not only loved them while their husbands lived, but told them so, and left their homes and children to join their lovers! Have not these lovers since married them?—And what is there in me, a princess of the bloods both of the crowns of Scotland and of Norway; a woman who has had the nobles of both kingdoms at her feet, and frowned upon them all; that I should now be contemned?—Is the ingrate for whom alone I ever felt a wish of love, is he to despise me for my passion?—You mistake Edwin; you know not the heart of man."—"Not of the common race of men, perhaps;" replied he, "but certainly that of Sir William Wallace. Purity and he are too sincerely one, for him to allow personal vanity to blind his eyes to the deformity of the passion you describe. And, mean as I am, when compared with him, yet I must aver, that were a married woman
to love me, and not only tell me of it, but seek to excuse her frailty, I should see her contempt of the principles which are the only impregnable bulwarks of innocence, and I should shrink from her, as I would from pollution." "Then you declare yourself my enemy, Edwin?" "No;" replied he, "I speak to you as a son: and if you choose to venture to say to Sir William Wallace, what you have said to me, I shall not even observe on what has past, but leave you, unhappy lady, to the pangs I would have spared you."

He rose.—Lady Mar wrung her hands in a paroxysm of conviction that what he said was true.—"Then, Edwin, I must despair!"—He looked at her with pity: "Could you abhor the dereliction that your soul has thus made from duty, and leave him, (whom your unwidowed wishes now pursue,) to seek you; then I should say that you might be happy: for penitence appeases God, and shall it not find grace with man?"—"Blessed Edwin!" cried she, falling on his neck and kissing him; "whisper but my penitence to Wallace: teach him to think I hate myself. O! make me that in his eyes which you would wish, and I will adore you on my knees!"

The door opened at this moment, and Lord Ruthven entered. The tears she was so profusely shedding on the bosom of his son, he attributed to some conversation she might be holding respecting her deceased lord, and taking her hand, after some words of condolence, he told her that he came to propose her removal on the following morning from the scene of all these horrors. "I, my dear sister," said he, "will attend you as far as Perth. After that, Edwin will be your guard to Braemar; and my Janet shall stay with you there, till time has softened your griefs." Lady Mar looked at him; "And where will be Sir William Wallace?" "He," answered Ruthven, "will be detained here. Some considerations, consequent to his receiving the French dispatches, will hold him some time longer south of the Forth." Lady Mar shook her head doubtfully at this, and reminded him that the chiefs in the citadel had withheld the dispatches.
Lord Ruthven then informed her, that Lord Loch-awe, on hearing the particulars of the transaction in the citadel had, unknown to Wallace, summoned the most powerful of his friends then near Stirling; and attended by them and a large body of armed men, he was carried in a litter to that city. In the same manner he entered the council-hall, and though on that bed of weakness, he threatened the assembly with instant death from his troops without, unless they would consent immediately to swear obedience to Wallace, and to compel Badenoch to give up the French dispatches. Violent tumults were the consequence; but Loch-awe's litter being guarded by a double rank of armed chieftains; and the Keep being hemmed round with men prepared to put to the sword every Scot hostile to the proposition of their lord, the insurgents at last complied; and used some coercion to force Badenoch to relinquish the royal packet. This triumph effected, Loch-awe and his train returned to the monastery. Wallace was resolute not to re-assume the dignity he had resigned, and the re-acknowledgment of which had been extorted from the lords in the citadel. "No;" said he, to Loch-awe; "it is indeed time that I should sink into shades where I cannot be found, since I am become a word of contention amongst my country-men."

Finding him not to be shaken, his friends urged him no farther; and Ruthven saying, that on opening the French dispatches, he had found matter in them to prevent his seeking the repose of Braemar;—"Then we will wait for him here," cried the Countess.—"That would be wrong;" answered Ruthven, "it is against the sacred laws of the church to detain the remains of the dead so long from their grave. He will doubtless visit Mar; therefore to-morrow I advise your leaving Falkirk."

Edwin seconded this council; and her ladyship, fearful of making further opposition, silently acquiesced. But her spirit was not so quiescent.—At night when she went to her cell, her ever-wakeful fancy aroused a thousand images of alarm. She remembered the vow that Wallace had made to seek Helen.
He had already given up the Regency, which might have detained him from such a pursuit; and might not a passion, softer than indignation against the ungrateful chieftains, have dictated this act?" "Oh! should he love Helen, what is there not to fear!" cried she; but should he meet her, I am undone!" Thus, racked by jealousy, and goaded on by contradicting expectations, she rose from her bed, and paced the room in wild disorder. At one moment she strained her mind to recollect any kind look or word from him; and her imagination glowed with anticipated delight. Again she thought of his address to Helen, of his vow in her favour, and she was driven to despair. All Edwin's kind entreaties were forgotten, passion was alone awake; and forgetful of her rank and sex, and of her situation, she determined to see, and appeal to the heart of Wallace for the last time. She knew that he slept in an apartment at the other end of the monastery: and that she might pass thither unobserved, she glided into an opposite cell where lay a sick monk, and stealing away his cloak, threw it over her, and hurried along the cloisters.

The chapel doors were open; and as she passed, she saw the bier of her lord awaiting the hour of its removal, and surrounded by the priests who were singing anthems for the repose of his soul. No tender recollections, no remorse, knocked at the heart of Lady Mar as she sped along. Abandoned to all but thoughts of Wallace, she felt not that she had a soul; she acknowledged not that she had a hope but what centered in the smiles of the man she was hastening to find.

His door was fastened with a latch: she gently opened it, and found herself in a moment in his chamber. She trembled;—she scarcely breathed; she approached his bed, but he was not there.—Disappointment palsied her heart, and she sunk upon a chair, almost fainting. "Am I betrayed?" said she, to herself; "Has that youthful hypocrite warned him hence?" And then again she thought: "But how should Edwin guess that I should venture here? O, no; my cruel stars alone are against me!"

She now determined to await his return; and nearly
three hours she passed there, enduring all the torments of guilt and misery; but he appeared not. At last, hearing the matin-bell, she started from her seat, fearful that at the dawn of morning some one of her maids might, by entering her apartment, miss her. She, therefore, with a most unwilling mind, rose to leave the shrine of her idolatry; and once more crossing the cloisters, as she was drawing towards the chapel, she saw Wallace himself issue from the door, supporting on his bosom the fainting head of Lady Ruthven. Edwin followed them. Lady Mar pulled her cowl over her face, and withdrew behind a pillar. “Ah!” thought she, “absenting myself from my duty I fled from thee!” She listened with breathless attention to what might be said.

Lord Ruthven met them at that instant. “The exhaustion of this night’s watching by the bier of her brother,” said Wallace, “has worn out your gentle lady: we supported her through the whole of these sad vigils, but at last she sunk.” What Ruthven said in reply, as he took his wife in his arms, the Countess could not hear: but Wallace answered, “I have not seen her.” “I left her late in the evening, drowned in tears,” replied Ruthven, in a more elevated tone; “and therefore I suppose that she in secret offers those prayers for her husband, which my tender Janet pours over his grave!”

“Such tears,” replied Wallace, “are heaven’s own balm. I know they purify the heart whence they flow. And the prayers we breathe for those we love, unite our souls the closer to theirs. Look up, dear Lady Ruthven,” said he, as she began to revive; “look up, and hear how you may yet on earth retain the society of your beloved brother! Even by seeking his spirit at the footstool of God. ’Tis thus I live, sister of my most venerated friend! My soul is ever on the wing for heaven,—in banquets, as in the solitary hour; in joy, as in sorrow. For I know where my treasure lives—in the bosom of her God! So believe of your brother: and there, with prayer and thanksgiving, our rejoicing spirits shall meet those we love!”

“Wallace! Wallace!” cried Lady Ruthven, looking
on his animated countenance with wondering rapture; "and art thou a man and a soldier? Oh! rather say, an angel, lent us here a little while to teach us to live and die!" A glowing blush passed over the pale but benign cheek of Wallace. "I am a soldier of him who was indeed brought into the world to shew us by his life and death, how to be virtuous and happy. Know me by my life to be his follower, and David himself wore not a more glorious title!"

Lady Mar, while she contemplated the matchless form before her, exclaimed to herself, "Why was it animated by as faultless a soul!—Oh! Wallace! wert thou less excellent, I might hope—but hell is in my heart and heaven in thine!" She tore her eyes from a view which blasted while it charmed her, and rushed from the cloisters.

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CHAP. XIII.

The sun rose as the funeral procession of the Earl of Mar moved from before the gates of the monastery at Falkirk. Lord Ruthven and Edwin mounted their horses. The maids of the two ladies led them forth towards the litters which were to convey them so long a journey. Lady Ruthven came first, and Wallace placed her tenderly in her carriage. The Countess next appeared, clad from head to foot in the deep weeds of her widowhood. Her child followed in the arms of its nurse. At sight of the innocent babe whom he had so often seen pressed to the fond bosom of the father he was now following to his grave, tears rushed into the eyes of Wallace. Lady Mar at that moment lifted her veil, and meeting his commiserating look, applied it to herself, and with a flush of joy sunk her head upon the shoulder of her maid. Wallace advanced to her respectfully, and handing her to her vehicle, urged her to cherish life for the sake of her child. She threw herself back in violent agitation on her pillow, and Wallace deeming the presence of her babe the surest comforter, after blessing it with all the fervor of its father's
friend, laid it by her side. At that moment, before he had relinquished it, she bent her face upon his hands, and bathing them with her tears, in a stifled voice said, "Oh! Wallace, remember me!" Lord Ruthven rode up to bid adieu to his friend, and the litters moved on. Wallace promised that both he and Edwin should hear of him in the course of a few days; and affectionately grasping the hand of the latter, bade him farewell.

Hear of him they should, but not see him; for it was his determination to set off that night for Durham, where he was informed that Edward with the remains of his army now lay, and joined by his young queen, meant to sojourn till his wounds were healed. Wallace believed that his presence in Scotland could be no longer serviceable, and might engender continual intestine divisions; he would therefore seek to fulfil his vow to Mar, (for he thought it probable that Helen might be carried to the English court), and then attempt an interview with young Bruce, to learn how far he had succeeded in persuading his father to leave the vassalage of Edward, and to resume the sceptre of his ancestors.

To effect his plan without hinderance, immediately on the disappearance of the cavalcade, he retired to his apartment, and addressed a letter to Lord Ruthven, telling him that he was going on an expedition which, he trusted in heaven, would prove beneficial to his country; but as it was an enterprise of rashness, he would not load his soul with making any one his companion; and therefore he begged Lord Ruthven to teach his friends so to consider a flight, which they might otherwise deem unkind.

All the brother was in his letter to Edwin; conjuring him to prove his affection for his friend, by quietly abiding at home till they should meet again in Scotland.

Another epistle he wrote to Andrew Murray, now Lord Bothwell: addressing him as the first chieftain who with him had struck a blow for Scotland, and as his dear friend and brother soldier, he confided to his care the valiant troop which had followed him from Lanark;—"Tell them," said he, "that in obeying you, they still serve with me: they perform their duty to
Scotland, at home—I, abroad: our aim is the same; and we shall meet again at the happy consummation of our labours."

These letters he inclosed in one to Scrymgeour, with orders to dispatch two of them according to their directions; but that to Murray, Scrymgeour was himself, at the head of the Lanarkers, to take to that nobleman, who would explain to him his farther wishes.

At the glooming of evening Wallace left the monastery, and at the door, put his packet into the hand of the porter to deliver to Scrymgeour when he should appear there at his usual hour. As the chief meant to assume a minstrel's garb that he might travel the country unrecognised as its once adored Regent, he took his way towards a cave in Torwood, where he had, at noon, deposited his means of disguise. When arrived there, he disarmed himself of all but his sword, dirk, and breastplate; he covered his tartan gambeson with a minstrel's cassock; and staining his bright complexion with the juice of a berry, concealed his brighter locks beneath a close bonnet. Being thus completely equipped, he threw his harp over his shoulder; and having first, in that deep solitude where no eye beheld, no ear heard him, but that of God, invoked a blessing on his enterprise; with a buoyant spirit, rejoicing in the power in whose light he moved, he went forth, and under the sweet serenity of a summer night, pursued his way along the broom-clad hills of Muiravenside.

All lay in profound rest.—Not a human creature crossed his path till the carol of the lark summoned the husbandman to his rural toil, and spread the thomy hills and daisied pastures with herds and flocks. As the lowing of cattle descending to the water, and the bleating of sheep hailing the morning beam, came on every breeze, and mingled with the joyous voices of their herdsmen calling to each other from afar; as all met the ear of Wallace, his conscious heart could not but whisper—"I have been the happy instrument to effect this! I have restored every man to his paternal fields! I have filled all these honest breasts with gladness!"

He stopped at a little moss-covered cabin on a burn.
side beneath Craig Castle in Mid-Lothian, and was hospitably entertained by the simple inhabitants. Wallace repaid their kindness with a few ballads which he sang accompanied by his harp. As he gave the last notes of King Arthur's Death in Glory, the worthy cottar raised his head from the spade on which he leaned, and asked whether he could not sing about the present glory of Scotland? "Our renowned Wallace," said he, "is worth King Arthur and all the knights of his round table; for he not only conquers for us in war, but establishes us in happy peace. Who, like him of all our great captains, took such care of the poor, as to give them not only the bread that sustaineth the temporal, but that which supports the eternal life? Sing us then his praises, minstrel, and tarry with us days instead of hours." The wife and the children, who clung around their melodious visitant, joined in this request; but Wallace rising, with a saddened smile said, "I cannot sing what you require: but you may oblige Sir William Wallace, if you will take a letter from him, of which I am the bearer, to Lord Dundaff at Berwick. I have been seeking for a faithful Scot to whom I could intrust it, and now I have found one. It is to reveal to the noble Dundaff, the death of his gallant son, for whom all Scotland must mourn to its latest generations."

The honest shepherd gladly accepted this mission; and his wife, loading their guest's scrip with her choicest fruits and cakes, accompanied him, followed by the children, to the bottom of the hill.

In this manner, sitting at the board of the lowly, and sleeping beneath the thatched roof, did Wallace pursue his way through Tweeuale and Ettrick Forest, till he reached the Cheviots. From every lip he heard his own praises; heard them with redoubled satisfaction, for he could have no suspicion of their sincerity, as they were uttered to a poor minstrel, and by persons without expectation that their expressions of gratitude would ever reach the Regent's ear.

It was the sabbath-day when he mounted the Cheviots. He stood on one of their summits, and leaning on his harp, contemplated the fertile dales he left be-
The gay villagers in their best attires, were thronging to their churches, while the aged, too infirm for the walk, were sitting cheerfully in the sun at their cottage doors, adoring their Almighty Benefactor in the sublimer temple of the universe. All spoke of security and happiness. "Thus I leave you, beloved Scotland! And may I, on my return over these hills, still behold thy sons and daughters rejoicing in the heaven-bestowed peace of their land!"

Having descended into Northumberland, his well-replenished scrip was his only provider; and when it was exhausted, he purchased food from the peasantry. He would not accept the hospitality of a country which he had so lately trodden down as an enemy. Here he heard his name mentioned with terror as well as admiration. While many related circumstances of misery to which the ravaging of their lands had reduced them, all concurred in speaking highly of the moderation with which the Scottish leader treated his conquests.

Late in the evening Wallace arrived at the north side of the river that surrounds the episcopal city of Durham. He crossed Elvet Bridge,—His minstrel garb (it being a privileged character) prevented his being stopped by the guard at the gate; but as he entered under the porch, a horse that was going through started at his abrupt appearance. Its rider suddenly exclaimed, "Fool, thou dost not see Sir William Wallace?" Then turning to the object of the animal's alarm, he called out: "Harper, you frighten my horse: draw back till I pass." Wallace, not displeased to find that the terror of him was so great amongst the enemies of Scotland, that they even addressed their animals as if they shared their dread; stood out of the way, and saw the speaker to be a young Southron knight, who now with difficulty kept his seat on the restive beast. Making a desperate plunge, it would have thrown him, had not Wallace put forth his hand and seized the bridle. By his assistance, the horse was soothed; and the young lord thanking him for his services, told him, that as a reward, if he chose, he would introduce him to play before the queen, who that day held a grand feast at the bishop's palace: Wallace, who thought it probable...
that he might either see or hear tidings of Lady Helen in this assembly, and most likely find easier access to Bruce than he could otherwise do, gladly accepted the offer. Accordingly the knight, who was Sir Piers Gaveston, the son of a brave Gascon nobleman who had joined the king of England's party, ordered the minstrel to follow him. He turned his horse towards the city, and Wallace obeying, was conducted through the gates of the citadel to the palace within its walls.

On entering the banqueting hall, he was placed by the knight in the musician's gallery, there to await his summons to her majesty. The entertainment being spread, the room was soon full of guests; and the queen was led in by the haughty bishop of the see, the king being too ill of his wounds to allow of his joining so large a company. The beauties of the lovely sister of Philip le Bel seemed to fill the gaze and hearts of all the by-standers, and none appeared to remember that Edward was absent. Wallace hardly glanced on her youthful charms: his eyes roamed from side to side in quest of a fairer, a dearer object; the captive daughter of his dead friend! But Helen was not there, neither was De Valence; but Buchan, Athol, and Soulis sat near the royal Margaret in all the pomp of feudal grandeur, but sullen and revengeful; for the defeat on the Carron had obscured the victory of Falkirk, and instead of their having presented Edward to his young queen as the conqueror of Scotland, she had found him and them fugitives in the Castle of Durham.

As soon as the royal band had finished their grand pieces, Gaveston pressed forward towards the queen, and told her that he had presumed to introduce a travelling minstrel into the gallery, hoping that she would order him to perform for her amusement, as he could sing legends from the descent of the Romans to the victories of Edward I. With all the eagerness of her age in quest of novelties, she commanded that he should be immediately brought to her.

Gaveston having presented him, Wallace bowed with the respect due to her sex and dignity, and to the esteem in which he held her royal brother. Margaret desired him to place his harp before her, and begin to
sing. As he knelt on one knee and struck its sounding chords, she stopped him by the inquiry of whence he came? "From the north country," was his reply. "Were you ever in Scotland? asked she. "Often."

The young lords crowded round to hear this dialogue between majesty and lowliness. She smiled, and turning to the nobles, said, "Do not accuse me of disloyalty either to my king or my husband; but I have a curiosity to ask another question." "Nothing your majesty wishes to know," said Bishop Beck, "can be amiss." "Then tell me," cried she, "(for you wandering minstrels see all the great, good or bad, else how could you make songs about them?) did you ever meet Sir William Wallace in your travels?" "I have, madam." "Pray tell me what he is like! for you will probably be unprejudiced; and that is what I can hardly expect in this case, from any of these brave lords." Wallace, wishing to avoid further questioning on this subject, replied, "I have never seen him so distinctly, as to be able to prove any right to your majesty's opinion of my judgment." "Cannot you sing me some ballad about him?" inquired she, laughing, "and if you are a little poetical in your praise, I will excuse you, as my royal father thinks he would have shewn bright in a fairer cause." "My songs are dedicated to glory set in the grave;" returned Wallace, "therefore Sir William Wallace's faults or virtues will not be sung by me." "Then he is a very young man, I suppose," for you are not very old, and yet you talk of not surviving him. I was in hopes," cried she, addressing Beck; "that my lord the king would have brought this Wallace to have supped with me here; but for once rebellion overcame its master."

Beck made some reply which Wallace did not hear; and the queen again turning to him, said, "My good minstrel, we French ladies are very fond of beauty; and you will not a little reconcile me to these northern realms, if you will tell me whether he is any thing like as handsome as any one of the gay knights with whom you see me surrounded?" Wallace smiled, and replied, "The beauty of Sir William Wallace lies in a strong arm and a tender heart; and if these be charms in the
eyes of female goodness, he may hope not to be quite an object of abhorrence to the sister of Philip of France!" The minstrel bowed as he spoke, and the young queen laughing again, said, "I wish not to come within the influence of either. But sing me some Scottish legend, and I will promise, wherever I see the knight, to treat him with all the courtesy due from a daughter of France."

Wallace again struck the chords of his harp; and with a voice whose full and melodious tones rolled round the vast concave of the hall, he sang the triumphs of Reuther (w). The queen, as he sang, fixed her eyes upon him; and when he ended, she turned and said to Gaveston, "If the voice of this man had been Wallace's trumpet, I should not now wonder at the discomfiture of England. He almost tempted me from my allegiance, as the warlike animation of his notes seemed to charge the flying Southrons." Speaking, she rose, and presenting a jewelled ring to the minstrel, left the apartment.

The lords crowded out after her; and the musicians coming down from the gallery, seated themselves with much rude jollity to regale on the remnants of the feast. Wallace, who had before discovered the senachie (r) of Bruce, by the arms on his coat, gladly saw him drawing towards him. He came to invite the stranger minstrel to partake of their fare. Wallace did not appear to decline it; and as the court bard seemed rather devoted to the pleasures of wine, he found it not difficult to draw from him what he wanted to know. He learnt that young Bruce was still in the castle under arrest; "and," added the man, "I shall feel no little mortification to be obliged, in the course of half an hour, to relinquish these festivities for the gloomy duties of his apartment."

This was precisely the point to which Wallace had wished to lead him; and pleading fatigue, he offered to supply the senachie's place in the earl's chamber. The half-intoxicated bard accepted the proposition with eagerness; and as the shades of night had long closed in, he conducted his illustrious substitute through some vaulted passages which led from the palace to the
large round tower (w) of the castle; informing him, as they went, that he was to sleep in a recess adjoining to Bruce's room; but that he was to continue playing there till the last vesper bell from the abbey in the neighbourhood should give the signal for his laying aside the harp. By that time Bruce would be fallen asleep, and he might then lie down on the pallet in the recess.

All this Wallace promised punctually to obey; and being conducted by the senachie up a spiral staircase, was left in the little anti-room. The chief drew the cowl of his minstrel cloak over his face, and set his harp before him in order to play. He could see through its strings that a group of knights were in earnest conversation at the farther end of the apartment, but they spoke so low that he could not hear what was said. One of the party turned round, and the lamp which hung from the middle of the roof shedding its rays upon his face, discovered him to be the brave Earl of Gloucester, whom Wallace had taken and released at Berwick. Another, the same light shewed to be Percy, Earl of Northumberland. Wallace found the strangeness of his situation. He, the conqueror of Edward, to have been singing as a mendicant in his halls: and having given laws to the two great men before him, he now sat in their view as unobserved as unfear'd by them! Their figures concealed that of Bruce: but at last, when all rose together, he heard Gloucester say in rather an elevated voice, "Keep up your spirits.—This envy of your base countrymen will recoil upon themselves. It cannot be long before King Edward discovers the motives of their accusations, and his noble nature will acquit you accordingly."

"My acquittal," replied Bruce in a firm tone, "will not restore what Edward's late injustice has rifled from me: and, as that is the case, I am willing to abide by the test of my own actions, and by them to open the door of my freedom. Your king may depend on it," added he, with a sarcastic smile, "that I am not a man to be influenced against the right. Where I owe duty, I will pay it to the uttermost farthing."

Percy, who did not apprehend the true meaning of this speech, immediately answered, "I believe you,
and so must all the world: for did you not give brave proofs of it in bearing arms against the triumphant Sir William Wallace?" "I did indeed give proofs of it," returned Bruce, "which I hope the world will one day know, by bearing arms against the usurper of my country's rights! And in defiance of injustice and treason, before men and angels I swear," cried he, "to perform my duty to the end; and to retrieve to honour, the insulted, the degraded name of Bruce!"

The two earls fell a little back before the vehement action which accompanied this burst from the soul of Bruce; and Wallace caught a glimpse of his youthful form, which stood pre-eminent in patriotic virtue, between the Southron lords: his fine countenance glowed, and his brave spirit seemed to emanate in light from every part of his body. "My prince and brother!" exclaimed Wallace to himself, ready to rush forward and throw himself at his feet, or into his arms.

Gloucester, as little as Northumberland, comprehending his ambiguous declaration, replied, "Let not your heart, my brave friend, burn too hotly against the king for this arrest. He will be the more urgent to obliterate by kindness this injustice, when he understands the aims of the Cummins. I have myself felt his wrath; and as it was misplaced, who is there in England more favoured by Edward, than Ralph de Monthermer? My case will be yours. Good night, Bruce.—May kind angels give you propitious dreams, to repeat the augury of your true friends!" Percy at the same time shook hands with the young earl, and the two Southron nobles left the room together.

Wallace could now take a more leisurely survey of Bruce. He no longer wore the gay embroidered acqueton; his tunic was black velvet; and all the rest of his garments accorded with the same mourning hue. Soon after the lords quitted him, the buoyant elasticity of his figure which before seemed ready to rise from the earth, so was his soul elevated by his sublime resolves, gave way to melancholy retrospections; and he threw himself into a chair, with his hands clasped upon his knee and his eyes fixed in musing gaze upon the floor. It was now that Wallace touched the strings of
his harp. The *Death of CuthuUin* rolled over the sounding strings: but Bruce heard as though he heard them not; they soothed his mood, without his perceiving what it was that calmed, yet deepened the saddening thoughts which possessed him. His posture remained the same; and sigh after sigh gave the only responses to the strains of the bard.

Wallace grew impatient for the chimes of that vesperrbell which, by assuring Bruce’s attendants that he was gone to rest, would secure from interruption the conference he meditated. Two servants entered.—Bruce, scarcely looking up, bade them withdraw, for he should not need their attendance; he did not know when he should go to bed; and he desired to be no further disturbed. The men obeyed; and Wallace immediately changing the melancholy strain of his harp, struck the chords to the proud triumph he had played in the hall. Not one note of either piece had he yet sung to Bruce; but when he came to the passage in the latter, appropriated to these lines:

"Arise, glory of Albin, from thy cloud,
And shine upon thine own!"

He could not forbear giving the words voice.—Bruce started from his seat. He looked towards the minstrel, and walked the room in great disorder of mind. The pealing sound of the harp, and his own mental confusion, prevented his distinguishing that it was not the voice of his senachie. The words alone, he heard; and they seemed a call which his heart panted to obey. The hand of Wallace paused upon the instrument. He looked around to see that all observation was indeed at a distance. Not that he dreaded any thing for himself; for his magnanimous mind, courageous from infancy, by a natural instinct had never known personal fear: but anxious that he should not precipitate Bruce into useless danger, he first satisfied himself that all was safe; and then, as the young earl sat in a paroxysm of emotions occasioned by reflections too racking to be borne with equanimity, (for they carried self-blame along with them; or rather a blame on his father, which pierced him to the heart,) Wallace slowly advanced from the recess. The agitated Bruce accidentally raising his
head, to his surprise beheld a man in a minstrel's garb, who was much too tall to be his senachie, and who approached him, he thought, with a caution that portended treachery. He sprang on his feet, and caught his sword from the table; and at the moment, when perhaps his voice, by alarming the attendants that slept in the next room, might have surrounded him with danger, Wallace threw off his cowl. Bruce stood gazing on him, stiffened with astonishment. Wallace, in a low voice exclaimed, "Do you not know me, my prince?" Bruce, without speaking, threw his arms about his neck. He was silent as he hung on him, but his tears flowed: he had much to say, but excess of emotion rendered it unutterable. Wallace, as he returned the fond embrace of friendship, said, "How is it that I not only see you a close prisoner, but in these weeds?" Bruce, at last forcing himself to articulate, answered, "I have known misery in all its forms, since we parted; but I have not yet power to name my grief of griefs, while I tremble at the peril to which you have exposed yourself by seeking me: the vanquisher of Edward, the man who snatched Scotland from his grasp, were he known to be within these walls, would be a prize for which the boiling revenge of the tyrant would give half his kingdom! Think then, my friend, how I must shudder at this daring. I am surrounded by spies; and should you be discovered, Robert Bruce will then have the curses of his country added to the judgments which already have fallen on his head." As he spoke, they sat down together on the couch, and he continued; "Before I can answer your questions, tell me what immediate cause could bring you to seek the alien Bruce in prison, and by what stratagem you came in this disguise into my apartment? Tell me the last, that I may judge, by the means of your present safety."

Wallace briefly related the events which sent him from Scotland, his rencontre with Piers Gaveston, and his arrangement with the senachie. To the first part of the narrative, Bruce listened with indignation. "I knew," exclaimed he, "from the boasting of Athol and Buchan, that they had left in Scotland some dregs of their own refractory spirits; but I could not have
guessed that envy had so far obliterated gratitude in
the hearts of my countrymen, that so many could be
persuaded to follow the pernicious counsels of the
Cummins' emissaries. The wolves have now driven
the shepherd from the fold," cried he, "and the sheep
will soon be devoured! Fatal was the hour for Scot-
land and your friend, when you yielded to the voice of
faction, and relinquished the power that would have
finally given the nation peace!"

Wallace then recapitulated his reasons for having re-
frained from enforcing the obedience of the young
Lord Badenoch and his adherents, and for abdicating a
dignity which he could no longer maintain without
shedding the blood of the misguided men who opposed
him. Bruce acknowledged the wisdom of this con-
duct; and then proceeded to animadvert on the cha-
racters of the Cummins. He told Wallace that he had
met the two sons of the late Lord Badenoch in Guienne;
that James, who now pretended such resentment of his
father's death, was ever a rebellious son. John, who
yet remained in France, was of a less violent temper;
"But" added the prince, "I have been taught to be-
lieve, by one who will never counsel me more, that all
the Cummins, male and female, would be ready at any
time to sacrifice earth and heaven to their ambition. It
is to Buchan and Athol that I owe my prolonged con-
finement; and to them I may date the premature death
of my dear father."

The start of Wallace declared his shock at this in-
formation. "How?" exclaimed he, "The Earl of Carrick
dead? Fell, fell assassins of their country!" The
swelling emotions of his soul would not allow him
to proceed, and Bruce resumed—"It is for him I wear
these sable garments, poor emblems of the mournings
of my soul; mournings, not so much for his loss, (and
that is grievous as ever son bore;) but because he lived
not to let the world know what he really was; he lived
not to bring into light his long obscured honour!—
There, there Wallace, is the bitterness of this cup to
me!"

"But can you not sweeten it, my dear prince," cried
Wallace, "by retrieving all that he was cut off from
redeeming? To open the way to you, I came."—"And I will enter where you point;" returned Bruce, "but heavy is my woe, that, knowing the same spirit was in my father's bosom, he should be torn from the opportunity to make it manifest: O! Wallace, that he should be made to lie down in a dishonoured grave! Had he lived, my friend, he would have brightened that name which rumour has sullied; and I should have doubly gloried in wearing the name which he had rendered so worthy of being coupled with the kingly title. Noble was he in soul; but he fell amidst a race of men whose art was equal to their venality, and he became their dupe. Betrayed by friendship, he sunk into the snare; for he had no dishonour in his own breast, to warn him of what might be the vill'any of others. He believed the cajoling speeches of Edward; who, on the first offence of Baliol, had promised to place my father on the throne. Month after month passed away, and the engagement was unperformed. The disturbances on the continent seemed to his confiding nature a sufficient excuse for the various delays; and he waited in quiet expectation, till your name, my friend, rose glorious in Scotland. My father and myself were then in Guienne. Edward persuaded him that you affected the crown; and he returned with that deceiver, to draw his sword for once against his people and their ambitious idol, as he believed you to be; and grievous has been the expiation of that fatal hour!—Your conference with him on the banks of the Carron, opened his eyes: he saw what his credulity had made Scotland suffer; what a wreck he had made of his own fame; and, from that moment, he resolved to follow another course. But the habit of trusting the affection of Edward, inclined him rather to remonstrate with him on his rights, than immediately to take up arms against him: yet resolved not to strike a second blow on his people, when you as-sailed the Southron camp, he fled. I, on quitting you, came up with him in Mid-Lothian; and he, never having missed me from the camp, concluded that I appeared thus late from having kept in the rear of my di- vision."

Bruce now proceeded to narrate to Wallace the par.
ticulars of his father's meeting with the king at Durham. Instead of that monarch receiving the Earl of Carrick with his wonted familiar welcome, he turned coldly from him when he approached; and suffered him to take his usual seat at the royal table, without deigning him the slightest notice. Bruce was absent from the banquet, having determined never again to mingle in social communion with the man whom he was now to regard as the usurper of his rights. The absence of his heroic eye, which had once before looked the insolent voluptuary Buchan into his inherent insignificance, emboldened the audacity of this enemy of his house, and, supported by Athol on the one side, and Soulis on the other, he seized a pause in the conversation, (that he might draw the attention of all present on the disgrace of the Earl of Carrick,) and said, with affected carelessness.—"My lord, to-day you dine with clean hands; but the last time I saw you at meat, you eat your own blood!" The Earl of Carrick turned on him a look, which asked him to explain. Lord Buchan laughed, and continued; "When we last met at table, was it not at supper in his majesty's tent, after the victory at Falkirk? You were then red from the slaughter of those people to whom, I understand, you now give the fondling appellation of sons! When you recognised the relationship, it was not probable that we should again see your hands in their brave livery; and their present pallid hue convinces more than myself of the truth of the information." (x)

"And I," cried Edward, rising on the couch to which his wounds confined him, "that I have discovered a traitor!—You fled, Lord Carrick, at the first attack which the Scots made on my camp, and you drew thousands after you. I know you too well to believe that cowardice dictated the motion. It was treachery, accursed treachery to your friend and king; and you shall feel the weight of his displeasure!"—"To this hour, King Edward," replied the Earl, starting from his chair, "I have been more faithful to you, than to my country or my God! I heard, saw, and believed, only what you determined; and I became your slave; your vile, oppressed slave!—The victim of your arti-
—How often have you, preceding your Scottish battles, promised, were they successful, that you would restore me to the crown of my ancestors! I believed you; and I engaged all who yet acknowledged the influence of Bruce, to support your cause in Scotland. Was not this your promise, to allure me to the field of Falkirk? And when I had covered myself, as the Lord Buchan says, with the blood of my children; when I asked my friend for the crown I had served for, what was his answer? Have I nought to do but to win kingdoms to give to you? Thus, then, did a king, a friend, break his often repeated word! What wonder then that I should feel the indignation of a prince and a friend, and leave him to defenders whom he seemed more highly to approve? But of treachery, what have I shewn? Rather confidence, King Edward; and the confidence that was awakened in the fields of Palestine, brought me hither, to remonstrate with you to allow me to resume my rights, when I might otherwise, by throwing myself into the arms of my people, have demanded them at the head of a victorious army!"

Edward, who had been prepared by the Cummins to discredit all that Carrick might say in his defence, turned with a look of contempt towards him, and said, "You have been persuaded to act like a madman; and as such characters, both yourself and your son shall be used, till I have leisure to consider any rational evidence you may in future have to offer in your defence." "And is this the manner, King Edward, that you treat your friend?"—"The vassal," replied Edward, "who presumes upon the condescension of his prince, and acts as if he really were his equal, ought to meet the punishment due to such arrogance. You saved my life on the walls of Acre; but you owed that duty to the son of your liege lord. In the fervour of youth, I inconsiderately rewarded you with my friendship; and the return is treason." As he concluded, he turned from the Earl of Carrick, and a guard immediately seizing him, took him to the Keep of the castle.

His son who had been sought in the Carrick quarters, and laid under an arrest, met his father in the guard chamber. Carrick could not speak, but motioning to be
conducted to the place appointed for his prison, the men with equal silence led him through a range of apartments which occupied the middle story, and stopping in the farthest, left him there with his son. Bruce, who was not so much surprised at his own arrest, as at that of his father, beheld all in speechless astonishment until the guards withdrew; and then seeing Lord Carrick with a changing countenance throw himself on the bed, (for it was in his sleeping room that they had left him;) he exclaimed, "What is the meaning of this, my dear father? Has any charge against me, brought suspicion on you?"—"No, Robert, no;" replied the earl, "it is I who have brought you into this prison, and into disgrace; disgrace with all the world for having tacitly surrendered my birth-right to the invader of my country. Honest men abhor, villains treat me with contumely. And he for whom I incurred all this, because I would not, when my eyes were opened to my sin, again embrace my hands in the blood of my country, Edward thrusts me from him! You are implicated in my crime; and for not joining the Southrons to repel the Scots from the royal camp, we are both prisoners."

"Then," replied Bruce, "he shall feel that you have a son who has courage to be what he suspects; and, from this hour, I proclaim eternal enmity to the betrayer of my father; to the ingratitude who embraced you, to destroy!"

The indignation of the youthful prince wrought him up to so vehement a declaration of resolute and immediate hostility, that Lord Carrick was obliged to give his transports way; but when he saw that his son had exhausted his denunciations, though not the determined purposes of his soul; for as he trod the room with a step which seemed to shake the foundation on which he moved with the power of his mighty mind, Carrick gazed on him with pride, yet grief, and sighing heavily, called him to approach him. "Come to me, my Robert!" said he, "and hear and abide by the last injunctions of your father; for, from this bed I shall never rise more. A too late sense of the injuries which I have joined in inflicting on the people I was born to protect, and the ingratitude of him for whom I have offended my God.
and wronged my country, have broken my heart. I shall die, Robert, but you will avenge me!"—"May God so prosper me!" cried Bruce, raising his arms to heaven. Carrick resumed: "Attend to me, my dear and brave son, and do not mistake the nature of my last wish. Do not allow the perhaps too forcible word I have used, to hurry you into any personal revenge on Edward. Let him live to feel and to regret the outrages he has committed on the peace and honour of his too faithful friend. Pierce him on the side of his ambition; there he is vulnerable; and there you will heal while you wound. This is my revenge, dear Robert, that you may one day have his life in your power, and that in memory of what I now say, you will spare it. When I am gone, think not of private resentment. Let your aim be the recovery of the kingdom which Edward rifled from your fathers. Join the virtuous and triumphant Wallace, as soon as you can make your escape from these walls. Tell him of my remorse, of my fate, and be guided wholly by his counsels. To insure the success of this enterprise, my son; a success, to which I look as the only means to redeem the name I have lost, and to inspire my separated spirit with courage to meet the free-born souls of my ancestors; urge not your own destruction by any premature disclosure of your resolutions. For my sake, and for your country's, suppress your resentment; threaten not the King of England; provoke not the unworthy Scottish lords who have gained his ear; but bury all in your own bosom till you can join Wallace, and by his arm and your own, seat yourself firmly in the throne of your fathers. That moment will sufficiently avenge me on Edward!—and in that moment, Robert, or at least as soon as circumstances will allow, let the English ground which will then hold my body, give up its dead! Remove me to a Scottish grave: and standing over my ashes, proclaim to them who might have been my people, that for every evil I suffered to fall on Scotland, I have since felt answering pangs, and that dying, I beg their forgiveness, and bequeath them my best blessing, my virtuous son, to reign in my stead!"

These injunctions to assert his own honour and that
of his father, were readily sworn to by Bruce, but he could not so easily be made to quell the imperious indignation which was precipitating him to immediate and loud revenge. The dying earl trembled before the overwhelming passion of his son’s wrath and grief. Treated with outrage and contumely, he saw his father stricken to the earth before him, and he could not bear to hear of any temporizing with his murderers. But all this tempest of the soul, the wisdom-inspired arguments of the earl at last becalmed, but did not subdue. He convinced his son’s reason, by shewing him that caution would ensure the blow; and that his aim could only be effected by remaining silent till he could publish his father’s honour, evidenced by his own heroism.

“Do this,” added Carrick, “and I shall live fair in the memories of men. But be violent, threaten Edward from these walls, menace the wretches who have trodden on the grey hairs of their prince, and your voice will be heard no more: this ground will drink your blood, and blind-judging infamy will for ever after point to our obscure graves!”

Such persuasives at last prevailed with Bruce; and next day, having written the few hasty lines which Wallace received at Falkirk, he intrusted them to his senachie, who was a Scot and loved his country, to convey safely to Scotland. He obeyed by means of a youth, who having stolen from Annandale to see a brother amongst Bruce’s followers, had now asked leave to return. The senachie granted him permission, provided he would faithfully and secretly deliver a packet into the hands of the Lord Regent. This the young man executed with fidelity.

Shortly after it was dispatched, the prophecy of Lord Carrick was verified: he was seized in the night with violent spasms, and died in the arms of his son.

When Bruce related these particulars, his grief and indignation became so violent, that Wallace was obliged to enforce the dying injunctions of the father he so vehemently deplored, to moderate the delirium of his soul. “Ah!” exclaimed the young earl, “I have indeed needed some friend to save me from myself, some one to reconcile me to the Robert Bruce who has so long
slept in the fatal delusions which poisoned his father and laid him low! Oh! Wallace! at times I am mad. I know not whether this forbearance be not cowardice. I doubt my father meant what he spoke, that he did not yet seek to preserve the life of his son at the expense of his honour, and I have been ready to precipitate myself on the steel of Edward, so that he should but meet the point of mine!"

Bruce then added, that in his more rational meditations, it was his design to have attempted an escape some time in the course of the two following days; for, that he understood a deputation of English barons seeking a ratification of their charter, were to arrive in Durham on the morrow: the bustle attendant on their business, would, he hoped, draw attention from him, and afford him the opportunity he sought. "Then," continued he, "I should have made directly to Stirling; and had not Providence conducted you to me, I might have unconsciously thrown myself in the midst of enemies. James Cummin is too ambitious to have allowed my life to have passed unattempted."

Whilst he was yet speaking the door of the chamber burst open, and Bruce's two attendants rushed into the room with looks aghast. Bruce and Wallace started on their feet and laid their hands on their swords. But instead of any thing hostile appearing behind the servants, the inebriated figure of the senachie staggered forward. The men, hardly awake, stood staring and trembling and looking from the senachie to Wallace; at last one, extricating his terror-struck tongue and falling on his knees, exclaimed, "Oh! blessed St. Andrew! is this the senachie and his wraith."(5) Bruce perceived the mistake of his servants; and explaining to them that a travelling minstrel had obliged the senachie by performing his duty, he bade them retire to rest and think no more of their alarm.

The intoxicated bard threw himself without ceremony on his pallet in the recess, and the servants, though convinced, still shaking with the effects of their fright, almost with tears entreated to be allowed to bring their heather beds into their lord's chamber. To deny them was impossible; and all further converse
with Wallace that night being put an end to, a couch was laid for him in an interior apartment, and with a grateful pressure of the hands in which their hearts silently embraced, they separated to repose.

CHAP. XIV.

The second matin-bell had sounded from the abbey before the eyes of Wallace opened from the deep sleep which had sealed them. A bath soon refreshed him from every toil; and having renewed the stain on his face and hands with the juice of the nut which he carried about him, and once more covered his martial figure and golden hair with the minstrel's cassock and cowl, he rejoined his friend. Bruce had previously affected to consider the senachie as much disordered by his last night's excess; and ordering him to keep from his presence for at least a day, desired that the travelling minstrel should be sent to him, when he rose, to supply his place.

The table was spread when Wallace entered, and several servants were in attendance. Bruce, at sight of his friend hastily rose and would have embraced him, so did his comforted heart spring forward to meet him; but before these people it would have been more than imprudent; and hailing him with only one of his love-beaming looks, he made a sign to him to sit down at another board near to his own. While he eat, to remove all suspicion from the attendants, (some of whom were spies of Edward's, as well as his own servants;) he discourse with Wallace on subjects relative to northern literature; and repeated to him, with bursts of admiration, many passages apposite to his own heroic sentiments, from Ossian, and other favourite bards of Scotland.

The repast was just finished; and Wallace, to maintain his assumed character while the servants were removing the table, was tuning his harp, when the Earl of Gloucester entered the room. The earl told Bruce that after much searching over the castle for the north-
On this being intimated to Gloucester, he rather chose to come himself to demand the harper of his friend, than to subject him to perhaps the insolence of any of the royal servants. The king desired to hear him sing the triumph with which he had so much pleased the queen. Bruce turned pale at this message, and was opening his mouth to utter a denial, when Wallace, who read in his countenance what he was going to say, and aware of the consequences, immediately spoke, “If my Lord Bruce will grant permission, I should wish to comply with the King of England’s request.”—“Minstrel!” replied Bruce, casting on him a powerful expression of what was passing in his mind; “you know not, perhaps, that the King of England is at enmity with me, and cannot mean well to any that has been my guest or servant! The Earl of Gloucester will excuse your attendance in the presence.”

“Not for my life, or your minstrel’s!” replied the earl, “the king would suspect some mystery; and perhaps this innocent man might fall into peril. But as it is, his majesty merely wishes to hear him play and sing, and I pledge you my head, he shall return in safety.”

Further opposition would only have courted danger; and Bruce, with as good a grace as he could assume, gave his consent; and a page, who followed Gloucester, taking up the harp, Wallace, with a glance at his friend which spoke the fearless mind with which he ventured into the power of his enemy, accompanied Gloucester out of the room.

The earl moved swiftly forward; and leading him through a double line of guards, the folding doors of the royal apartment were thrown open by two knights in waiting; and Wallace found himself in the presence. The king lay, perforated with the wounds which Wallace’s own hand had given him, upon a couch overhung with a crimson velvet canopy, whose long golden fringes swept the floor. His crown stood on a cushion at his head; and his queen, the blooming Margaret of France, sat,
full of smiles, at his feet. The young Countess of Gloucester occupied the seat at her side.

The countess, who from indisposition had not been at court the preceding day, fixed her eyes on the minstrel as he advanced into the middle of the room where the page, by Gloucester's orders, planted the harp. She observed the manner of his obeisance to the king and queen, and to herself; and the queen whispering her with a smile, said as he took his station at the harp, "Have your British troubadours usually such an air as that? Am I right; or am I wrong?"—"Quite right;" replied the countess in as low a voice; "I suppose he has sung of kings and heroes so long, that he cannot help assuming their step and demeanor!"—"But how did he come by those eyes, I wonder?" answered the queen; "If singing of Reuther's beamy gaze has so richly endowed him, I must, by getting him to teach me his art, warble myself into a complexion as fair as any northern beauty!" "But then his must not be the subject of your song," whispered the countess with a laugh, "for methinks it is rather of the Ethiop hue!"

During this short dialogue, which was heard by none but the two ladies, Edward was speaking with Gloucester, and Wallace leaned upon his harp.

"That is enough," said the king to his son-in-law, "now let me hear him play."

"The earl gave the word, and Wallace striking the chords with the master hand of genius, called forth such strains, and uttered such tunes from his divinely modulated voice that the king listened with wonder, and the queen and countess scarcely allowed themselves to breathe. He sung the parting of Reuther and his bride, and their souls seemed to pant upon his notes; but he changed his measure, and their bosoms heaved with the enthusiasm which spoke from his lips and hand, for he urged the hero to battle, he described the conflict, he mourned the slain, he sung the glorious triumph:—as the last sweep of the harp rolled its lofty diapasm on the ear of the king, the monarch deigned to pronounce him unequalled in his art. Excess of delight so agitated the more delicate frames of the ladies, that while they poured their encomiums
on the minstrel, they wiped the glistening tears from their cheeks, and the queen approaching him, laid her hand upon the harp and touching the strings with a light finger, said with a sweet smile—"You must remain with the king's musicians, and teach me how to charm as you do!" Wallace replied to this innocent speech with a smile as sweet as her own, and a bow.

The countess now drew near. Though not much older than the youthful queen, (being Edward's eldest daughter,) she had been married twice; and being therefore more acquainted with the proprieties of life, her compliments were uttered in a form more befitting her rank and the supposed quality of the man to whom the queen continued to pour forth her unrestrained praises.

Edward desired Gloucester to bring the minstrel closer to him. Wallace approached the royal couch. Edward looked at him from head to foot before he spoke. Wallace bore this eagle gaze with an undisturbed countenance: he neither withdrew his eye from the king, nor did he allow a conqueror's fire to emit from its glance.

"Who are you?" at length demanded Edward, who, surprised at the noble mien and unabashed carriage of the minstrel, had conceived some suspicions of his quality. Wallace saw what was passing in the king's mind, and by frankness determined to uproot all doubt, mildly, but fearlessly answered, "A Scot." "Indeed said the king, satisfied that no incendiary would thus dare to proclaim himself: "And how durst you, being of that rebel nation, venture into my court? Feared you not that you would have fallen a sacrifice to my indignation against the mad leader who is hurrying you all to destruction?" "I fear nothing on earth." Replied Wallace. "This garb is privileged; none who respect the law dare commit violence on a minstrel; and against them who have no law but their own wills, I have this weapon to defend me." As Wallace spoke, he pointed to a dirk which stuck in his girdle. "You are a bold man, and an honest man, I believe," replied the king, "and as my queen desires
it, I order your enrolment in my travelling train of musicians. You may leave the presence."

"Then follow me to my apartment," cried the queen. "Countess, you will accompany me to see me take my first lesson."

The page took up the harp, and Wallace bowing his head to the king, was conducted by Gloucester to the anti-room of the queen's apartments. The earl there told him that he was returning to his majesty, but that when the queen dismissed him, his page would shew him the way back to Lord Carrick.

The royal Margaret herself opened the door, so eager was she to admit her teacher, and placing herself at the harp, she attempted a pathetic passage of the Triumph, which had particularly struck her, but she was wrong. Wallace was asked to set her right, he obeyed. She was quick, he clear in his explanations, and in less than an half hour, he made her play the whole of that movement in a manner that surprised and entranced her. "Why, minstrel," cried she, taking her hand from the instrument and looking him up in the face, "either your harp is enchanted, or you are a magician; for I have studied three long years to play the lute, and could never bring forth any tone that did not make me ready to stop my own ears. And now, countess," cried she, again running over a few bars, "did you ever hear any thing so delightful?"

"I suppose," returned the Countess, that all your former instructors have been dunces, and "that this Scot alone knows the art they pretended to teach."

"Do you hear what the countess says?" exclaimed she, affecting to whisper Wallace, "she will not allow of any spiritual agency in my wonderfully awakened talent; and if you can contradict her, do, for I want very much to believe in fairies, magicians, and all the enchanting world!"

Wallace, with a respectful smile, answered, "I know of no spirit that has interposed in your majesty's favour, but that of your own genius, and it is more potent in its effect than the agency of all fairy-land." The queen looked at him very gravely, and said, "If you really think that there are no such things as fairies
and enchantments, for so your words would imply, then every body in your country must have genius; for they seem to be excellent in every thing.—Your warriors are so peerlessly brave; all, excepting these Scottish lords, who are such favourites with the king! I wonder what he can see in their uncouth faces, or find in their rough indelicate conversation to admire. If it had not been for their besetting my gracious Edward, I am sure he never would have suspected any ill of the noble Bruce!"—"Queen Margaret!" cried the Countess of Gloucester, giving her a look of respectful reprehension; "had not the minstrel better retire?" The queen blushed, and recollected that she was giving too free a vent to her sentiments; but she would not suffer Wallace to withdraw.

"I have yet to ask you," resumed she, "as the warriors of Scotland are so resistless, and their minstrels so perfect in their art, whether all the ladies are as dazzlingly beautiful as the Lady Helen Mar?"

The eagerness with which Wallace grasped at any tidings of her who was so great an object of his enterprise, at once disturbed the composure of his air; and had the penetrating eyes of the countess been then directed towards him she might have drawn some dangerous conclusions from the start he gave at the mention of her name, and from the heightened colour which in spite of his exertions to suppress all evident emotion, maintained its station on his cheek. "But perhaps you have never seen her?" added the queen. Wallace replied, neither denying nor affirming her question, "I have heard many praise her beauty, but more her virtues."—"Well, I am sorry," continued her majesty, "since you sing so sweetly of female charms, that you have not seen this wonder of Scottish ladies; you have now little chance of that good fortune, for Earl De Valence has taken her abroad, intending to marry her amidst the state with which my lord has invested him." "Is it to Guienne, he has taken her?" inquired Wallace, "Yes." replied the queen, rather pleased than offended at the minstrel's ignorance of court ceremony, in thus familiarly presuming to put a
question to her; "while so near Scotland he could
not win her to forget her native country and her fath-
er's danger, who it seems was dying of his wounds
when De Valence carried her away. And to prevent
bloodshed between the earl and Soulis, who is also
madly in love with her, my ever gracious Edward gave
the English lord a high post in Guienne, and thither
they are gone."

Before Wallace could answer this, and some remark
which the queen laughingly added to her information,
the countess thought it proper to give her gay mother-
in-law a more decisive reminder of decorum, and rising,
she whispered something which covered the youthful
Margaret with blushes. Her majesty rose directly, and
pushing away the harp, said, "You may leave the room,"
and turning her back to Wallace, she walked away
through an opposite door.

CHAP. XV.

WALLACE had hardly recounted the particulars of
his royal visit to Bruce, (who had anxiously awaited his
return, and received him with open arms,) when the
page, who had attended him during his interview with
the queen, again appeared, and presenting him with a
silk handkerchief curiously coiled up, said that he brought
it from her majesty, who supposed it was his, as she
found it in the room where he had been playing the
harp. Wallace was going to say that it did not belong
to him, when Bruce, seeing more in this than his friend
did, gave him a look that directed him to take the hand-
kercchief. Wallace, without a word, obeyed, and the
boy withdrew.

Bruce smiled, "There is more in that handkerchief
than silk, my friend! queens send not these embassies
on trifling errands." While Bruce spoke, Wallace
unwrapped it. "I told you so!" cried he, with a frank
archness playing over his before pensive features, and
pointing at the slip of emblazoned vellum which was now
unfolded, "shall I look aside while you peruse it?"
Look on it, my dear prince," replied Wallace, "for in trifles, as well as things of moment, I will have but one soul with you." The vellum was then opened, and these words presented themselves.

"Presume not on this condescension. This injunction may be necessary, for the noble lady who was present at our interview, tells me that the men of this island are very presuming. But you must redeem the character of your countrymen, and not transgress on a courtesy that only means to say, I did not leave you this morning so abruptly out of unkindness. I write this, because, always having the countess with me, I shall not even dare to whisper it in her presence. Be always faithful and respectful, minstrel, and you shall ever find an indulgent mistress.

"A page will call for you when your attendance is desired."

Wallace and Bruce looked on each other with no little surprise at the contents of this billet. Bruce spoke first, "Had you vanity, my friend, this letter from so lovely and innocent a creature, might be a gratification; but in our case, the sentiment it breathes is full of danger. She knows not the secret power that impelled her to write this, but we do. And I fear it will point an attention to you which may produce effects ruinous to our projects."—"Then," answered Wallace, "our alternative is to escape it, by getting away this very night. And as you persevere in your resolution not to enter Scotland unaccompanied by me, and will share my attempt to rescue Lady Helen Mar, we must direct our course immediately to the continent."

"We shall be the more secure under a disguise," returned Bruce, "I can furnish ourselves with priests' garments, for I have in my possession the wardrobe of the confessor who followed my father's fortunes, and who, since his death, has shut himself up in the abbey of St. Cuthbert to pass the remainder of his life in prayer over his remains."

It was then settled between the friends that when it became dark they should dress themselves in the confessor's robes, and by means of the queen's signet which she had given to Wallace at the banquet, pass the guard,
as priests who had entered by some other gate, and were come from shriving her majesty. Once without the confines of the city, they would make swift progress southward to the first sea port, there to embark for France, well aware that the moment they were missed suspicion would direct pursuit towards, the borders of Scotland.

In these arrangements, and in planning their future movements in Guienne in relation to the rescue of Helen, they passed several hours, and were only interrupted by the arrival of a lute from the queen for her minstrel to tune. Wallace obeyed, and returning it by the page who brought it, congratulated himself that it was not accompanied by any new summons; and continuing to discourse with Bruce on the past, present, and to come, their souls grew more closely entwined as they more intimately recognised their kindred natures, and time moved on unmarked till the shadows of evening deepened into night.

"Now is our hour," cried Bruce, starting on his feet, "go you into that room, and array yourself in the confessor's robes, while I call my servants to dispense with their usual nightly attendance. In a few minutes I will follow you."—Wallace, with determination, and hope before him, gladly obeyed. At this instant the Earl of Gloucester suddenly entered, and looking round the room with a disturbed countenance, abruptly said, "Where is the minstrel?"—"Why?" answered Bruce, with an alarm which he in vain tried to repress from shewing itself in his face. Gloucester advanced close to him, "Is any one within hearing?"—"No one." "Then," replied the earl, "his life is in danger. He is suspected to be not what he seems; and, I am sorry to add, to have presumed to breathe wishes to the queen which are of a nature to insure a mortal punishment."

Bruce was so confounded with this stoppage of all their plans, and at the imminent peril of Wallace, that he could not speak. Gloucester proceeded, "My dear Bruce, from the circumstance of his being with you, I cannot but suppose that you know more of him than you think proper to disclose. Whoever he may be, whether he came from France, or really from Scotland
as he says, his life is now threatened: and for your sake I come to warn you that his guilt is discovered. A double guard is now set round the Keep, so no visible means are left for him to escape."

"Then what will become of him?" exclaimed Bruce in wild consternation, and forgetting all caution in dismay for his friend, "am I to see the bravest of men, the saviour of my country, butchered before my eyes by a tyrant?—I may die, Gloucester, in his defence, but I will never behold him fall!"

Gloucester stood aghast at this disclosure. He came to accuse the friend of Bruce, that Bruce might be prepared to clear himself of connivance with so treasonable a crime; but now that he found this friend to be Wallace, the preserver of his own life, the restorer of his honour at Berwick, he immediately resolved to give him freedom. "Bruce," cried he, "when I recollect the figure and deportment of this minstrel, I am surprised that in spite of his disguise I did not recognise the invincible Regent of Scotland; but now I know him, he shall find that generosity is not confined to his own breast. Give me your word that you will not attempt to escape the arrest in which you are now held, until the court leaves Durham, and I will instantly find a way to conduct your friend in safety from the castle." "I pledge you my word of honour," cried Bruce; "nay, I would swear it to you, noble Gloucester, if an oath were necessary, that before suspicion should fall on your head, I would die in chains. A child may keep me prisoner in Durham, when you release my friend."—"He saved me at Berwick," replied Gloucester, "and I am anxious to repay the debt I owe. If he be near, explain what has happened in as few words as possible, for we must not delay a moment, as I left a council with the enraged king, settling what secret death would be horrible enough for such a traitor to die."—"When he is safe," answered Bruce, "I will attest his innocence to you; meanwhile, rely on my faith, that you are giving liberty to a guiltless man."

Bruce hastened to Wallace, who had just completed his disguise. He briefly related what had past; and received for answer, that he would not leave his prince...
to the revenge of the tyrant. But Bruce, urging that the escape of the one could alone secure that of the other, implored him not to persist in refusing his offered safety, but to make direct for Guienne. "I will rejoin you," added he, "when the court leaves Durham; that is my hour of escape; and wherever De Valence is, there we will rendezvous. Before Lady Helen's prison, we will meet to set her free."

Wallace had hardly assented to this, when a tumultuous noise broke the silence of the court-yard; and the next moment they heard the great iron doors of the Keep thrown back on their hinges, and the clangor of arms and many voices in the hall. "You are lost!" exclaimed Bruce, with a cry of despair; "but we will die together!"—At that instant Gloucester hastened into the room: "They are quicker than I thought!" cried he, "but follow me.—Bruce remain where you are:—be bold, deny you know any thing of where the minstrel passes the night, and all will be well." As he spoke, the feet of them who were come to seize Wallace, already sounded in the adjoining apartment. Gloucester turned into a short gallery, flew across it holding the Scottish hero firmly by the hand, and pulling the shaft of a stone pillar from under its capital, and apparent adhesion to the wall, let himself and his companion into a passage excavated in the shell of the building. The huge column closed after them by a spring, into its former situation; and the silent pair descended by a very long flight of stone steps to a square dungeon without any apparent outlet; but the earl found one by raising a flat stone marked with an elevated cross, and again they penetrated lower into the bosom of the earth by a gradually declining path till they found themselves on level ground. "This," said Gloucester, for the first time speaking since he commenced the escape, "is a vaulted passage which reaches in a direct line to Fincklay Abby. (c) It was discovered to me ten years ago, by my uncle, the then abbot of that monastery. He explored it with me, to satisfy my curiosity; I having previously engaged never to betray the secret, as he told me that none but the Bishop of Durham, and the Abbot of Fincklay,
were ever made acquainted with its existence. Since my coming hither this time, (which was as escort to the young queen, not to bear arms against Scotland;) I one day took it into my head to revisit this recess; and happily for the gratitude I owe to you, I found all as I had left it in my uncle's lifetime. Without any breach of my truth to the abbot (for to do good, being the first law of God, it supersedes all other engagements;) I lay similar injunctions of secrecy upon you, both for the sake of my word to the dead, and my honour with Edward, whose wrath would fall upon me in the most fearful shapes should he ever know that I delivered his vanquisher as well as my own, out of his hands. But, noble Wallace, though the enemy of my king's ambition, you are the friend of mankind. You were my benefactor, and I should deserve the rack could I suffer one hair of your head to fall with violence to the ground."

Wallace, with answering frankness, declared his sense of the earl's generous gratitude; and earnestly commended the young Bruce to his watchful friendship. "The brave impetuosity of his mind," continued Wallace, "at times overthrows his prudence, and leaves him exposed to dangers which a little virtuous caution might avoid. Dissimulation is a baseness that I should shudder at seeing him practice: but when the flood of indignation swells his bosom, then tell him that I conjure him, on the life of his dearest wishes, to be silent! The storm which threatens him will blow over; and the power who guides through perils those who trust in it, will ordain that we shall meet again!"

Gloucester replied, "What you say, I will repeat to Bruce.—I know his claims. I am too sensible how my royal father-in-law has trampled on his rights; and should I ever see him restored to the throne of his ancestors, I could not but acknowledge the hand of heaven in the event. Without any treason to my own king, I might then rejoice in the restitution made to yours, as I now would not do any thing to impede your course; for, in letting justice have its way, I obey the King of Kings. I should not even have bound our friend to remain a prisoner during Edward's sojourn
at Durham, were I not certain, that from my acknowledged attachment to him, (should he escape at present,) my enemies would persuade the king that I had effected his release. The result would be my disgrace; and a broken heart to her who has raised me by her generous love, from the rank of a private gentleman, to that of a prince."

Gloucester then informed Wallace, that about an hour before he came to alarm Bruce for his safety, he was summoned by Edward to attend him immediately. When he obeyed, he found Soulis standing by the royal couch, while his majesty was talking with violence. At sight of Gloucester he beckoned him to advance, and striking his hand fiercely on a packet he held, he exclaimed, "Here, my son, behold the record of your father's shame! Of a king of England dishonoured by a slave!" As he spoke, he dashed the packet from him. Gloucester took it up. Soulis answered, "Not a slave, my lord and king: can you not see through the ill-adapted disguise, the figure and mien of nobility? He is some foreign lover of your bride's, come—" "Enough!" interrupted the king, "I know I am dishonoured; but the villain shall die.—Read the letter, Gloucester, and say what shall be my revenge!"

Gloucester opened the vellum, and read in the queen's hand.

"Gentle minstrel! My lady countess tells me I must not see you again. Were you old or ugly, as most bards are, I might, she says; but being young, it is not for a queen to smile upon one of your calling. She bade me remember that when I smiled, you smiled too; and that you asked me questions unbecoming your degree.—Pray do not do this any more; though I see no harm in it, and used to smile as I liked when I was in France. Oh! if it were not for those I love best who are now in England, I wish I were there again! and you would go with me, gentle minstrel, would you not? And you would teach me to sing so sweetly! I would then never talk with you, but always speak in song: how pretty that would be; and then we should be from under the eyes of this harsh countess. My ladies in France would let you come in, and stay as long with
me as I pleased. But as I cannot go back again I will make myself as happy here as I can, and in spite of the countess, who rules me more as if she were my stepmother, than I hers; but then, to be sure, she is a few years older.

"I will see you this very evening, and your sweet harp shall sing all my heart aches to sleep. My French lady of honour will conduct you secretly to my apartments. I am sure you are too honest to guess even at what the countess says you might fancy when I smile on you. Smile as often as I will, or frown when she makes me, I shall still think of you the same! But as she says you must never come to see me again, she will never know whether I smile or frown; but this I promise you, that all my smiles shall be yours—all my frowns hers.—Genile minstrel, presume not, and ever shall you find an indulgent mistress in M—.

P. S. At the last vespers to-night, my page shall come for you."

Gloucester knew the queen's hand-writing, and not being able to contradict that this letter was hers, he inquired how it came into his majesty's hands. "I found it," replied Soulis, "as I was crossing the courtyard; it lay on the ground; and I suppose had been accidentally dropped by the queen's messenger."

Gloucester wishing to extenuate as much as possible for the young queen's sake, whose youth and inexperience he pitied, suggested that from the simplicity with which the note was written, from her innocent references to the minstrel's profession, she merely addressed him in that character. Every line in the billet seemed to him to bear testimony that the minstrel was no other than he appeared, and that her majesty only wished to indulge her passion for music.

"If he be only a base itinerant harper," replied the king, "the deeper is my disgrace; for if a passion of another kind than music, be not portrayed in every word of this artful letter, I never read a woman's heart!"

The king continued to comment on the fatal scroll with the lynx eye of jealousy, and loading her name with every opprobrium, Gloucester inwardly thanked heaven that none other than Soulis and himself were
present to hear Edward fasten such foul dishonour on his queen. The generous earl could not find more arguments in her favour with which to assuage the mounting ire of her husband. She might be innocent of actual guilt, or indeed of being aware that she had conceived any wish that might lead to it; but, certainly, more than a queen's usual interest in a poor wandering minstrel was, as the king said, evident in every line. Gloucester remaining silent. Edward believed him convinced of the queen's crime, and being too wrathful to think of caution, he sent for the bishop and others of his lords, to whom he vented his injury and indignation. But all were not inclined to be of the same opinion with their sovereign; some thought with Gloucester; others deemed her quite innocent, that the letter was a forgery; and the rest adopted the severer references of her husband: but all united, (whoever were determined to spare the queen,) in recommending the immediate apprehension and execution of the minstrel.

"It is not fit," cried Soulis, "that the man who has even been suspected of invading our monarch's honour, should live another hour."

This sanguinary sentence was acceded to, with as little remorse by the whole assembly as they would have condemned a tree to the axe. Earl Percy, who had given his vote for the death of the minstrel more from inconsideration, than that thirst of blood which stimulated the voices of Soulis and the Cummins, proposed, as he believed the queen innocent, that the Countess of Gloucester and the French lady of honour should be examined relative to the circumstances mentioned in the letter.

The king immediately ordered their attendance.

The royal Jane of Acre appeared at the first summons, with an air of truth and freedom from alarm, which convinced every one, as far as her evidence went, of the innocence of the queen. Her testimony was, that she believed the minstrel to be other than he seemed; but that she was certain, from the conversation which the queen had held with her after the bishop's feast, that this was the first time in which she had ever seen him; and that she was ignorant of his
real rank. On being questioned by the bishop, the Countess acknowledged that her majesty had praised his figure as well as his singing; "yet not more," added she, "than she afterwards did to the king, when she awakened his curiosity to send for him." Her highness continued to reply to the interrogatories put to her, by saying, that it was in the king's presence she first saw the minstrel, and then she thought his demeanor much above his situation; but when he accompanied the queen and herself into her majesty's apartments, she had an opportunity to observe him narrowly, as the queen engaged him in conversation; and by his answers, questions, and easy, yet respectful deportment, she was convinced that he was not what he appeared.

"And why, Jane," asked the king, "did you not impart these suspicions to your husband or to me?" "Because," replied she, "remembering that my interference on a certain public occasion, brought my late husband Clare, under your majesty's displeasure; on my marriage with Montemener, I made a solemn vow before my confessor, never again to offend in the like manner. — And besides, the countenance of this stranger was so ingenuous, and his sentiments so natural and honourable, that I could not suspect he came on any disloyal errand."

"Lady," asked one of the older lords, "if you thought so well of the queen and of this man, why did you caution her against her smiles, and deem it necessary to persuade her not to see him again?"

The countess blushed at this question, but replied; "Because I saw that the minstrel was a gentleman: he possessed a noble figure, and a handsome face in spite of his Egyptian skin; and like most young gentlemen, he might be conscious of these advantages, and attribute the artless approbation, the innocent smiles of my gracious queen, to a source more flattering to his vanity. I have known many lords not far from your majesty, make similar mistakes on as little grounds;" added she, looking disdainfully towards some of the younger nobles; "and therefore, to prevent such insolence, I desired his final dismission."
"Thank you, my dear Jane," replied the king, relaxing from the severity of his mood; "you almost persuade me of Margaret's innocence." "Believe it sire!" cried she with animation; "whatever romantic thoughtlessness her youth and inexperience may have led her into, I pledge my life on her virtue."

"First let us hear what that French woman has to say to the assignation?" exclaimed Soulis, whose polluted heart could not suppose the existence of true purity; and whose cruel disposition exulted in torturing and death; "question her; and then her majesty may have full acquittal!"

Again the brow of Edward was overcast. All the fiends of jealousy once more tugged at his heart; and ordering the Countess of Gloucester to withdraw, he commanded the Baroness de Pontoise to be brought into the presence.

When she saw the king's threatening looks, and beheld the fearful expression which shot from every surrounding countenance, she shrunk with terror. For her heart, long hacknied in secret gallantries, from the same inward whisper which proclaimed to Soulis that the queen was guilty, could not believe but that it had been the confident of an illicit passion; and therefore, though she knew nothing really bad of her unhappy mistress, yet fancying that she did, she stood trembling before the royal tribunal with the air and aspect of a culprit.

"Repeat to me," demanded the king, "or answer it with your head, all that you know of Queen Margaret's intimacy with the man who calls himself a minstrel."

The French-woman, at these words, which were delivered in a tone that seemed the sentence of her death, fell on her knees, and in a burst of terror exclaimed, "Sire, I will reveal all—if your majesty will grant me a pardon for having too faithfully served my mistress!"

"Speak! speak!" cried the king with desperate impatience; "I swear to pardon you, even if you have joined in a conspiracy against my life; but speak the truth, and all the truth, that judgment without mercy may fall on the guilty heads!"

"Then I obey," answered the baroness.—"Foul be-
"The only time I ever heard of, or saw this man to my knowledge, was when he was brought to play before my lady at the bishop's banquet; I did not much observe him, being engaged in conversation at the other end of the room, so I cannot say whether I might not have seen him in France; for many noble lords adored the Princess Margaret, though she appeared to frown upon them all. But I must confess, that when I attended her majesty's disrobing after the feast, she put to me so many questions about what I thought of the minstrel who had sung and played so divinely, that I began to think her admiration too great to have been awakened by a mere song. And then she asked me if a king could have a nobler air than he had; and she laughed and said she would send your majesty to school to learn of him."

"Damnable traitoress!" exclaimed the king. —The baroness paused, and retreated from before the sudden fury which flashed from his eyes.—"Go on!" cried he, "hide nothing, that my vengeance may lose nothing of its aim!"

She proceeded. "Her majesty then talked of his beautiful eyes; so blue, she said, so tender, yet proud in their looks; and only a minstrel!" De Pontoise, added she, can you explain that? I, being rather perhaps too well learned in the idle tales of our troubadours, heedlessly answered, 'Perhaps he is some king in disguise, just come to look at your charms, and go away again!' She laughed much at this conceit, said he must be one of Pharaoh's race then, and that had he not such white teeth his complexion would be intolerable. I being pleased to see her majesty in such spirits, thinking no ill, and being in a rallying mood, answered, 'I read once of a certain Spanish lover who went to the court of Tunis to carry off the king's daughter; and he had so black a face that none suspected him to be other than the Moorish..."
prince of Granada; when, lo! and behold! one day in a pleasure party on the sea, he fell over-board, and came up with the fairest face in the world, and presently acknowledged himself to be the christian King of Castle! The queen laughed at this story, but not answering me, went to bed.—Next morning when I entered her chamber, she received me with even more gayety, and putting aside my hair under my coiffure, said, "Let me see if I can find the devil's mark here!" 'What is the matter?' I asked, 'Does your majesty take me for a witch?' 'Exactly so,' she replied, 'for a little sprite told me last night, that all you said was true.' And then she began to tell me, with many smiles, that she had dreamt that the minstrel was the very prince of Portugal whom, unseen, she had refused for the king of England, and that he gave her a harp set with jewels. She then went to your majesty; and I saw no more of her till she sent for me late in the evening. She seemed very angry.—'You are faithful,' said she to me, 'and you know me, De Pontoise, you know me too proud to degrade myself, and too high-minded to submit to tyranny. The Countess of Gloucester, with persuasions too much like commands, will not allow me to see the minstrel any more.' She then declared her determination that she would see him, that she would feign herself sick, and he should come and sing to her when she was alone; and that she was sure he was too modest to presume on her condescension. I said something to dissuade her, but she over-ruled me; and shame to myself, I consented to assist her.—She embraced me, and gave me a letter to convey to him, which I did by slipping it beneath the ornaments of the handle of her lute, which I sent as an excuse for the minstrel to tune.—It was to acquaint him with her intentions, and this night he was to have visited her apartments."

It was immediately apprehended by the council that this was the letter which Soulis found.

"And is this all you know of the affair?" inquired Percy, seeing that she made a pause. "And enough too!" cried Soulis, "to blast the most vaunted chastity in Christendom."
"Take the woman home," cried the king; "send her to France, and never let me see her face more!" The baroness withdrew in terror, and Edward calling on Sir Piers Gaveston, told him to head the double guard that was to surround the Keep which held the object of his officious introduction; and taking a file of men with him, go in person to bring the minstrel to receive his sentence. "For," cried the king, "be he prince or peasant, I will see him hanged before my eyes; and then, return his wanton paramour, branded with infamy, to her disgraced family!"

Soulis now suggested, that as the delinquent was to be found with Bruce, most likely that young nobleman was privy to his designs.—"We shall see to him hereafter," replied the king, "meanwhile, look that I am obeyed."

The moment this order passed the king's lips, Gloucester, now not doubting the queen's guilt, hastened to warn Bruce of what had passed, that he might separate himself from the crime of the man he had protected; but finding that the accused was no other than the universally feared, universally beloved and generous Wallace, all other considerations were lost in the desire of delivering him from the impending danger. He knew the means, and he did not hesitate to employ them.

During the recital of this narrative, Gloucester narrowly observed his auditor; and by the ingenuous bursts of his indignation, and the horror he evinced at the crime he was suspected of having committed, the earl was fully convinced that the noble Scot had not possessed one wish with regard to the queen, that angels might not have registered. This ascertained, he now saw that her sentiments of him had not gone farther than a childish admiration, easily to be pardoned in an innocent creature hardly more than sixteen.

"See," cried Wallace, "the power that lies with the describer of actions! The chaste mind of your countess, saw nothing in the conduct of the queen but thoughtless simplicity. The contaminated heart of the Baroness de Pontoise described passion in every word, wantonness in every movement; and judging of her mistress by herself, she has wrought this mighty ruin.
How then does it become virtue to admit the virtuous only to her intimacy; for the vicious make her to be seen in their own colours! Impress your king with this self-evident conclusion. And were it not for endangering the safety of Bruce, the hope of my country, I myself would return and stake my life on proving the innocence of the Queen of England.—But if a letter, with my word of honour, could convince the king—"

"I accept the offer," interrupted Gloucester; "I am too warmly the friend of Bruce; too truly grateful to you, to betray either into danger; but from Sunderland, whether I recommend you to go, and to embark for some French port, write the declaration you mention, and enclose it to me. This means of clearing the injured Margaret, makes me alter my first intentions: Bruce shall be set at liberty before we leave Durham; and as soon as he is beyond the reach of harm from England, I will contrive that the king shall have your letter without suspecting by what channel; and then I trust that all will be well."

During this discourse, they passed on through the vaulted passage, till arriving at a wooden crucifix which marked the half way, and boundary of the domain of Durham, Gloucester stopped:—"I must not go farther.—Should I prolong my stay from the castle during the search for you, suspicion may be awakened. You must, therefore, now proceed alone.—Go straight forward, and at the extremity of the vault you will find a flag-stone, surmounted like the one with a cross by which we descended; raise it, and it will let you into the cemetery of the Abbey of Finchlay. One end of this burying-place, for some religious reason that I do not understand, is always open to the east. Thence you may emerge to the open world; and may it, in future, noble Wallace, treat you ever according to your unequalled merits. Farewell!"

Wallace bade him adieu with similar expressions of esteem, and exchanging the warm embraces of friendship, the earl turned to retrace his steps; and Wallace alone, pursued his way through the rayless darkness, with a swift pace towards the Finchlay extremity of the vault.
Wallace having emerged from his subterranean journey, according to the advice of Gloucester made direct to Sunderland, and arrived there about daybreak. A vessel belonging to France (which, since the marriage of Margaret with Edward, had been at amity with England as well as Scotland) was there, waiting the first favourable wind to set sail for Dieppe. Wallace secured a passage in her; and going on board, wrote his promised letter to Edward.—It ran thus:

"This testimony, signed by my hand, is to assurance Edward King of England, upon the word of a knight, that Margaret Queen of England, is in every respect guiltless of the crimes alleged against her by the Lord Soulis, and sworn to by the Baroness de Pontoise. I came to the court of Durham on an errand connected with my country; and that I might be unknown, I assumed the disguise of a minstrel. By accident I encountered Sir Piers Gaveston, and ignorant that I was other than I seemed, he introduced me at the royal banquet. It was there I first saw her majesty. —And I never had that honour but three times: one I have named; the second was in your presence; and the third and last, in her apartments, to which you yourself saw me withdraw. The Countess of Gloucester was present the whole time; and to her highness I appeal. The queen saw in me only a minstrel: on my art alone as a musician was her favour bestowed; and by expressing it with an ingenuous warmth, which none other than an innocent heart would have dared display, she has thus exposed herself to the animadversions of libertinism, and to the false representations of a terror-struck, because worthless, friend.

I have escaped the snare which her enemies had laid for me:—and for her sake, for the sake of truth, and your own peace, King Edward, I declare before the searcher of all hearts, and before the world, in whose esteem I hope to live and die; That your wife is innocent! And should I ever meet the man who, after this declaration, dares to unite her name to mine in a tale of
infamy,—by the power of truth I swear, that I will make him write a recantation with his blood. Pure as a virgin's chastity is, and shall ever be, the honour of William Wallace."

This letter he enclosed in one to the Earl of Gloucester, and having dispatched his packet by a hired messenger, to Durham, he gladly saw a brisk wind blow up from the north-west. The ship weighed anchor, and under a fair sky cut the waves swiftly towards the Norman shores. But ere she reached them, the warlike star of Wallace, which still prevailed, bore down upon his little barque the terrific sails of the Red Reaver, a formidable pirate which then infesting the Gallic seas, swept them of their commerce and insulted their navy. He attacked the French vessel; but it carried a greater than Cæsar and his fortunes: Wallace and his destiny were there—and the enemy struck to the Scottish chief. The Red Reaver, (so surnamed because of his red sails and sanguinary deeds,) was killed in the action: but his young brother, Thomas de Longueville, was found alive within the captive ship, and to the astonishment of Wallace, accompanied by Prince Louis of France, whom the pirate had taken the day before on a sailing party.

Adverse winds for some time prevented Wallace from reaching port with his invaluable prize, but the fourth day from the capture, he cast anchor in the harbour of Dieppe. The indisposition of the prince, from a wound he had received in his own conflict with the Reaver, made it necessary to apprise King Philip of the accident:—and in answer to Wallace's dispatches to that purpose, the grateful monarch repeated the proffers of personal friendship which had been the principal subject of his last embassy, and added to them a pressing invitation that he would immediately accompany the prince to Paris, and receive from the throne a mark of royal gratitude, that should record his service done to France with due honour to future ages. Meanwhile, Philip sent him a suit of armour, with a request that he would wear it in remembrance of France and his own heroism. But no devoirs from a monarch, no offers of aggrandizement, could tempt Wallace from his duty.
Impatient to pursue his journey towards the spot where he hoped to meet Brucé, (whose interest was now so united with Scotland, that in serving one, he still proved his love for the other,) he wrote a respectful excuse to the king; and arraying himself in the monarch’s martial present, (to convince him by the evidence of his son that he had so far obeyed the royal wish,) he joined the prince to bid him farewell. Louis was accompanied by young De Longueville, (whose pardon Wallace had obtained from the king, on account of the youth’s abhorrence to the use which his brother had compelled him to make of his brave arm:)—and the two, from different feelings, expressed their disappointment when they found that their benefactor was going to leave them. Wallace gave his highness a packet for the king, containing a brief statement of his vow to Lord Mar, and his promise, that when he had fulfilled it, Philip should see him at Paris. The royal cavalcade then separated from the deliverer of its prince, and Wallace mounting a richly barbed Arabian which had accompanied his splendid armour, took the road to Rouen.

Night overtook him on a vast and trackless plain. The sky was so thick with clouds that not a star was visible, and the horse, terrified at such impenetrable darkness, and the difficulties of the path which was over a barren and stony moor, suddenly stopped. This aroused Wallace from a long fit of musing, to look onward. But on which way lay the road to Rouen, he could have no guess. To pass the night in so dreary a spot, was no pleasant contemplation, and spurring his animal, he determined to push forward to some lodging.

He had ridden nearly an hour, when the dead silence of the scene was broken by the roll of distant thunder. Forked lightning shot from the horizon and shewed a line unmarked by any vestige of human habitation. Still he proceeded. The storm approached, and breaking in peals over his head, discharged such sheets of vivid fire at his feet that the horse reared, and plunging amidst the blaze, flashed an insufferable light from his rider’s armour and his own, on the eyes of a troop of horsemen who stood under the tempest gazing with affright at the scene. Wallace, by the same transitory
illumination, saw the travellers as they seemed to start back at his appearance; and mistaking their sentiment, he called to them that his well-managed, though terrified steed, should do them no hurt. One of them advanced, and respectfully inquired of him the way to Rouen. Wallace replied that he was a stranger in this part of the country; but as he also was seeking that city, he would render them every assistance in his power to find the path. While he was yet speaking, the claps of thunder became more tremendous, and the lightning seeming to roll in volumes along the ground, the horses of the troop became restive, and one of them throwing its rider, galloped, scared away, across the plain. Cries of terror, mingled with the groans of the fallen person, excited the compassion of Wallace: he rode towards the spot where the latter proceeded, and asked the nearest by-stander (for several had alighted,) whether his friend were much hurt? The man returned an answer full of alarm for the sufferer and anxiety to obtain some place of shelter, for the rain now began to fall. In a few minutes it increased to torrents, and extinguishing the lightning, deepened the horrors of the scene, by preventing the likelihood of discovering any human abode. The poor men, now gathered round their fallen companion, and declaring that from his feeble state he must perish under such inclemencies: but Wallace cheered them, by saying he would seek a shelter for their friend, and that he would blow his bugle when he had found one. As he spoke, he turned his horse, and calling, as he galloped along, in the loudest tones of his voice, for any Christian man who lived near to open his doors to a dying traveller! after riding about in all directions, during a time that seemed an age, while a poor suffering creature was lying exposed to the torrents which were now rolling down his armour, he saw a glimmering light for a moment, and then all was darkness; but a shrill female voice answered, "I am a lone woman, and a widow; but for the Virgin’s sake I will open my door to you, whoever you may be." The good woman re-lit her lamp, which the rain had extinguished when she opened the casement; and unlatching her door, Wallace briefly related what had
happened, and entreated permission to bring the unfortunate traveller to her cottage. She readily consented, and giving him a lantern to guide his way, he blew his bugle, and was answered by so glad and loud a shout, that he was assured his companions could not be far distant, and that he must have made many an useless circuit before he had arrived at this benevolent matron's.

The men directed him through the darkness by their voices, for the lamp threw its beams but a very little way, and arriving at their side, by his assistance the bruised traveller, whom they said was their master, was brought to the cottage. It was a poor hovel: but the good woman had spread a clean woollen coverlid over her own bed in the inner chamber, and thither Wallace carried the invalid, and laid him on the humble paffet. He seemed in great pain, but his kind conductor answered their hostess's inquiries respecting him, that he believed no bones were broken. "Yet," added he, "I fear the effects of internal bruises on so emaciated a frame. Wallace then inquired for some herbs which usually grow in the poorest garden, to make a decoction for the stranger. The old woman cheerfully went into hers to gather them, and shewed the attendants where they might put the horses under the shelter of an old ruined shed which projected from the hovel. Meanwhile the Scottish chief, assisted by the man who had been the spokesman of the troop, disengaged the sufferer from his wet garments, and covered him with the blankets of the bed. Recovered to recollection by the comparative comfort of his bodily feelings, the stranger opened his eyes. He fixed them on Wallace, then looked around, and turned to Wallace again. The attendant in a few words hastily related the particulars of what had happened. "Generous knight!" cried the invalid, "I have nothing but thanks to offer for this kindness. You seem to be of the highest rank, and yet have succoured one whom the world abjures! You have shewn charity to the poorest, most degraded of men! Can it be possible that a prince of France has dared to act thus contrary to his peers!"

Wallace, not apprehending what had given rise to
this question, supposed the stranger's wits were disordered, and looked with that inquiry towards the attendant just at the moment when the old woman re-entered with the herbs, followed by a man wrapped in a black mantle. "Here," cried she, "is another tempest-beaten traveller; I hope your honours will give him room by your fire!"—While she spoke, the newcomer put up his visor; his eyes met those of Wallace, and the ejaculations, Wallace!—Bruce!—burst at once from their hearts as they rushed into each other's arms. All present were lost to them in the joy of meeting so unexpectedly after so perilous a separation; a joy, not confined for its object to their individual selves, each saw in the other the hope of Scotland; and when they embraced, it was not merely with the ardour of friendship, but with the fires of patriotism rejoicing in the preservation of its chief dependance. While the friends, in their native tongue, freely spoke before a people who could not be supposed to understand them, the aged stranger on the bed reiterated his moans. Wallace, in a few words, telling Bruce the manner of his rencontre with the sick man, and his belief that he was disordered in his mind, drew towards the bed, and offered him some of the decoction which the woman had made. The invalid took it, drank it, and looked earnestly first on Wallace, and then on Bruce. "Pierre, withdraw," cried he to his attendant. The man obeyed. "Sit down by me, noble friends," said he to the Scottish chiefs, "and read a lesson which I pray ye lay to your hearts!" Bruce glanced a look at Wallace, that declared he was of his opinion. Wallace drew a stool, while his friend seated himself on the bed.—The old woman perceiving something extraordinary in the countenance of the bruised stranger, thought he was going to reveal some secret heavy on his mind, and out of delicacy withdrew.

"You think that my intellects are injured," said he, turning to Wallace, "because I addressed you as one of the house of Philip! Those jewelled lilies round your helmet led me into the error. I never before saw them granted to other than a prince of the blood. But think not, brave man, I respect you less since I have
discovered that you are not of the race of Philip, that
you are other than a prince!—Look on me, at this emaciated form, and behold the reverses of all earthly grandeur!—This palsied hand once held a sceptre, these hollow temples were once decorated with a crown!—He that used to be followed as the source of honour, as the fountain of prosperity, with suppliants at his feet and flatterers at his side, would now be left to solitude, were it not for these few faithful old servants, who, in spite of all changes, have preserved their allegiance to the end. "Look on me, chiefs, and behold him who was the King of Scots."

Both Wallace and Bruce, at this declaration, struck with surprise and compassion at meeting their ancient enemy, reduced to such abject misery, with one impulse bowed their heads to him with an air of reverence they would have started from, had he been still the minion of Edward. The action penetrated the heart of Balliol: for when, at the mutual exclamation of the two friends on their first meeting in the hovel, he recognised in whose presence he lay, he fearfully remembered, that by his base submissions, he had turned the scale of judgment in his own favour, and defrauded the grandsire of the very Bruce now before him, of a fair decision on his rights to the crown! and when he looked on Wallace, who had preserved him from the effects of his accident, and brought him to a shelter from the raging terrors of the night, his conscience doubly smote him; for, from the hour of his elevation to that of his downfall, he had ever persecuted the family of Wallace, and at an hour momentous for Scotland, had denied them the right of drawing their swords in the defence of Scotland.—He, her king, had resigned all into the hands of an usurper: but Wallace, the injured Wallace, had arisen like a star of light on the deep darkness of her captivity, and Scotland was once more free! At first the exiled monarch had started at the blaze of the unknown knight's jewelled panoply; now he shrunk before the brightness of his glory—and falling back on his bed, he groaned aloud. To these young men, so strangely brought before him, and both of whom he had wronged, he determined immediately
to reveal himself, and see whether those he had harmed were equally resentful of injuries, as those he had served were ungrateful for benefits received. He spoke: and when, instead of seeing the pair rise in indignation on his pronouncing his name, they bowed their heads, and sat listening in respectful silence; his desolate heart expanded at once to admit the long-estranged emotion of pleasure, and he burst into tears. He caught the hand of Bruce, who sat nearest to him, and stretching out the other to Wallace, exclaimed, "I have not deserved this goodness from either of you. Perhaps you two are the only men now living whom I ever greatly injured, and you, excepting my four poor attendants, are perhaps the only men existing who would compassionate my misfortunes!"

"These are lessons, king," returned Wallace, in a respectful tone of voice, "to fit you for a better crown than the one you so lately wore. And never, in my eyes, did the descendant of Alexander seem so worthy of his blood!"—The grateful monarch pressed his hand.—Bruce continued to gaze on him with a thousand awful thoughts occupying his mind. Baliol read in his expressive countenance the reflections which chained his tongue. "Behold how low is laid the proud rival of your grandfather!" exclaimed he, turning to Bruce. "I compassed a throne I could not fill.—I mistook the robes, the homage, for the kingly dignity. Ignorant of the thousand duties I was called upon to perform, I left them all undone. I bartered the liberties of my country for a crown I knew not how to wear, and the insidious trafficker reclaimed it, and threw me into prison.—There I expiated my crime against the gallant Bruce: not one of all the Scottish lords who frequented Edward's court, ever came to beguile a moment of sorrow from their captive monarch.—Lonely I lived, for I was even deprived by the mandates of my tyrant of the comfort of seeing my fellow prisoner Lord Douglas, he whose attachment to my true interests had betrayed to an English prison. I never saw him after the day of his being put into the Tower, until that of his death."—Wallace interrupted him with an exclamation of surprise. "Yes," added Baliol, "I myself
closed his eyes: at that awful hour he petitioned to see me, and the boon was granted. I went to him; and then, with his dying breath, he spoke truths to me which were indeed the messengers from heaven: they taught me what I was, and what I might be. He died: but Edward being then absent in Flanders, and you, brave Wallace, triumphant in Scotland, and laying such a stress in your negotiations for the return of Douglas, the Southron cabinet agreed to conceal his death, and by making his name an instrument to excite your hopes and fear, turn your anxiety for him to their own advantage."

The blood spread in deep scarlet over the face of Bruce:—" With what a race have I been so long connected!—What mean subterfuges, what dastardly deceits, for the leaders of a great nation to adopt! Oh! king!" exclaimed he, turning to Baliol, "If you have errors to atone for, what then must be the penalty of my sin, for holding so long with an enemy as vile as ambitious!—Scotland! Scotland! I must weep tears of blood for this!" He rose in agitation.—Baliol followed him with his eyes. "Amiable Bruce! you too severely arraign a fault that was venial in you. Your father gave himself to Edward, and his son accompanied the tribute." Bruce vehemently answered, "If King Edward ever said that, he uttered a falsehood.—My father loved him, confided in him, and the ingratitude betrayed him!—His fidelity was no gift of himself in acknowledgment of inferiority: it was the pledge of a friendship exchanged on equal terms on the fields of Palestine: and well did King Edward know that he had no right over either my father or me, for, in the moment he doubted our attachment, he was aware of having forfeited it; he knew he had legally no claim on us; and forgetting every law, human and divine, he threw us into prison. But my father found liberty in the grave, and I am ready to shew him my power in—" he would have added "Scotland," but he forbore to give, perhaps, the last blow to the unhappy Baliol, by shewing him that his kingdom had indeed passed from him, and that the man was be-
fore him, destined to wield his sceptre. He stopped, and sat down in generous confusion.

"Hesitate not," said Baliol, "to say where you will shew your power? I know that the brave Wallace has laid open the way. Had I possessed such a leader of my troops, I should not now be lying a mendicant in this hovel; I should not be a creature to be pitied and despised.—Wear him, Bruce, wear him in your heart's core. He gives the throne he might have filled."

"Make not that a subject of extraordinary praise," cried Wallace, "which, if I had left undone, would have stamped me a traitor. I have only performed my duty: and may the Holy Anointer of the hearts of kings, guide him to his kingdom, and keep him there in peace and honour."

Baliol rose in his bed at these words: "Bruce," said he, approach me near." He obeyed. The feeble monarch turned to Wallace; "You have supported what was my kingdom, through its last struggles for liberty: put forth your hand, and support its exiled sovereign in his last regal act." Wallace obeying, raised the king so as to enable him to assume a kneeling posture. Dizzy with the exertion, Baliol for a moment rested on the shoulder of the chief, and then looking up, he saw Bruce gazing on him with compassionate interest. The unhappy monarch stretched out his arms to heaven:—"May God pardon the injuries which my fatal ambition did to you and yours; the miseries I brought upon my country;—and let your reign redeem my errors! May the spirit of wisdom bless you, my son!" His hands were now laid with pious fervour on the head of Bruce, who, at this benediction sunk on his knees before him. "Whatever rights I had to the crown of Scotland, by the worthlessness of my reign they are forfeited, and I resign all unto you even to the participation of the mere title of king; and what was as the ghost of my former self, an accusing spirit to me, will I trust, be as an angel of light to you, to conduct your people into all happiness!" exhausted by his feelings, he sunk back into the arms of Wallace.—Bruce, starting from the ground, poured a little of the herb-balsam into the king's mouth, and he re-
vived. As Wallace laid him back on his pillow he gazed wistfully at him, and grasping his hand, said in a low voice, "How did I throw a blessing from me! But in those days, when I rejected your services at Dunbar, I knew not the Almighty arm which brought the boy of Ellerslie to save his country! — I scorned the patriot flame that spoke your mission, and the mercy of heaven departed from me!"

Memory was now busy with the thoughts of Bruce. He remembered his father's weak if not criminal devotion at that time to the interests of Edward; he remembered his heart-wrung death; and looking at the desolate old age of another of Edward's victims, his brave soul melted to pity and regret, and he retired into a distant part of the room to shed unobserved the tears he could not restrain. Wallace soon after saw the eyes of the exhausted king close in sleep: and cautious of awakening him, he did not stir; but leaning against the thick oaken frame of the bed, was soon lost in as deep a repose.

After some time of wordless stillness, (for the old dame, and the attendants, were at rest in the outward chamber,) Bruce, whose low sighs were echoed only by the wind which swept in gusts by the little casement, looked towards the abdicated monarch's couch. He slept profoundly, yet frequently started as if disturbed by troubled dreams. Wallace moved not on his hard pillow, and the serenity of perfect peace rested upon all his features: — "How tranquil is the sleep of the virtuous!" thought Bruce, as he contemplated the difference between his state and that of Baliol's; "there lies an accusing conscience; here rests one of the most faultless of created beings. It is, it is, the sleep of innocence! — come ye slanderers," continued he, mentally calling on those he had left at Edward's court, "and tell me if an adulterer could look thus when he sleeps! — Is there one trace of irregular passion about that placid mouth? Does one of those heavenly-composed features bear testimony to emotions, which leave marks even when subdued? — No; virtue has set up her throne in that breast, and well may kings come to bow to it!"
THE entrance of the old woman about an hour after sun-rise, awakened Wallace; but Baliol continued to sleep. On the chief opening his eyes, Bruce with a smile stretched out his hand to him. Wallace rose, and whispering the widow to abide by her guest till they should return (for they intended to see him safe to his home,) he said they would refresh themselves with a walk. The good dame curtseyed acquiescence; and the friends cautiously passing the sleepers in the outer apartments, emerged to the cheerful breeze. A wood opened its umbrageous arms at a little distance, and thither, over the dew-bespangled grass, they bent their way. The birds sung from tree to tree; and Wallace seating himself under an overhanging larch which canopied a narrow winding of the river Seine, listened with mingled pain and satisfaction to the communications which Bruce had to impart relative to what had passed since his departure from Durham. He related, that the instant Wallace had followed the Earl of Gloucester from the apartment in the castle, it was entered by Sir Piers Gaveston. He demanded the minstrel. Bruce replied he knew not where he was. Gaveston, anxious by his zeal to convince the king that he was no accomplice with the suspected person, again addressed Bruce in a tone which he meant should intimidate him; and, a second time put the question, “Where is the minstrel?”—“I know not,” replied Bruce. “And will you dare to tell me, earl,” asked he, “that within this quarter of an hour he has not been in this tower? nay, in this very room?”—The guards in your antichamber have told me that he was:—and can Lord Carrick stoop to utter a falsehood to screen a wandering beggar?”

While he was speaking Bruce stood eyeing him with increasing scorn. Gaveston paused.—“You expect me to answer you;” said the prince; “out of respect to myself, I will; for such is the unsullied honour of Robert Bruce, that even the air shall not be tainted
with a slander against his truth, without being re-purified by its confutation. Gaveston, you have known me five years: two of them we past together in the jousts of Flanders, and yet you believe me capable of falsehood! Know then, unworthy of the esteem I have bestowed on you! that neither to save mean nor great, would I deviate from the strict line of truth. The man you seek may have been in this tower, in this room, as you now are; and as little am I bound to know where he is when he quits it, as whither you go when you relieve me from an inquisition which I hold myself accountable to no man to answer."

"Tis well;" cried Gaveston, "and I am to carry this haughty message to the king?"—"If you deliver it as a message," answered Bruce, "you will prove that they who are ready to suspect falsehood, find its utterance easy. My reply is to you. When King Edward speaks to me, I shall find an answer that is due to him."—"These attempts to provoke me into a private quarrel," cried Gaveston, "will not succeed. I am not to be so foiled from my duty. I must seek for the man throughout your apartments."—"By whose authority?" demanded Bruce.—"By my own, as the loyal subject of my outraged monarch. He bade me bring the traitor before him, and thus I obey." As Gaveston spoke, he beckoned to his men to follow him to the door whence Wallace had disappeared. Bruce threw himself before it: "I must forget the duty I owe to myself, before I allow you or any other man to invade my privacy. I have already given you the answer that becomes Robert Bruce; and as you are a knight, instead of compelling, I request you to withdraw." Gaveston hesitated: but he knew the determined character of his opponent; and therefore with no very good grace, muttering that he should hear of it from a more powerful quarter, he left the room.

And certainly his threats were not in this instance vain; for, in the course of a few minutes a marshal attended by a numerous retinue, made his appearance, to force Bruce before the king.
Annandale, I come to summon you into the presence of your liege lord Edward of England."

"The Earl of Cleaveland obeys," said he, and with a fearless step he walked out before the marshal.

When he entered the presence-chamber, Sir Piers Gaveston stood beside the royal couch, as if prepared to be his accuser. The king sat, supported by pillows, paler with the mortifications of his jealousy and baffled authority, than by the effects of his wounds,—"Robert Bruce!" cried he, the moment his eyes fell on him; but the sight of his mourning habit made a stroke upon his heart that sent out drops of shame in large globules on his forehead,—he paused, wiped his face with his handkerchief, and resumed—"Are you not afraid, presumptuous young man, thus to provoke your sovereign? Are you not afraid that I shall make that audacious head answer for the man whom you thus dare to screen from my just revenge?" Bruce felt the many injuries he had suffered from this proud king rush at once upon his memory; and without changing his position, or lowering the lofty expression of his looks, he firmly answered—"The judgment of a just king I cannot fear; the sentence of an unjust one, I despise."—"This to his majesty's face?" exclaimed Soulis.—"Insolence—Rebellion—Chastisement—nay, even death!" were the words that were heard murmuring round the room, at the honest reply. Edward had too much good sense to echo any one of them; but turning to Bruce with a sensation of shame he would gladly have represed, he said, that in consideration of his youth he would pardon him what had passed, and reinstate him in all the late Earl of Carrick's honours, if he would immediately declare where he had hidden the offending instruc. "I have not hidden him;" cried Bruce "nor do I know where he is: but had that been confided to me, as I know him to be an innocent man, no power on earth should have wrenched him from me!"

"Self-sufficient boy!" exclaimed Earl Buchan, with a laugh of contempt, "Do you flatter yourself that he would trust such a novice as you are, with secrets of this nature?" Bruce turned on him an eye of fire. —"Buchan," replied he, "I will answer you on other
Meanwhile remember, that the secrets of good men are open to every virtuous heart; those of the wicked, they would be glad to conceal from themselves."

"Robert Bruce," cried the king, "before I came this northern journey I ever found you one of the most devoted of my servants, the gentlest youth in my court; and how do I see you now? Braving my nobles to my face! How is it that until now this spirit never broke forth?" "Because," answered the prince, "until now, I had never seen the virtuous friend whom you call upon me to betray." "Then you confess," cried the king, "that he was an instigator to rebellion!" "I avow," answered Bruce, "that I never knew what true loyalty was, till he taught it me; I never knew the nature of real chastity, till he explained it to me; and allowed me to see in himself, incorruptible fidelity, bravely undaunted, and a purity of heart not to be contaminated! And this is the man on whom these lords would fasten a charge of treason and adultery! But out of the filthy depths of their own breasts, arise the steams with which they would blacken his fairness."

"Your vindication," cried the king, "confirms his guilt.—You admit that he is not a minstrel in reality.—Wherefore then did he steal in ambuscade into my palace, but to betray either my honour or my life, or perhaps both?" "His errand here, was to see me." "Rash, boy!" cried Edward, "then you acknowledge yourself a premeditated conspirator against me?" Soulis now whispered in the king's ear, but so low that Bruce did not hear him; "Penetrate farther, my liege; this may be only a false confession to shield the queen's character. For she who has once betrayed her duty, finds it easy to reward such handsome advocates." The scarlet of inextinguishable wrath now burnt on the face of Edward.—"I will confront them," thought he, "and surprise them into betraying each other."

By his orders the queen was brought in, supported by the Countess of Gloucester. "Jane," cried the king, "leave that woman; let her impudence sustain her." "Rather her innocence my lord," said the countess bowing, and hesitating to obey. "Leave her
to that," returned the incensed husband, "and she would grovel on the earth like her own base passions: but stand before me she shall; and without other support than the devil's within her" "For pity!" cried the queen, extending her clasped hands towards Edward, and bursting into tears; "have mercy on me, for I am innocent!" "Prove it then," cried the king, "by agreeing with this confident of your minstrel, and at once tell me by what name you addressed him when you allured him to my court? Is he French, Spanish, or English?" "By the Virgin's holy purity I swear!" cried the queen, sinking on her knees, "that I never allured him to this court;—I never beheld him till I saw him at the bishop's banquet; and for his name, I know it not." "O! vilest of the vile!" cried the king, in a paroxysm of fury throwing a missal which lay on his couch, at her head; "and didst thou become a wan- ton at a glance!—From my sight this moment, or I shall blast thee?"

The queen fainted, and dropt senseless into the arms of the Earl of Gloucester, who at that moment returned from seeing Wallace through the cavern. At sight of him, Bruce knew that his friend was safe; and fearless for himself, when the cause of outraged innocence was at stake, he suddenly exclaimed, "By one word, King Edward, I will confirm the blamelessness of this injured queen. Listen to me, not as a monarch, and an enemy, but with the unbiassed judgment of man with man, and then ask your own brave heart, if it would be possible for Sir William Wallace to be a seducer? Every mouth was dumb at the enunciation of that name. None dared open a lip in accusation; and the king himself, thunder-struck alike with the boldness of his conqueror venturing within the grasp of his revenge, and at the daringness of Bruce in thus declaring his connexion with him; for a few minutes knew not what to answer: only, he had received conviction of his wife's innocence! He was too well acquainted with the history and uniform conduct of Wallace, to doubt his honour in this transaction; and though a transient fancy of the queen's might have had existence, yet he had now no suspicion of her actions. "Bruce," said
he, "your honesty has saved the Queen of England. Though Wallace is my enemy, I know him to be of an integrity which neither man nor woman can shake; and therefore," added he, turning to the lords, "I declare before all who have heard me so fiercely arraign my injured wife, that I believe her innocent of every offence against me. And whoever, after this, mentions one word of what has passed in these investigations, or even whispers that they ever have been held, shall be punished as guilty of high treason."

Bruce was then ordered to be re-conducted back to the round tower; and the rest of the lords withdrawing by command, the king was left with Gloucester, his daughter Jane, and the now reviving queen, to make his peace with her, even on his knees.

Bruce was more closely immured than ever. Not even his senachie was allowed to approach him, and double guards were kept constantly on the watch around his prison. On the fourth day of his seclusion, an extra row of iron bars was put across his windows. He asked the captain of the party, the reason of this new rivet on his captivity, but he received no answer. His own recollection, however, solved the doubt; for he could not but see that his declaration respecting his friendship with Wallace, had so alarmed Edward that his present confinement was likely to terminate in death. One of the sentinels, on having the same inquiry put to him which Bruce had addressed to his superior, in a rough tone told him that he had best not ask too many questions, lest he should hear that his majesty had determined to keep him under Bishop Beck's pad-lock for life. Bruce was not to be deprived of hope by a single evidence, and smiling, said—"There are more ways of getting out of a tyrant's prison, than by the doors and windows!" "Why, you would not eat through the walls?" cried the man. "Certainly," replied Bruce, "if I have no other way; and through the guards too."—"We'll see to that," answered the man. "And feel it too, my sturdy soldier;" returned the prince, "so look to yourself." Bruce threw himself carelessly into a chair as he spoke; and the man eyeing him askance, and remembering how strangely the minstrel had disappeared
from within the walls of the tower, now began to think that people born in Scotland inherited some natural necromantic power of executing whatever they determined. "And I am determined," muttered he to himself; "never again to take this guard while a Scottish lord remains in the castle!"

Bruce, though careless in his manner of treating the soldier's information, thought of it with some degree of anxiety; as certainly the additional barricades did argue a longer sojourn in his prison than he had at first anticipated. Lost in reflections chequered with hope and doubts of his ever effecting his escape from such an iron prison, he remained immovable on the spot where the smiths and the soldier had left him, till another sentinel brought in his lamp. He set it down in silence, and withdrew; and then Bruce heard the bolts on the outside of his chamber door pushed into their guards.—"There they go!" said he to himself; "And those are to be the morning and evening sounds to which I am to listen all my days! At least Edward would have it so. Such is the gratitude he shews to the man who restored to him his wife; who restored to him the consciousness of yet possessing that unsullied honour, which is so dear to every married man!—Well, Edward; kindness might bind generous minds even to forget their rights; but thanks to you, neither in my own person, nor for any of my name, do I owe you ought but a sight of me as King of Scotland: and, please God, that you shall see; if the prayers of one that trusts in him, can, like the ministering angels to Peter, open these double steeled gates to set me free!"

While invocations to the power in which he confided and resolutions respecting the consequences of his hoped for liberty, by turns occupied his mind, he heard the light tread of a foot in the adjoining passage. He listened breathlessly, for no living creature, he thought could be in that quarter of the building, as he had suffered none to enter it since by it Wallace had disappeared. He half rose from his couch, as the door at which he had seen him last, gently opened. He started up, and Gloucester, with a lantern in his hand, stood before him. The earl put his finger on his lip, and taking
Bruce by the hand, led him, as he had done Wallace, down into the vault which leads to Fincklay Abbey.

When once in that subterraneous cloister with the entrance firmly secured behind them, as they advanced along, the earl replied to the impatient gratitude of Bruce, (who saw that the generous Gloucester meant that he should follow the steps of his friend;) by giving him a succinct account of his motives for changing his first determination, and now giving him liberty. He had not visited Bruce since the escape of Wallace, that he might not excite any new suspicion in Edward; and the tower being fast locked at every usual avenue, he had now entered it from the Fincklay side. He then proceeded to inform Bruce, that after his magnificent forgetfulness of his own safety to insure that of the queen had produced a reconciliation between her and her husband, Lord Buchan, Soulis, and Athol, and one or two English lords, joined next day to persuade the king that Bruce's avowal respecting Wallace having been really in the castle, was an invention of his own to screen some baser friend and his royal mistress. They succeeded in re-awakening some doubts in Edward, who sending for Gloucester, said to him, "Unless I could hear from Wallace's own lips, and (that in my case is impossible,) that he has been here, and that my wife is guiltless of this foul stain, I must ever remain in horrible suspense. These cruel Scots; ever fertile in maddening suggestions, have made me even suspect that Bruce had other reasons for his apparently generous risk of himself, than a love of justice."

While these ideas floated in the mind of Edward, Bruce was more closely immured. And Gloucester having received the promised letter from Wallace, determined to lay it before the king. Accordingly, on the first opportunity, the earl, one morning, stole unobserved into the presence chamber before Edward was brought in. He laid the letter under his majesty's cushion. As Gloucester expected, the moment the king saw the superscription he knew the hand, and read the letter twice over to himself without speaking a word. But the clouds which had hung on his countenance all passed away; and with a smile reaching the packet to Glou-
cester, he desired him to read aloud that silencer of all doubts respecting the honour of the queen. Gloucester obeyed: and the astonished nobles, looking on each other, one and all assented to the credit that was to be given to Wallace's word, and deeply regretted having ever joined in the suspicion against her majesty.—Thus then all appeared amicably settled. But the embers of discord still glowed. The three Scottish lords, afraid that Bruce would again be taken into favour, laboured to shew that his friendship with Wallace pointed to his throwing off the English yoke and independently assuming the Scottish crown. Edward gave too ready credence to these insinuations; and complied with Bishop Beck's request, to allow him to hold the royal youth his prisoner. But while the Cummins won this victory over Bruce, they gained nothing for themselves. They had ventured, during the king's vain inquiries respecting the manner in which Wallace's letter had been conveyed to his apartment, to throw out some hints of Bruce having been the agent by some secret means; and that he, however innocent the queen might be, certainly, by such solicitude for her exculpation, evinced an interest in her person which might prove dangerous. These latter inuendoes, the king crushed in the first whisper. "I have done enough with Robert Bruce;" said he, "he is condemned a prisoner for life; and mere suspicions shall never provoke me to give sentence for his death." Irritated with this reply and the contemptuous glance which accompanied it, the vindictive triumvirate turned from the king to his court; and having failed in compassing the destruction of Bruce and his more renowned friend, they determined at least to make a wreck of their moral fame. The guilt of Wallace and the queen, and the participation of Bruce, were now whispered through every circle; and credited in proportion to the evil dispositions of the hearers.

One of his pages at last brought to the ears of the king the stories which these lords so busily circulated; and sending for them, he gave them so severe a reprimand, that retiring from his presence in stifled wrath, they determined to accept the invitation of young Lord Badenoch, return to their country, and support him in
the regency. Next morning, Edward was informed that they had secretly left Durham, with all their followers; and fearing that Bruce might also make his escape, a consultation was held between the king and Beck, of so threatening a complexion, that Gloucester no longer hesitated immediately to fulfil his pledged word to Wallace, and give the Scottish prince his liberty. When he was free the utmost that he could effect against Edward, would be to assume the crown of Scotland: “And that,” thought Gloucester, “is only his right. Hence I cannot believe I am doing a disloyal thing to my king, when I obey the holy injunction: Help the oppressed to his own; and partake not in the iniquity of the evil doers.”

Impelled by these sentiments, Gloucester led Bruce in safety through the vaulted passage; and taking an affectionate leave of him, they parted in the cemetery of Fincklay; Gloucester, to walk back to Durham by the banks of the Wear: and Bruce, to mount the horse the good earl had prepared, and left tied to a tree, to convey him to Hartlepool. There he embarked for Normandy. When he arrived at Caen, he did not delay; but pursuing his way across the country towards Guienne, where he hoped to meet Wallace, night and the storm overtook him; he lost his way; and after much wandering, at last, directed by the lights which glimmered from the cottage windows, he reached the door, begged for shelter—“And,” added he, “was compensated for every toil and suffering, by the sight of my best and dearest friend!”

The discourse next turned on their future plans. Wallace, having mentioned his adventure with the Red Reaver, and the acknowledgments of Philip for the rescue of his son, proposed that the favour he should ask in return, (as the King of France seemed very earnest to bestow on him some especial mark of gratitude;) would be his interference with Edward to grant the Scots a peaceable retention of their rights, “And then,” said he to Bruce, “you will take possession of your kingdom, with the olive branch in your hand.” Bruce nodded, but shook his head; “And what then will Robert Bruce be? A king, to be sure! but a king without...
a name. Who won me my kingdom? Who accomplished this peace? Was it not William Wallace? Can I then consent to mount the throne of my ancestors, so poor, so inconsiderable a creature? I am not jealous of your fame, Wallace; I glory in it; for you are more to me than the light to my eyes: but I would prove my right to the crown by deeds worthy of a sovereign. Till I have so shewn myself in the field against Scotland's enemies, I cannot consent to be restored to my inheritance, even by you."

"And is it in war alone," returned Wallace, "that you can shew deeds worthy of a sovereign? Think a moment, my dear friend, and then scorn your objection. Look around on the annals of history; nay, before your eyes, on the daily occurrences of the world, and see how many are brave and complete generals; how few, wise legislators, and such efficient rulers as to produce obedience to the laws, and happiness to the people. This is the commission of a king: to be the representative on earth of our father who is in heaven. Here is exercise for courage, for enterprise, for fortitude, for every virtue which elevates the character of man: this is the god-like jurisdiction of a sovereign. To go to the field, to lead his people to scenes of carnage, is often a duty in kings; but it is one of those necessities which, more than the trifling circumstances of sustaining nature by sleep and food, reminds the conqueror of the degraded state of mortality. The one shews the weakness of the body, the other, the corruption of the soul. For how far must man have fallen beneath his former heavenly nature, before he can delight in the destruction of his fellow men! Lament not, then, brave and virtuous prince, that I have kept your hands from the stains of blood. Shew yourself beyond the vulgar appreciation of what is fame; and conscious of the powers with which the Creator has endowed you, assume your throne with the dignity that is their due:— and whether it be in the cabinet or in the field that He calls you to act, there obey, and rely on it that a name greater than that of the hero of Macedon will awen, Robert King of Scots!" "You almost persuade me," returned Bruce. "But let us see Philip and then I am in decide."
As the morning was now advanced, the friends turned towards the cottage, intending to see Baliol safe at Rouen, and then proceed together to Guienne to the rescue of Lady Helen; after which, they hoped successful enterprise, they would visit Paris, and hear its monarch’s determination.

On entering the hovel they found Baliol awake, and anxiously inquiring of the widow what was become of the two young knights. At sight of them he stretched out his hands to both, and said he was so revived by his sleep, that he should be able to travel in a few hours. Wallace proposed sending to Rouen for a litter to carry him the more easily thither. “No,” cried Baliol with a frown, “Rouen shall never again see me within its walls. It was coming from thence that I lost my way last night; and though my poor servants would have gladly returned thither with me, sooner than suffer me to perish in the storm; yet, rather would I have been found dead on the road, a reproach to the kings who have betrayed me, than have taken an hour’s shelter in that inhospitable city.”

After some questions from the friends, Baliol, while they took the simple breakfast prepared for them by the widow, related, that in consequence of the interference of Philip le Bel with Edward, he had been released from the Tower of London, and sent to France, under an oath never again to leave that country. Philip then gave the exiled king the Castle of Galliard for a residence, where he was soon joined by several of his old adherents from Scotland. But his luxurious son, unable to exist divided from the pleasures of a gay court, abandoned his father, and went to Navarre; madly hoping to be elevated to the hand of its sovereign’s daughter. Baliol for some time enjoyed his shadow of royalty at Galliard; as he still had a sort of court, composed of the followers who were with him, and of the barons in the neighbourhood. Philip allowed him guards, and a splendid table. But on the peace being signed between France and England; that Edward might give up his ally the Earl of Flanders to his offended liege lord, Philip consented to relinquish the cause of Baliol, and though he should still give him
shelter in his dominions, remove from him all the appendages of a king.

"Accordingly," continued Baliol, "the guard was taken from my gates, my establishment was reduced to that of a private nobleman; and no longer having it in my power to gratify the avidity, or to flatter the ambition of those who came about me, I was soon left alone. All but the poor old men whom you see, and who had been faithful to me through every change of my life, instantly deserted the forlorn Baliol. But they remained; and from being servants, they became my companions; for none other ever appeared within the walls of Galliard. In vain I remonstrated with Philip: either my letters never reached him, or he disdained to answer the man whose cause he could abandon. Things were in this state, when the other day an English lord, who had been stranded off the coast, brought his suite to my castle. I received him with hospitality; but soon found that what I gave in kindness, he seized as a right;—in the true spirit of his master Edward, he treated me more like the keeper of an inn than a generous host: and such was his insolence, on my attempting to plead with him for a Scottish lady whom his turbulent passions has forced from her country and reduced to a pitiable state of illness, that he laughed at my arguments, and told me, that had I taken more care of my kingdom, the door would not have been left open for him to steal away its fairest prize—-.

Wallace interrupted him—"Heaven grant that you may be speaking of Lord de Valence and Lady Helen Mar!" "I am," replied Baliol, "but surely Sir William Wallace cannot rejoice in his countrywoman being likely to be made the compulsive property of any Southron lord?" "No;" replied he, "but I rejoice in finding them so near, I rejoice in the opportunity of so soon performing my word to her dying father, in rescuing her from the villain's arms." "They are now at Galliard," returned Baliol, "and as her illness seems a lingering one, De Valence declared to me his intentions of continuing there. He seized upon the best apartments, and carried himself with so much haughtiness that, provoked beyond endurance, I ordered my
horse, and accompanied by my honest men rode to Rouen to obtain redress from the governor. But the unworthy Frenchman told me with a look of derision, that his master having more respect for one English earl than for all the dethroned monarchs in Christendom, he advised me to go back, and by flattering De Valence, try to regain the favour of Edward. I retired in indignation, determining to assert my own rights in my own castle; but the storm overtook me, and after being abandoned by my friends, I was saved by my enemies.”—“Then you mean now to return to Galliard?”—inquired Wallace. “Immediately: and if you will go with me, I will engage, if the lady consent, (and that I do not doubt, for she scorns all his prayers for her hand, and passes night and day in tears;) to assist in her escape.”—“That,” Wallace replied, “was precisely what I was going to request.”

Baliol advised that they should not all return to the castle together, as the sight of two knights of their appearance accompanying his ghost, would alarm De Valence;—and so some bloody fray might succeed. “The quietest way,” said the deposed king, “is the surest. Follow me at a short distance; and towards the shadows of evening knock at the gates and request a night’s entertainment. I will grant it; and then your happy destiny, ever fortunate Wallace, must do the rest.”

This scheme being approved, a litter of hurdles was soon formed for the invalid monarch, and the old woman’s pallet spread upon it, “I will return it to you, my good widow,” said Baliol, “and with other proofs of my gratitude.” The two friends then assisted the king to rise. And when Baliol set his foot to the floor, he felt so surprisingly better, that he thought he could ride the journey. Wallace over-ruled this wish for fear of further delays; and with Bruce, supported his emaciated figure towards the door. The widow stood to see her guests depart. Baliol, as he mounted his travelling machine, put a piece of gold into her hand. Wallace saw not what the king had given, and gave a purse as his reward. Bruce had nought to bestow. He had left Durham with little, and that little was ex-
pended. “My good widow,” said he, “I am poor in every thing but gratitude. In lieu of gold you must accept my prayers!” “May they, sweet youth,” replied she, “return on your own head, and give you bread from the barren land, and water out of the sterile rock!” “And have you no blessing for me, mother!” said Wallace, turning round, and regarding her with an impressive look; “Some spirit that you wist not of, speaks in your words.” “Then it must be a good spirit,” answered she, “for all that is around me betokens gladness. The scripture saith, Be kind to the way-faring man, for many have so entertained angels unawares! Yesterday at this time, I was poor and in misery. Last night I opened my doors in the storm, you entered and gave me riches, he follows and endows me with his prayers! Am I not then greatly favoured by him who giveth bread to all who trust in him? From this day forth, I will light a fire each night in a part of my house where it must be seen on every side from a great distance. Like you, princely knight, whose gold will make it burn, it shall shine afar, and give light and comfort to all who approach it.” “And when you look on it,” said Wallace, “tell your beads for me. I am a son of war; and it may blaze when my vital spark is just expiring.” The widow paused, gazed on him steadily, and then burst into tears. “And is it possible that beautiful face may be laid in dust, that youthful form lie cold in clay, and these aged limbs survive to light a beacon to your memory! and it shall arise! It shall burn like a holy flame, an incense to heaven for the soul of him who has succoured the feeble, and made the widow’s heart to sing for joy!” Wallace pressed the old woman’s withered hand: Bruce did the same. She saw them mount their horses, and when they disappeared from her eyes, she returned into her cottage and wept.
WHEN Baliol arrived within a few miles of Chateau Galliard, he pointed to a wood, and told Wallace that under its groves he had best shelter himself till the setting sun; soon after which he should expect him and Bruce at the castle.

Long indeed seemed the interval. It usually happens that in contemplating a project, while the period of its execution appears distant, we think on it with composure; but when the time of action is near, when we only wait the approach of an auxiliary, or the lapse of an hour; every passing moment appears an age, and the impatient soul seems ready to break every bound to grasp the completion of its enterprise. So Wallace now felt; felt as he had never done before: for in all his warlike exploits, each achievement had followed the moment of resolve; but here, he was delayed to grow in ardor as he contemplated an essay in which every generous principle of man was summoned into action. He was going to rescue from the hands of a ravisher, the daughter of a brave veteran, his first friend in the great struggle, one who had fallen in the cause. A daughter who, by her intrepidity had once saved Scotland; a helpless woman in the hands of a man of violence! Glad was he then to see the sun sink behind the western hills. Bruce and he closed their visors, mounted their horses, and set off on full speed towards the chateau.

When they came in view of the antique towers of Galliard, they slackened their pace and more leisurely advanced to the gates. The bugle of Wallace demanded admittance; a courteous assent was brought by the warder, and the friends were conducted into a room where Baliol sat in a large chair. De Valence was walking to and fro in a great chafe; he started at sight of the princely armour of Wallace, (for he, as Baliol had done, conceived from the lilied diadem that the stranger must be of the royal house of France,) and composing his turbulent spirit, he bowed respectfully to the supposed prince. Wallace returned the salutation; and Baliol, rising, accosted him with no inconsiderable gravity.
erable degree of animation. He at once saw the mistake of De Valence, and perceived how greatly it would facilitate the execution of their project.

On his return to the chateau, De Valence had received him with more than his usual insolence; for the governor of Rouen had sent him an account of the despised monarch's complaint to him.—And when the despotic lord heard the sound of the bugle at the great gate, and learnt that it was the request of two travelling knights to be admitted to lodging, he flew to Baliol in displeasure to command him to recall his granted leave. —At the moment of his wrath, Wallace entered, and covered him with confusion. Struck with seeing a French prince in one of the persons he was going to treat with such indignity, he shrunk into himself, and bowed before him, with all the cowering meanness of his base and haughty soul. Wallace felt his pre-eminence, and bent his head in acknowledgment, with a majesty which convinced the earl that he was not mistaken. Baliol welcomed his guest in a manner not to dispel the earl's error.

"Happy am I," cried he, "that the hospitality which John Baliol intended to shew to a mere traveller, confers on him the distinction of serving one of a race whose favour confers protection, and its friendship honour." Wallace returned a gracious reply to this speech; for though he might well apply it to himself, yet he guessed that it was intended to mislead De Valence, and turning to Bruce, he said, "This knight is my friend; and though neither of us, from particular circumstances choose to disclose our names, whatever they may be, during this journey, yet you will confide in the word of one whom you have honoured by the address you have now made, and believe that his friend is not unworthy the hospitalities of him who was once King of Scots."

De Valence now approached, and announcing who he was, assured the knights, in the name of the king of England, whom he was going to represent in Guienne, of every respect from himself and assistance from his retinue, to bring them properly on their way. "I return you the thanks due to your courtesy," replied Wallace,
"and shall certainly remain to-night a burthen to King Baliol, but in the morning we must depart as we came, having a vow to perform which excludes the service of attendants."

A splendid supper was soon served, at the board of which De Valence sat as well as Baliol. The English earl never withdrew from the moment that the strangers entered, so cautious was he to prevent Baliol informing his illustrious guests of the captivity of Lady Helen Mar. Wallace ate nothing; he sat with his visor still closed, and almost in profound silence, never speaking but when spoken to, and then only answering in as few words as possible. De Valence supposed that this taciturnity was connected with his vow, and did not further remark it: but Bruce (who at Caen had furnished himself with a complete suit of black armour) appeared, though equally invisible under his visor, infinitely more accessible. The humbler fashion of his martial accoutrement did not announce the prince, but his carriage was so noble, his conversation bespoke so accomplished a mind and brave a spirit, that De Valence did not doubt that both the men before him were of the royal family. He had never seen Charles de Valois, and believing that he now saw him in Wallace, he directed all that discourse to Bruce which he meant should reach the ear of De Valois, and from him pass to that of the King of France. Bruce saw what was passing in his mind, and with as much amusement in the scene, as design, he led forward the earl's mistake, but rather by allowing him to deceive himself, than by any active means on his side to increase the deception. De Valence threw out hints respecting a frontier town in Guienne, north of the Garonne, which he thought his royal master could be persuaded to yield to the French monarch, as naturally belonging to Gascony. But then the affair must be properly laid before him; and that De Valence said he believed, had he motive to investigate some parchments in his possession, he might be able to do, and to convince Edward of the superior claims of the French king. And then casting out hints of the right he had by his ancestors, to the seigniory of Valence in Dauphiny; he, in short, after much circumlocution, gave them to under-
stand, that if Philip would either invest him with the revenues of Valence on the Rhone, or give him some equivalent, he would engage that the town in question should be delivered to France.

Baliol, notwithstanding his resolution to keep awake and assist his friends in their enterprise, was so overcome by his late fatigue, that he had fallen asleep soon after supper, and so gave De Valence full opportunity to unveil his widely-grasping mind to Bruce. Wallace now saw that the execution of his project must depend wholly on himself: and how to inform Helen that he was in the castle, and of his plan to get her out of it, hardly occupied him more than what to devise to detain De Valence in the eating-room while he went out to prosecute his design. As these thoughts absorbed him, by an unconscious movement he turned towards the English earl. De Valence paused and looked at him, supposing he was going to speak; but finding that he did not, the earl addressed him with some hesitation, feeling an inexplicable awe of directly saying to him what he had so easily uttered to his more approachable companion; “I seek not, illustrious stranger,” said he, “to inquire the name you have already intimated must be concealed; but I have sufficient faith in that brilliant circlet round your brows to be convinced (as none other than the royal hand of Philip could bestow it) that it distinguishes a man of the first honour. You now know my sentiments, prince; and for the advantage of both kings, I confide them to your services.” Wallace rose: “Whether I am prince or vassal,” replied he, “my services shall ever be given in the cause of justice, and of that Earl De Valence, you will be convinced when next you hear of me. My friend,” cried he, turning to Bruce, “you will remain with our host, while I go to the vigils of my vow.”

Bruce understood him. It was not merely with their host he was to remain, but to detain De Valence; and opening at once the versatile powers of his abundant mind, his vivacity charmed the earl, while the magnificence of his views in policy corroborated the idea to De Valence that he was conversing with one, whose birth had placed him beyond even the temptations of
those ambitions which, in the midst of the earl's passion for Helen, were at that moment subjecting his soul to every species of flattery, meanness, and in fact, disloyalty. Bruce, in his turn, listened to all De Valence's dreams of aggrandizement with much apparent interest; and recollecting his reputation for a love of wine, he replenished his glass so often that the fumes made him forget all reserves; and after pouring forth the whole history of his attachment to Helen, and his resolution to subdue her abhorence by love and grandeur, he gradually lowered his key, and at last fell fast asleep.

Meanwhile, Wallace, as soon as he quitted the banqueting chamber, wrapped himself in Baliol's blue cloak which lay in the anti-room, (for he had observed that De Valence wore a similar one at supper) and determining to pass to Helen's apartment as the earl, he enveloped even his helmet in the friendly mantle, and moving swiftly along the gallery was met by a page. "Precede me with a light," said he, affecting the rough voice of De Valence, "first to the stranger knight's apartment, and then to my lady's." The boy, who conceived him to be the earl, obeyed; and Wallace, having seen that all was, as he had planned with Baliol, in the chamber appointed for him, followed his conductor to Lady Helen's door. There he made a sign to be left.—It was now within an hour of midnight. He opened the latch. Two women lay on couches on each side of the door. These were creatures of De Valence. They started up at the noise, but he, waving his hand to them to be quiet, they, supposing it was their master, again composed themselves to rest. He then took the lamp that burnt on the table, and approached the bed of Helen. He covered the light with his hand, that it might not glare in her eyes while he observed her. She was in a profound sleep, but pale as the sheet which enveloped her:—her countenance seemed troubled, her brows frequently knit themselves, and she started as she dreamt, as if in apprehension. Once he heard her lips faintly murmur; "Save me, Wallace! on you alone——" there she stopped. His heart beat at this appeal. "I come
to save thee," he would have cried, but he checked the exclamation: his hand, in agitation, dropped at the same instant from before the lamp, and the blaze striking full on her eyes, waked her. She looked up; she saw, as she supposed, her dream realized, De Valence leaning over her bed, and herself wholly in his power:—for she knew not that the compassionate Baliol had returned. She shrieked with a cry of such distress as went through the soul of Wallace. The women raised themselves upon their couches, but Wallace repeating his sign to them to remain still, they obeyed. Helen covered herself with the clothes, and trembling, and in broken accents called on God to preserve her. "Lady Helen," whispered he, "look up; for a moment, look up."—"No, no," cried she, still believing it was De Valence, "Leave me, if you would not see me die, for know that these outrages will at last kill me."

Wallace durst not breathe his name for fear of being overheard. How was he then to persuade her to turn her eyes upon him?—He replied in rather a louder and stern voice, "Look on me, Lady Helen, this moment, or dread more fearful consequences. Look on me, and then I pledge you my honour, that if you desire it, I never will see you more!"—"Ever deceitful De Valence," cried she, "I will deserve honour, though I meet it not,—I will look on you; and release me, or—Oh! God of life and death, take me to thyself!" "Look up and try me," replied Wallace. The visored helmet, and the roughened tone in which he spoke, prevented her distinguishing that it was other than the voice of De Valence, and with a trembling horror which made the very bed shake under her, she drew down the coverlid. At the first motion of her hands to unveil her face, Wallace raised the visor from his, and holding the lamp so that she should see him distinctly, at the moment when with despair in her heart she turned her head to dart a glance at De Valence full of abhorrence, she meet the eyes dearest to her on earth—those of Sir William Wallace. A cry of joy would have escaped her, had he not put his finger on his lip; but falling back on her bed, the joy of hope, of happiness, of again seeing him who in her estimation was her
earthly security, her all here now that her father was no more, shook her with such strong emotions that Wallace feared to see her delicate frame expire in the tumult, or at least find repose in some deadly swoon. Alarmed for her life, or the accomplishment of her deliverance, he threw himself on his knees beside her, and softly whispered, "Be composed, for the love of heaven and your own safety! be collected and firm, and you shall fly this place with me to-night." Helen with all the fervor of her grateful soul, hardly conscious of the action, grasped the hand that held hers and replied "I will obey, command me, I will obey."—"Then request me, vehemently and loudly, to leave the room, and strike the lamp from my hand." Helen again looked towards him, but while her lips obeyed, her heart checked the words, and feeble was the injunction with which she bade him leave her.—Conscious of it, she blushingly repeated the command with some energy, and struck the lamp from his hand. Wallace immediately set his foot on it, and they were left in darkness. With a voice loud enough for the women to distinctly hear, (who were curiously listening, though they could not before make out any thing but that Lady Helen was in great agitation) he reproached her for her violence, and added, "I leave you to the darkness you have brought upon yourself; and I command that you neither speak to your attendants, nor answer their questions, nor have another light in your room, till you see me again." He then whispered to her to rise from her bed, and allow him in this favourable obscurity to lead her from the chamber. Helen spoke not, but in a tremor of timid delight, threw a dressing gown over her, which always lay on her pillow, and putting her feet into her slippers, stretched out her hand to Wallace. He took it. It was cold with agitation; and finding that weakness and emotion deprived her of the power to sustain her steps over the floor; he gently took her in his arms, and once more turning to the bed, said "Farewell cruel Helen!" and with cautious steps he bore her through the door. To meet any of De Valence's men in the passages, while in this situation, would betray all. To avoid this, he hastened through the illuminated galleries, and turning
into the apartment appointed for himself, laid his almost fainting burthen upon the bed. "Water?" said she, "and I shall revive." He gave her some, and at the same time laying a page's suit of clothes (which Baliol had provided) down beside her. "Dress yourself in these, Lady Helen," said he. "I shall withdraw meanwhile into the passage, but as soon as you are ready, come to the door, for your safety depends on expedition."

Before she could answer he had disappeared. And Helen having instantly thrown herself on her knees to thank God for this commencement of her deliverance, and to beseech his blessings on its consummation, she rose strengthened: and obeying Wallace, the moment she was equipped she laid her hand upon the latch, but the watchful ear of her friend heard her, and he immediately opened the door. The lamps of the gallery shone full upon the light grace of her figure, as shrinking with blushing modesty, and yet eager to be with her preserver, she stood hesitating before him. He threw his cloak over her, and putting her arm through his, in the unobscured blaze of his princely armour, descended to the lower hall of the castle. One man only was there. Wallace ordered him to open the great door.—"It is a fine night," said he, "and I shall ride some miles before I sleep."—The man asked if he were to saddle the horses,—he was answered in the affirmative; and the gate being immediately unbarred, Wallace led his precious charge into the freedom of the open air. As soon as she saw the outside of those towers which she had so lately entered as the worst of all prisoners, her heart so overflowed with gratitude to her deliverer, that sinking by his side upon her knees, she could only grasp his hand and bathe it with the pure tears of rescued innocence. Her manner penetrated his soul; he raised her in his arms: but she, dreading that she had perhaps done too much, convulsively articulated—"My father—his blessing—" "Was a rich endowment, Lady Helen," returned he, "and you shall ever find me deserving it." Her head leaned on his breast. But how different was the lambent flame which seemed to mingle in either heart as they now beat against
each other, from the destructive fire which shot from the burning veins of Lady Mar when she would have polluted with her unchaste lips this shrine of a beloved wife, this bosom consecrated to her sacred image!—Wallace had shrunk from her as from the touch of some hideous contagion. But with Lady Helen, it was soul meeting soul; it was innocence resting on the bosom of virtue. No thought that saints would not have approved was there; no emotion which angels might not have shared, glowed in their grateful bosoms—She, grateful to him; both grateful to God.

The man brought the horses from the stable. He knew that two strangers had arrived at the castle, and not noticing Helen's stature, he supposed that they were both before him. He had been informed by the servants, that the taller of the two was the Count de Valois, and he now held the stirrup for him to mount. But Wallace first placed Helen on Bruce's horse, and then vaulting on his own, put a piece of gold into the attendant's hand. "You will return, noble prince?" inquired the man. "Why should you doubt it?" answered Wallace. "Because," replied the servant, "I wish the brother of the King of France to know the foul deeds which are done in his dominions." "By whom?" asked Wallace, much surprised at this address. "By the Earl de Valence, prince," answered he; "he has now in this castle a beautiful lady whom he brought from a foreign land and treats in a manner unbecoming a knight or a man."—"And what would you have me do?" said Wallace, willing to judge whether this applicant were honest in his appeal. "Come in the power of your royal brother," answered he, "and demand the Lady Helen Mar of Lord de Valence."

Helen, who had listened with trepidation to this dialogue, drew nearer Wallace, and in an agitated whisper said, "Ah! let us hasten away!" The man was close enough to hear her. "Hah!" cried he, in a burst of doubtful joy, "Is it so? Is she here? say so, noble knight, and Rollo Grimsby will serve ye both for ever!"—"Grimsby!" cried Helen, recollecting his voice the moment he had declared his name, "What,
the honest English soldier?—I, and my preserver will indeed value so trusty a follower."

The name of Grimsby was too familiar to the memory of Wallace, too closely associated with his most cherished meditations, for him not to recognise it with melancholy pleasure. He had never seen Grimsby, but he knew him well worthy of his confidence, and ordering him (if he really desired to follow Lady Helen) to bring two more horses from the stables; as soon as they were brought, he made the joyful signal concerted with Bruce: as soon as he and his charge were out of the castle, he was to sound the Scottish pryse with his bugle.

The happy tidings met the ear of Bruce, who sat anxiously watching the sleep of De Valence, for fear he should awake, and leaving the room, interrupt Wallace in his enterprise. What then was his transport, when the first note of the horn burst upon the silence around him.—He sprang on his feet. The impetuosity of the action waked Baliol. Bruce made a sign to him to be silent, and pressing his hand with energy, he forgot the former Baliol in the present, and for a moment bending his knee, kissed the hand he held, and rising—was out of the room in an instant.

He flew across the outward hall, through the open gates:—and Wallace perceiving him rode out from under the shadow of the trees. The bright light of the moon shone on his sparkling crest:—that was sufficient for Bruce; and Wallace falling back again into the shade, was joined the next moment by his eager friend. Who this friend was for whom her deliverer told Helen he waited, she did not ask; for she dreaded while so near danger to breathe a word, but she guessed that it must be either Murray or Edwin. De Valance, impatient to shew her how desolate she was left, how dependant she was on him for love and happiness, had told her that not only her father was dead of his wounds, but that her uncles the Lords Bothwell and Ruthven had both been killed in the last battle. Hence, one of her two fatherless cousins, she now, with a saddened joy, prepared to see,—and every filial recollection pressing on her heart, her tears flowed silently, and in abund-
As Bruce approached his black mantle so enveloped him that she could not distinguish his figure. Wallace stretched his hand out to him in silence; he grasped it with the warm but mute congratulation of friendship, and throwing himself on his steed while Grimsby mounted another, triumphantly exclaimed, "Now for Paris!" and without the aid of spurs to his eager horse, he gaily led the way in full speed. Helen recognised none she knew in his voice, and drawing close to the white courser of Wallace, with something like disappointment mingling with her happier thoughts she kept pace with the fleetness of its steps.

CHAP. XIX.

Avoiding the beaten track of Rouen, Wallace, (to whom Grimsby was now a most valuable auxiliary, being so well acquainted with every part of the country,) took a sequestered path by the banks of the Orne, and entered the extensive forest of Alencon just as the moon set. Having ridden far and without cessation, Grimsby proposed for the lady's sake that they should alight, and allow her to repose awhile under the trees. Helen was indeed nearly exhausted; though the idea that she was flying from a man she abhorred, and under the protection of the only man whom she could ever love, seemed to have absorbed her being into his, and by inspiring her with a strength which surprised even herself, had for a long time kept her insensible to any fatigue. While her friends pressed on with a speed which allowed of no more conversation than merely occasional inquiries of how she bore the journey, the swiftness of the motion, and the rapidity of the events which had brought her from the most frightful of situations into one of the dearest to her secret and hardly-breathed wishes, so bewildered her faculties that she almost feared she was only enjoying one of those dreams which since her captivity had often mocked her with the image of Wallace and her release; and every moment she feared to awake and find herself...
still the prisoner of De Valence.—"I want no rest," replied she to the observation of Grimsby, "I could take none till we are beyond the possibility of being overtaken by my enemy."—"You are as safe in this wood, lady," returned the soldier, "as you can be in any place betwixt Galliard and Paris: it is many leagues from the chateau, and lies in so remote a direction, that I am sure, were the earl to pursue us, he would never choose this path." "And did he even come up with us, dear Lady Helen," said Wallace, "could you fear when with your father's friend?" "It is for my father's friend I fear," gently answered she, "I can have no dreads for myself, while under such protection."

A very little more persuaded Helen, and Grimsby having spread his cloak on the grass, Wallace lifted her from the horse, as soon as she put her foot to the ground and attempted to stand, her head grew giddy, and she must have fallen, but for the supporting arm of her watchful friend. He carried her to the couch prepared by the good soldier and laid her on it. Grimsby had been more provident than they could have expected, for when, after saddling the second pair of horses, he returned into the hall for his cloak, he found the remnants of the seneschal's supper still on the table, and taking an undrawn flask of wine, he put it into his vest. This he now produced, and Wallace made Helen drink some of it. The cordial revived her; and leaning against his arm, she soon found the repose her wearied frame, in spite of the happy agitation of her spirits, demanded and induced. For fear of disturbing her, not a word was spoken.—Wallace supported her head, and Bruce sat at her feet, while Grimsby remained with the horses as a kind of outpost.

Sweet was her sleep; for the thoughts with which she sunk into slumber filled her dreams. Still she was riding by the side of Wallace, and listening to his voice cheering her through the lengthening way! But some wild animal, in its nightly prowl, starting upon the horses, frightened them so that they began to snort and plunge; and though the no less terrified alarmer fled far away, it was with difficulty that the voice and
management of Grimsby could quiet them. The noise they made suddenly awoke Helen, and her scattered faculties not immediately collecting themselves, she felt an instant impression that all had indeed been but a dream, and starting in affright, she exclaimed—
"Where am I? Wallace where art thou?"—"Here, my dear Lady Helen;" cried he, pressing her to his breast with fraternal tenderness; "I am here; you are safe with your friend and brother." Her heart beat violently with a terror which this assurance could hardly subdue. At last she spoke, and in an agitated voice said, "Forgive me, if my senses are a little bewildered?—I have suffered so much—and this release seems so miraculous, that at moments I hardly believe it real. I wish day-light were come, that I might be convinced." When she had uttered these words, she suddenly stopped and added, as she felt herself blush all over.—"But I am very silly to talk thus;—I believe my late terrors have disordered my head."
"What you feel, lady, is only natural;" observed Bruce, "I experienced the same when I first regained my liberty and found myself on the road to join Sir William Wallace. Dear, indeed, is liberty; but dearer is the friend whose virtues make our recovered freedom sure."—"Who speaks to me?" said Helen, in a low voice to Wallace, and raising her head from that bosom on which she felt she did but too much delight to lean, "It is one," answered Wallace in the same tone, "who is not to be publicly known until occasion demands it; one who, I trust in God, will one day seal the happiness of Scotland,—Robert Bruce." That name which, when in her idea it belonged to Wallace, used to raise such emotions in her breast, she now heard with an indifference that surprised her. But who could be more to Scotland than Wallace had been? All that was in the power of patriot or of king to do for his country he had done; and what then was Bruce in her estimation? One who, basking in pleasures while his country suffered, allowed a brave subject to breast and to overthrow every danger before he would put himself forward; and now he appeared, to assume a throne which, though his right by birth, he had most justly
forfeited by a neglect of the duties indispensable in the heir of so great and oppressed a kingdom. These would have been her thoughts of him:—But Wallace called this Bruce his friend: the few words which she had heard him speak, were generous and full of a gratitude to her deliverer which would have engaged her esteem, even had it not been accompanied by a tone of voice and manner of expression which bespoke an ardent, ingenuous, and amiable mind.

The answer, however, that she made to the reply of Wallace was spontaneous and struck upon the heart of Bruce: “How long,” said she, “have you promised Scotland that it should see that day.”

“Long, to my grief, Lady Helen,” rejoined Bruce. “I would say to my shame, had I ever intentionally erred towards my country; but ignorance of her state and of the depth of Edward’s treachery, was my crime. I only required to be shewn the right path, to pursue it; and Sir William Wallace came to point the way. My soul, lady, is not unworthy the destiny to which he calls me.” Had it been light, she would have seen the flush of conscious virtue that overspread his fine countenance while he spoke: but the words were sufficient to impress her with that respect for his character he deserved, and which her answer shewed—“My ever-to-be-lamented father taught me to consider Bruce as the rightful king of Scotland; and now that I see the day which he so often wished to hail, I cannot but regard it as the termination of Scotland’s woes. Oh! had it been before, perhaps——” here she paused, for tears stopped her utterance. “You think,” rejoined Bruce, “that much bloodshed might have been spared! But, dear Lady Helen, poison not the comfort of your life by that belief. No man exists who could have effected so much for Scotland in so short a time, and with so little loss, as our Wallace has done. Who, like him, makes mercy the companion of war; and compels even his enemies to emulate the clemency he shews? Fewer have been slain on the Scottish side during the whole of his struggle with Edward, than were lost by Baliol on the fatal day of Dunbar. Then, no quarter was given; and too many of the wounded
THE SCOTTISH CHIEFS.

were left to perish on the field. But with Wallace, life was granted to all who asked; and the wounded enemy as well as the friend was alike succoured by him. This conduct provoked the jealousy of the Southron generals not to be surpassed in generosity; and thus comparatively few have been lost. But if in that number, some were our noblest chiefs, we must be resigned to yield to God what is his own; nay, we must be grateful, daughter of the gallant Mar, for the manner in which they were taken. "They fell in the arms of true glory, like parents defending their offspring; while others,—my grandfather and father, perish'd with broken hearts, in unavailing lamentations that they could not share the fate of those who died for Scotland." "But you, dear Bruce," returned Wallace, "will live for her: will teach those whose hearts have bled in her cause, to find a balm for every wound, in her prosperity."

Helen smiled through her tears at these words.—They spoke the heavenly consolation which had descended on her own mourning spirit. "If Scotland be to rest under the happy reign of Robert Bruce, then envy cannot again assail Sir William Wallace, and my father has not shed his blood in vain. His beatified spirit, with those of my uncles Bothwell and Ruthven, will rejoice in such peace; and I shall enjoy it to felicity, in so sacred a participation." Wallace, surprised at her associating the name of Lord Ruthven with those who had fallen, interrupted her with the information that when he last quitted Scotland, he had left him in perfect health. Helen, happy at these tidings, explained that De Valence had given her the opposite intelligence, with other dreadful accounts, in order, most probably, by impressing her with an idea that she was friendless, to precipitate her into the determination of becoming his wife. But she did not repeat to her brave auditors all the arguments he had used to shake her impregnable heart. Impregnable, because a principle kept guard there, which neither flattery nor ambition could dispossess. He had told her that the very day in which she would give him her hand, King Edward would send him viceroy into Scotland, where
she should reign with all the power and magnificence of a queen. He was handsome, accomplished, and adored her: but Helen could not love him whom she could not esteem; for she knew he was libertine, base, and cruel.—That he loved her, affected her not: she could only be sensible to an affection placed on worthy foundations; and he who trampled on all virtues in his own actions, could not desire them when seen in her; he therefore must love her for the fairness of her form, "which to-day is, and to-morrow is thrown into the grave!" and to place any value on such affection would be to grasp the wind. Personal flatteries having made no impression on Helen, ambitious projects were attempted with equal ill success. Had De Valence been lord of the east and western empire, could he have made her the envy and admiration of a congregated world, all would have been in vain: she had seen and known the virtues of Sir William Wallace, and from that hour, all that was excellent in man, all that was desirable on earth, seemed to her to be in him summed up. "On the barren heath," said she to herself, "in some desert island, with only thee and thy virtues, how happy could be Helen Mar! how great!—For, to share thy heart, thy noble, glorious heart, would be a bliss, a seal of honour from heaven, with which no terrestrial elevation could compare!" Then would she sigh; then would she thank God for so ennobling her as to make her capable of appreciating and loving above all earthly things the matchless virtues of Sir William Wallace. "Yes," thought she, on the very evening of the night when he so unexpectedly appeared to release her, "even in loving thy perfections there is such enjoyment that I would rather be as I am, what others might call the hopeless Helen, than the loving and beloved of any other man on earth. In thee, I love virtue; and the imperishable sentiment will bless me in the world to come." With these thoughts she had fallen asleep: She dreamt that she called on Wallace to save her, and on opening her eyes, she had found him indeed near her.

Every word which this almost adored friend, now said to comfort her with regard to her own immediate
losses; to assure her of the peace of Scotland, should heaven bless the return of Bruce; took root in her soul, and sprang up into resignation and happiness. She listened to the plans of Wallace and Bruce to effect their great enterprise: and several hours of the night, during which he rested, passed to her not only in repose, but in enjoyment. Wallace, though pleased with the sympathetic interest she took in even the minutest details of their design, became fearful of over-tasking her weakened frame: he whispered Bruce to gradually drop the conversation; and, as it died away, slumber again stole over her eye-lids.

The dawn had spread far over the sky while she yet slept. Wallace sat contemplating her, and the now sleeping Bruce, who had also imperceptibly sunk to rest. Various and anxious were his meditations. He had hardly seen seven-and-twenty years, yet so had he been tried in the vicissitudes of life, that he felt as if he had lived a century; and instead of looking on the lovely Helen, as on one whose charms might claim a lover's wishes in his breast, he regarded her with sentiments more like parental tenderness. That indeed seemed the affection which now reigned in his bosom. He felt as a father towards Scotland: for every son and daughter of that harassed country, he was ready to lay down his life: Edwin, he cherished in his heart as he would have done the dearest of his own offspring: it was as a parent to whom a beloved and prodigal son had returned, that he looked on Bruce: but Helen, of all Scotland's daughters, she was the most precious in his eyes; set love aside, and no object without the touch of that all-pervading passion, could he regard with more endearing tenderness than he did Helen Mar. The shades of night passed away under the bright rise of the king of day, and with them her slumbers. She stirred, she awoke. The lark was then soaring with shrill cadence over her head: the notes pierced the ear of Bruce, and he started on his feet. "You have allowed me to sleep, Wallace!" "And why not?" replied he. "Here it was safe enough for all to have slept. Had there been danger, I would have called you." "Whence, my good friend," cried Bruce with a smile,
"did you draw the ethereal essence that animates your frame? You toil for us, watch for us, and yet you never seem fatigued, never discomposed!—How is this? What does it mean, Wallace?" "That the soul is immortal," answered he; "that it has a godlike power even while on earth to subdue the wants of this mortal frame. The circumstances in which heaven has cast me, have disciplined my body to obey my mind in all things; and therefore, when the motives for exertion are strong within me, it is long, very long, before I either feel hunger, thirst, or drowsiness. Indeed while so occupied, I have often thought it possible for the activity of the soul so to wear the body, as some day to find it suddenly fall away from about her spiritual substance, and leave her unencumbered, without having felt the touch of death. And yet that Elisha-like change," continued Wallace, "would not be till heaven sees the appointed time.—Man does not live by bread alone, neither by sleep, nor any species of refreshment.—His spirit who created all things, can give us rest while we keep the strictest vigils: his power can sustain the wasting frame, even in a barren wilderness."

"True," replied Helen, looking timidly up; "but because heaven is so gracious as sometimes to work miracles in our favour, surely we are not authorized to neglect the natural means of obtaining the same end?" "Certainly not," returned Wallace, "it is not for man to tempt God at any time. Sufficient for us is to abide by his all wise dispensations. When we are in circumstances to allow of our partaking the usual means of life, it is demanded of us to use them. But when we are brought into situations where watching, fasting, and uncommon toils are necessary; then it is an essential part of our obedience, to perform our duties to the end, without any regard to the wants which may impede our way. It is in that hour, when the soul of man, resolved to obey, looks down on human nature and looks up to God, and he derives from him both the manna and the ever-living waters of heaven. By this, the uplifted hands of Moses prevailed over Amalek in
Rephidim; by this, did the lengthened race of the sun light Joshua to a double victory in Gibeon."

The morning vapours being dispersed from the opposite plain, and Helen quite refreshed by her long repose, Wallace seated her on her horse, and they recommenced their journey. The helmets of both chiefs were now open.—Grimsby looked at one and the other; the countenance of both assured him that he should find a protector in either. He drew towards Helen: she noticed his manner, and observing to Wallace that she believed the soldier wished to speak with her, she checked her horse. At this action, Grimsby presumed to ride up, and bowing respectfully to her, said, that before he followed her to Paris it would be right for the Count de Valois to know whom he had taken into his train; "one, madam, who has been degraded by King Edward; degraded," added he, "but not debased; that last disgrace depends on myself; and I should shrink from your protection, rather than court it, were I indeed vile." "I have too well proved your integrity, Grimsby," replied Helen, "to doubt it now; but what has the Count de Valois to do with your being under my protection? It is not to him we go, but to the French king." "And is not that knight with the diadem," inquired Grimsby with surprise, "the Count de Valois? All the servants at Chateau Galliard told me that he was." Helen, astonished at this, said the knight should answer for himself. At that moment Wallace was looking towards them. She quickened the step of her horse, and followed by Grimsby, came to his side.

As soon as Wallace had heard from her what was the wish of the soldier, he called him to approach. "My friend," said he, "you have claims upon me which should insure you my protection, were I even insensible to the honourable principles you have just declared to Lady Helen. But I repeat I am already your friend. —You have only to speak, and all that is in my power to do to serve you, shall be done." "Then, sir," returned he, "as mine is rather a melancholy story, and parts of it have already drawn many tears from Lady Helen, if you will honour me with your attention apart

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from her, I would relate how I fell into disgrace with
my sovereign."

Wallace fell a little back with Grimsby, and while
Bruce and Helen rode briskly forward, he, at a slower
pace, prepared to listen to the recapitulation of scenes
in which he was only too deeply interested. Grimsby
accordingly began by narrating the fatal events at El-
erslie which had compelled him to leave the army in
Scotland. He related, that after quitting the priory of
St. Fillan, he reached Guienne, and there served under
the Earl of Lincoln until the marriage of Edward with
King Philip's sister gave the English monarch quiet
possession of that province. Grimsby then went with
the rest of the troops to join their sovereign in Flan-
ders. There he was recognised and brought to judg-
ment, by one of Heselrigge's captains; one who had
been a particular favourite with that tyrant from their
similarity of disposition, and to whom, after his return
from Ellerslie, he had told the mutiny and desertion
(as he called it) of Grimsby. But on the representa-
tion of the Earl of Lincoln, his punishment was mitigated
from death to the infliction of a certain number of lash-
es. This sentence, which the honest soldier regarded
as worse than the loss of life, was executed. On stripp-
ing him at the halbert, the diamond clasp was found
hanging round his neck. This was seized as the proof
of a new crime: his general now gave him up; and in
contempt of all his asseverations of innocence, so incon-
sistent were his judges, that while they allowed his
treason (for so they stigmatized his manly resentment
of Heselrigge's cruelty,) to prejudice them against
him in this his second charge, they would not believe
what was so probable, that this very jewel was given
to him by a friend of Sir William Wallace, as a reward
for his behaviour on that occasion. They decided at
once that he was a thorough villain, and unworthy to
live. He appealed to Edward; but he appealed in vain;
and on the following day he was adjudged to be broken
on the wheel for the robbery of this jewel. Every
heart was callous to his sufferings, but that of a poor
woman, (the wife of his gaoler,) who fancied him like a
brother of hers that had been killed ten years before in
Italy; and at the dead of night she opened his prison-door and set him free. He fled into Normandy; and without a home, outlawed, branded as a traitor and a thief, he was wandering half desperate on the shore one stormy night, almost tempted by despair to plunge into the raging flood, when the cry of distress attracted his attention. A ship was stranded. He ran to the neighbouring fishermen, put off in the first boat himself, and with indefatigable labour, by rowing backwards and forwards, saved the whole crew. This was De Valence in his way to Guienne. Chateau Galliard was the nearest residence fit to receive the earl and his train. Thither they went, taking Grimsby along with them: and from the servants he learnt that the lady whom he saw always covered with a veil, and often very hardly used, was their lord's wife, and a lunatic. He remained in the chateau, because he had no where else to go, and soon found, by accidental speeches from the lady's attendants, that she was not married to the earl, and was not only perfectly sane but often most cruelly treated. Her name he had never heard breathed till on the last evening, when carrying some wine into the banqueting-room, De Valence mentioned it to the other stranger knight. He then retired to the hall, full of horror, resolving to essay her rescue himself: but the unexpected sight of the two knights determined him to reveal the case to them. "This," added Grimsby, "is my story; and whoever you are, noble lord, if you think me not unworthy your protection, yield it to me, and you shall find me faithful unto death."

"I owe you that and more," replied the chief, "I am that Wallace on whose account you fled your country;—and, if you be willing to share the fortunes of one who may live and die in camps, I pledge you that my best destiny shall be yours." Could Grimsby in his joyful surprise have thrown himself at the feet of Wallace, he would have done it; but taking hold of the drapery of his scarf he pressed it enthusiastically to his lips and exclaimed: "Bravest of the brave, this is beyond my prayers, to meet you here, whom I believed the triumphant lord of Scotland!—I fell innocently into disgrace; ah! how am I now exalted unto honour!—
My country would have deprived me of life; I am therefore dead to it, and live only to gratitude and you!"

"Then," replied Wallace, "as the first proof of the confidence I repose in you, know, that the young chief who is riding forward with Lady Helen, is Robert Bruce, the Prince of Scotland. Our next enterprise is to place him upon the throne of his ancestors.—Meanwhile, till we license you to do otherwise, keep our proper names a secret, and call us by those we may hereafter think fit to assume."

Grimsby, once more reinstated in the station he deserved, that of trust and respect, no longer hung his head in abject despondency; but looking erect, as one born again from disgrace, he became the active, cheerful, and faithful servant of Wallace.

Helen, during Wallace's conversation with the soldier, listened with delight to the encomiums which Bruce passed upon his friend and champion. As his eloquent tongue described the merits of Wallace, and expressed an ardent gratitude for his having so gloriously supplied his place to Scotland; Helen turned her eyes upon the prince: before, she had scarcely remarked that he was more than young and handsome; but now, while she contemplated the noble confidence which breathed in every feature, she said to herself, "this man is worthy to be the friend of Wallace! His soul is a mirror that will reflect all the brightness of Wallace's: aye, like as with the sun's rays, to light up with fire all on whom it turns."

Bruce remarked the unusual animation of her eyes as she looked on him. "You feel all I say of Wallace," said he. But it was not a charge at which she need blush. It was addressed to that perception of exalted worth which regards neither sex nor age. Helen did not misapprehend him.—The amiable frankness of his manner seemed to open to him her heart. Wallace she adored almost as a god; Bruce she could love as a brother. It requires not time nor proof, to make virtuous hearts coalesce: there is a language without sounds, a recognition independent of the visual organ, which acknowledges the kindred of congenial souls almost in the moment they meet, "The virtu-
ous mind knoweth its brother in the dark!"—This was said by a hero whose soul sympathized in every noble purpose with that of Wallace; and Helen, impelled by the same principle, blushing with an emotion untainted with any sensation of shame, replied, "I am grateful to heaven which has allowed me to witness the goodness, to share the esteem of such a man—if a man he may be called." "He is one of the few, Lady Helen," replied Bruce, "who is worthy of so august a title; and he brightly shews the image in which he was made; so humble, so dignified! so great, so lowly! so eminent in all accomplishments of mind and body; wise, brave, and invincible, and yet forbearing, gentle, and unassuming: formed to be beloved, yet without a touch of vanity; loving all who approach him, without the least alloy of passion.—Ah! Lady Helen, he is a model after which I will fashion my life; for he has written the character of the son of God in his heart; and it shall be my study to transcribe the blessed copy into mine!" The tear of rapture glittered in the eye and on the smile of Helen. To answer Bruce she found was impossible: but that her smile and look, were fully appreciated by him, his own told her; and stretching out his hand to her, as she put hers into his, he said,—"We are united in his heart, my sweet friend!"—At this moment Wallace joined them. He saw the action and the animation of each countenance, and looked at Bruce with a glance of inquiry: but Bruce perceived nothing of a lover's jealousy in the look: it carried the wish of a friend to share what had impressed them with such happy traits.

"We have been talking of you!" returned the prince, "and if to be beloved is a source of joy, you must be peculiarly blest. The affections of Lady Helen and myself have met in your breast, and made your heart the altar on which we have pledged our fraternal love." Wallace regarded each with a look of the most penetrating tenderness. "It is my joy to love you both as a brother; but Lady Helen must consider me as even more than that to her. I am her father's representative; I am the voice of grateful Scotland, thanking her for the preservation her generous exertions yielded!—And to
you, my prince, I am your friend, your subject, all that is devoted and true."

Thus, enjoying the dear communion of hearts, the interchange of mind, and mingling soul with soul, did these three friends journey towards the gates of Paris. Every day seemed an age of blessedness to Helen; so gratefully did she enjoy each passing moment of a happiness that seemed to speak of paradise. Nature never before appeared so beautiful in her eyes: The sky was more serene, the birds sung with sweeter notes, the landscape shone in brighter charms; the fragrance of the flowers bathed her senses in softest balm, and the very air as it breathed around her, seemed fraught with life and joy. But Wallace animated the scene! and while she fancied that she inhaled his breath in every respiration, she moved as if on enchanted ground. O! she could have lingered there for ever! and hardly did she know what it was to draw any but sighs of bliss till she saw the towers of Paris embattling the horizon. They reminded her that she was now going to be occasionally divided from him; that when entered within those walls, it would no longer be deemed decorous for her to pass days and nights in listening to his voice, in losing all of woman's love in the beatified affection of an angel.

This passion of the soul, (if such it may be called) which has its rise in virtue, and its aim the same, would be most unjustly degraded were it classed with what the herd generally entitle love. The love which men stigmatize, deride, and yet encourage, is a fancy, an infatuation awakened by personal attractions, by—the lover knows not what; sometimes, by gratified vanity; sometimes by idleness; and often by the most debasing propensities of human nature. With these causes, an idea may mingle that the person beloved is possessed of those amiable endowments necessary to domestic happiness; but they are commonly secondary objects. Men are often hurried to the most excessive extravagancies of passion for a woman whom they know has no one attractive quality but that of beauty, or, perhaps, the art of flattering their vanity. And again, we see a man plotting the ruin of all that is admirable in
woman, and even while he does it, telling the unhappy object that it is the effect of his love. But, fools are they who say so; and greater fools are they who believe!—Love, true heaven-born love, that pure affection which unites congenial spirits here, and with which the Creator will hereafter connect in one blest fraternity the whole kindred of mankind, has but one cause, The universal fairness of its object!—That bright perfection which speaks of unchangeableness and immortality; a something so excellent, that the simple wish to partake its essence in the union of affection, to facilitate and to share its attainment of true and lasting happiness, invigorates our virtue, and inspires our souls. These are the aims and joys of real love. It has nothing selfish: in every desire it soars above this earth; and anticipates, as the ultimatum of its joy, the moment when it shall meet its partner before the throne of God. Such was the sentiment of Helen towards Wallace. So unlike what she had seen in others, of the universal passion, that she would hardly have acknowledged to herself that what she felt was love, had not the anticipation of even an hour's separation from him whispered the secret to her heart.

CHAP. XX.

WHEN they were arrived at a short distance from Paris, Wallace wrote a few lines to King Philip, informing him who were the companions of his journey, and that he should rest in the abbey of St. Denis until he should receive his majesty's greetings to Bruce. Grimsby was the bearer of this letter. He soon returned with an escort of honour headed by Prince Louis, who was eager to welcome his deliverer. At sight of Wallace he flew into his arms, and after embracing him again and again with all the unchecked ardour of youthful fondness, he presented to him a packet from the king.

It expressed the satisfaction of Philip at the near prospect he had of seeing the man whom he had so
long admired, and whose valour had wrought him such a service as the preservation of his son.—He then added, that he had other matters to thank him for when they should meet, and subjects to discuss which would be much elucidated by the presence of Bruce. "According to your request," continued he, "the name of neither shall be made public at my court: my own family only, know who are to be my illustrious guests; and the queen is as ready to bid them welcome, as to protect the Lady Helen Mar, to whom we offer our congratulations on her escape."

A superb ear, in which sat two ladies bearing rich apparel for Helen, drew near the abbey porch where Wallace stood. As soon as their errand was made known to him, he communicated it to Helen. Her delicacy would have wished to lay aside her page's apparel, before she was presented to the queen, but she had been so happy while she wore it;—"Days have past with me in these garments," said she to herself, "which may never happen again!" The ladies were conducted to Helen; they delivered a gracious message from their royal mistress, and opened the caskets. Helen sighed: she could urge nothing in opposition to their embassy, and reluctantly she assented to the change they were to make in her appearance. She stood mute while they disarrayed her of her humble guise, and clothed her in the robes of France. While they dressed her, in the adulatory strains of the court, they broke out in ejaculatory encomiums on the graces of her person; but to all this she turned an inattentive ear: her mind was absorbed in what she had enjoyed, in the splendid penance she was to undergo.

One of the women was throwing the page's clothes carelessly into a bag, when Helen perceiving her, said, "Take care of that suit, it is more precious to me than gold or jewels!" "Indeed!" answered the attendant, more carefully folding it, "it does not seem of very rich silk." "Probably not," returned Helen, "but it is valuable to me, and wherever I lodge, I will thank you to put it into my apartment."—A mirror was now presented, that she might see herself. She started at the load of pearls with which they had adorned her, and while
a tear stood in either eye, she mildly said, "I am a mourner, these ornaments must not be worn by me. Take them off." The ladies obeyed. And with thoughts divided between her father and her father's friend, she was conducted towards the car. Wallace approached her, and Bruce flew forward with his usual haste, to assist her:—but it was no longer the beautiful little page that met his view, the confidential and frank glance of a youthful brother!—It was a lovely woman, arrayed in all the charms of female apparel, and trembling and blushing as she again appeared as a woman, before the eyes of the man she loved. Wallace bowed as he touched her hand, for there was something in her air which seemed to say, "I am not what I was a few minutes ago."—It was the aspect of a strange austerity, the decorum of rank and situation;—not of the heart,—that had never been absent from the conduct of Helen: had she been in the wilds of Africa with no other companion than Wallace, still would those chaste reserves which lived in her soul, been there the guardians of her actions; for modesty was as much the attribute of her person, as magnanimity was the character of her soul.

Her particularly distant air at this time, was the effect of her reflections while in the abbey. She saw that the frank intercourse between her and her friend was to be interrupted by the forms of a court, and her manner insensibly assumed the demeanor she was so soon to wear. Bruce looked at her with delighted wonder. He had before admired her as beautiful; he now gazed on her as transcendently so.—He checked himself in his swift step, he paused to look on her and Wallace, and contemplated them with sentiments of such unmingled admiration, that this exclamation unconsciously escaped him—"How lovely!"—He could not but wish to see two such perfectly amiable and perfectly beautiful beings united as closely by the bonds of the world, as he believed they were in heart, and he longed for the hour when he might endow them with those proofs of his fraternal love, which should class them with the first of Scottish princes. "But how," thought he, "can I reward thee, Wallace, for what thou hast done for me and mine? Thy services are beyond all price; thy
soul is above even empires. Then how can I shew thee all that is in my heart for thee?” While he thus apos-
trophized his friend, Wallace and Helen advanced to-
wards him. Bruce held out his hand to her with a cor-
dial smile, “Lady Helen, we are still to be the same! Robes of no kind are ever to separate the affections borne in our pilgrimage!” She put her hand into his with a glow of delight: “While Sir William Wallace allows me to call him brother,” answered she, “that will ever be a sanction to our friendship: but courts are formal places, and I now go to one.” “And I will soon remove you to another,” replied he, “where—-” he hesitated, looked at Wallace, and then resumed, “where every wish of my sister Helen’s heart shall be gratified, or I be no king.” Helen blushed deeply, and hastened towards the car. Wallace placed her on the seat, and Prince Louis preceding the carriage, the cavalcade moved.

As Bruce vaulted into his saddle, he said something to his friend declarative of his admiration of the perfect-
ly feminine beauty of Helen. “But her soul is fairer!” returned Wallace. The prince of Scotland, with a gay but tender smile softly whispered, “Fair, doubly fair to you!” Wallace drew a deep sigh: “I never knew but one woman who resembled her in this respect, and she did indeed excel all of created mould. From infancy to manhood I read every thought of her angelic heart; I became the purer by the study, and I loved my model with an idolatrous adoration. There was my error, Bruce! But those sympathies, those hours are past. My heart will never throb as it has throbbed, never re-
joice as it has rejoiced, for she who lived but for me, who doubled all my joys, is gone!—And, though blest with friendship, there are times when I feel that I am solitary!”—Bruce looked at him with surprise and interest. “Solitary! Wallace! can you ever be solita-
ry, and near Helen Mar?” “Perhaps more so then, than at any other time, for her beauties, her excellen-
cies, remind me of what were once mine and recall ev-
ery regret. O! Bruce! thou canst not comprehend my loss! To mingle thought with thought, and soul with soul, for years; and then, after blending our very be-
ings, and feeling as if indeed made one,—to be separated—and by a stroke of violence! This was a trial of the spirit which, but for heaven's mercy, would have crushed me. I live, but still my heart will mourn; mourn her I have lost, and mourn that my rebellious nature will not be more resigned to the judgments of its God."

"And is love so constant?" exclaimed Bruce, "Is it to consume your youth, Wallace? Is it to wed such a heart as yours to the tomb?—Ah! am I not to hope that the throne of my children may be upheld by a race of thine?" Wallace shook his head, but with a placid firmness replied, "Your throne will be upheld by heaven; and if your children follow your example, the same Almighty arm will be with them; but should they pervert themselves, a host of mortal supports would not be sufficient to stay their downfall."

In discourse like this, the youthful prince of Scotland caught a clearer view of the inmost thoughts of his friend, than he had been able to discern before; for war, or Bruce's own interests having particularly engaged them in all their former conversations, Wallace had never been induced to glance at the private circumstances of his history. While Bruce sighed, in tender pity for the captivated heart of Helen, he the more deeply revered, more intensely loved, his suffering and heroic friend.

A few hours brought the royal escort to the gates of the Louvre; and through a train of nobles, who stood on the marbled pavement, Lady Helen, followed by the Scottish chiefs, was led into the audience-chamber by Prince Louis. Philip, who, as he had much to say to Wallace, intended to see him first alone, on hearing of his approach, retired to his closet. The queen and the Count D'Evreux, received Bruce and Helen, while De Valois conducted Wallace to the king.

At sight of the armour which he had sent to the preserver of his son, Philip instantly recognised the Scottish hero, and rising from his seat, hastened towards him, and clasped him in his arms. "Wonder not, august chief," exclaimed he, "at the weakness exhibited in these eyes! It is the tribute of nature to a virtue
which loads even kings with benefits. You have saved my son's life, you have preserved from taint the honour of my sister!"—Philip then proceeded to inform his auditor, that he had heard from a confessor of Queen Margaret's just arrived from England, all that had lately happened at Edward's court, and of Wallace's letter to clear the innocence of that injured princess. "She is perfectly reinstated in the king's confidence," added Philip, "but I can never pardon the infamy with which he would have overwhelmed her; nay, it has already dishonoured her; for the blasting effects of slander no time nor labour can erase. I yield to the prayers of my too gentle sister, not to openly resent this wrong, but in secret I will make him feel a brother's indignation. I do not declare war against him; but ask what you will, bravest of men, and were it to place the crown of Scotland on your head, demand it of me, and by my concealed agency, it shall be effected." The reply of Wallace was simple. He claimed no merit in the justice he had done the Queen of England, neither in his rescue of Prince Louis, but as a proof of King Philip's friendship, he gladly embraced his offered services with regard to Scotland.—"Not," added he, "to send troops into that country against England. Scotland is now free of its Southron invaders, and all I require is, that you will use your royal influence with Edward to allow it to remain so. Pledge your faith, most gracious monarch, with my master the royally descended Bruce, who is now in your palace. He will soon assume the crown that is his right; and with such an ally as France to hold the ambition of Edward in check, we may certainly hope that the bloody feuds between Scotland and England may at last be laid at rest."

Wallace explained to Philip the dispositions of the Scots, the nature of Bruce's claims, and the transcendent virtues of his youthful character. The monarch took fire at the speaker's enthusiasm, and giving him his hand, exclaimed, "Wallace, I know not what manner of man you are! You seem born to dictate to kings, while yourself puts aside, as things of no moment, the crowns offered to you.—You are young, and marvelling, I would say without ambition, did I not know that your
deeds and your virtues have set you above all earthly titles. But to convince me that you do not disdain the gratitude we pay, at least accept a name in my country! and know that the armour you wear, the coronet around your helmet, invested you with the rank of a prince of France, and the title of Count of Gascony." To have refused this mark of the monarch's esteem, would have been an act of churlish pride foreign from the character of Wallace. He graciously accepted the offered distinction, and bowing his head, allowed the king to throw the brilliant collar of Gascony over his neck.

This act was performed by Philip with all the emotions of disinterested esteem. But when he had proposed it to his brothers as the only way he could devise of rewarding Wallace for the preservation of his son and the honour of their sister, he was obliged to urge in support of his wish, the desire he had to take the first opportunity of being revenged on Edward, by the re-seizure of Guienne. To have Sir William Wallace Lord of Gascony would then be of the greatest advantage, as no doubt could be entertained of his arms soon restoring the sister province to the French monarchy. In such a case Philip promised to bestow Guienne on his brother D'Evereux.

To attach his new count to France was now all the wish of Philip; and he closed the conference with every expression of friendship which man could deliver to man. Wallace lost not the opportunity of pleading for the abdicated King of Scots; and Philip, eager, as well to evince his resentment to Edward, as to oblige Wallace, promised to send immediate orders to Normandy, that De Valence should leave Chateau Galliard, and Baliol be attended with all his former state.

The king then led his guest into the audience-chamber, where they found her majesty seated between Bruce and Helen. At sight of the Scottish chief she rose. Philip led him up to her; and Wallace, bending his knee, put the fair hand she extended to his lips.—" Welcome," said she, " bravest of knights! receive a mother, a sister's thanks." Tears of gratitude stood in her eyes. She clasped the hand of her son and his together, and added, "Louis, wherever
our Count of Gascony advises you to pledge this hand, give it.” “Then it will follow mine!” cried the king, putting his into that of Bruce; “You are Wallace’s acknowledged sovereign, young prince, and you shall ever find brothers in me and my son!—Sweet lady,” added he, turning to Helen, “thanks to your charms for having drawn this friend of all mankind to bless our shores!—When you take him hence (continued he, in a lowered tone that none but herself heard) it must be to reward him with beauties which might involve another Troy in flames!” Helen blushed deeply. Her heart glowed amidst its agitated turmoil; for during this long, circuitous journey, his endearing care had almost unconsciously awakened a hope which now, in a still small voice, whispered an echo to the wish of Philip.

The court only knew Wallace as Count of Gascony; and Bruce assumed the name of the young De Longueville, whom prince Louis had in fact allowed to leave him on the road to Paris, and to go to Chartres, there to pass a year of mourning within its penitential monastery. Only two persons ever came to the Louvre who might recognise Bruce to be other than he seemed; and they were John Cummin, the elder twin brother of the present Regent of Scotland, and James Lord Douglas. The former remained in France out of dislike to his brother’s proceedings; and as Bruce knew him in Guienne, and believed him to be a blunt well-meaning young man, he saw no danger in trusting him. The brave son of William Douglas was altogether of a nobler mettle; and both Wallace and his prince rejoiced at the prospect of receiving him to their friendship.

Philip opened the affair to the two lords, and having declared his designs in favour of Bruce, conducted them into the audience-room, and pointing to him where he stood, said, “There is the King of Scotland, whose cause I mean to support to my last gasp!” Douglas and Cummin would have bent their knees to their young monarch, but Bruce hastily caught their hands, and prevented the action; “My friends,” said he, “regard me as your fellow-soldier only, till you see
me on the throne of my fathers. Till then, that is our prince,” said he, looking on Wallace, “he is my leader, my counsellor, my example! And, if you love me, he must be yours.” Douglas and Cummin turned towards Wallace at these words. Royalty did indeed sit on his brow, but with a tempered majesty which spoke only in love and honour. From the resplendent countenance of Bruce it smiled and threatened; for the blaze of his impassioned nature was not yet subdued. The queen looked from the one to the other. The divinely composed air of Wallace seemed to her like the celestial port of some heaven-descended being, lent awhile to earth to guide the steps of the prince of Scotland. She had read of the deity of wisdom assuming the form of Mentor to protect the son of Ulysses; and had it not been for the youth of the Scottish chief, she would have said, here is the realization of the tale.

Helen had eyes for none but Wallace. Nobles, princes, kings, were all involved in one uninteresting mass to her when he was present. Yet she smiled on Douglas, when she heard him express his gratitude to the champion of Scotland for the services he had done a country for which his own father had died. Cummin, when he paid his respects to Wallace, told him that he did it with double pleasure, as he had two unquestionable evidences of his unequalled merit; the confidence of his father the Lord Badenoch, and the hatred of his brother, the present usurper of that title.

The king soon after led his guests to the council-room, where a secret council was to be held to settle the future bonds between the two kingdoms; and Helen, looking long after the departing figure of Wallace, with a pensive step followed the queen to her apartment.

CHAP. XXI.

THESE preliminaries for a lasting friendship being arranged and sworn to by Philip, Wallace dispatched a messenger to Scotland to Lord Ruthven at Hunting-
tower, informing him of all that had happened to him since their separation, and of his present designs with regard to Scotland. He made particular inquiries respecting the state of the public mind, and declared his intentions not to introduce Bruce amongst the cabals of his chieftains until he knew exactly how they were all disposed. Some weeks passed away before a reply to this letter arrived. During this time the health of Helen, which had been much impaired by the sufferings inflicted on her by De Valence, gradually recovered; and her beauty became as much the admiration of the French nobles as her meek dignity was of their respect. A new scene of royalty presented itself in this gay court to Wallace, for all was pageant and chivalric gallantry; but it had no other effect on him than that of exciting those benevolent affections which rejoiced in the innocent gayety of his fellow beings. His pensiveness was not that of a cynic. Though hilarity never awakened his mind to buoyant mirth, yet he loved to see it in others, and gently smiled when others laughed.

With a natural superiority, which looked over these court pastimes, to objects of greater moment, Bruce merely endured them; but it was with an urbanity congenial with his friend's; and while the princes of France were treading the giddy mazes of the dance, or tilting at each other in the mimic war of the tournament, the Prince of Scotland, who excelled in all these exercises, left the field of gallantry indisputed; and moved in this splendid scene an uninterested spectator, talking with Wallace or with Helen on events which yet lay in fate, and whose theatre would be the field of Scotland. So accustomed had the friends now been to share their thoughts with Lady Helen, that they consulted her in all their plans, and hardly considered them as fixed till she had confirmed them by her approval. Her soul was inspired with the same zeal for Scotland which animated their own breasts: like Bruce's, it was ardent; but like Wallace's, it was tempered with a moderation which gave her foresight, and freed her opinion from the hazard of rashness. What he possessed by the suggestions of genius, or had acquired by experience,
she learnt from love. It taught her to be careful for the safety of Wallace: and while he saw that his life must often be put in peril for Scotland, her watchful spirit, with an eagle's ken perceived where his exposure was not likely to produce advantage.

The winds of this season of the year being violent and often adverse, Wallace's messenger did not arrive at his destined port in Scotland, till the middle of November; and the January of 1299 had commenced before his returning barque entered the mouth of the Seine.

Wallace was alone when Grimsby opening the door, announced Sir Edwin Ruthven. In a moment the friends were locked in each others arms. Edwin, strain-ing Wallace to his heart, reproached him in affection-ate terms for having left him behind; but while he spoke, joy shone through the tears which hung on his eye-lids, and with the smiles of fraternal love, again, and again he kissed his friend's hand and pressed it to his bosom. Wallace answered his glad emotions with similar demonstrations of affection; and when the agitations of their meeting were subdued, he learned from Edwin that he had left the messenger at some distance on the road, so impatient was he again to embrace his friend, and to congratulate his dear cousin on her escape.

Edwin answered the anxious inquiries of Wallace respecting his country, by informing him that Badenoch having arrogated to himself the supreme power in Scotland, had determined to take every advantage of the last victory gained over King Edward; and in this resolution he was supported by the resentment of Lords Athol, Buchan, and Soulis, who were returned, full of indignation, from the court of Durham. Edward removed to London; and Badenoch, hearing that he was preparing other armies for the subjugation of Scotland, sent embassadors to the Vatican to solicit the Pope's interference. Boniface, flattered by this appeal, wrote a letter to Edward, exhorting him to refrain from further oppressing a country over which he had no lawful power. Edward's answer was full of artifice and falsehood; maintaining his pretensions to Scotland by
the abandonment of every good principle; and declar-
ing his determination to consolidate Great Britain into
one kingdom, or to make the northern part, one uni-
universal grave.(c) Wallace sighed as he listened. "Ah!
my dear Edwin," said he, "how just is the observation
that the almost total neglect of truth and justice which
the generality of sovereign states discover in their
transactions with each other, is an evil as inveterate as
it is dishonourable and ruinous! It is one great source
of the misery of the human race; a misery in which
millions are involved without any compensation; for it
seldom happens that this dishonesty contributes ulti-

dately even to the interests of the princes who thus
basely sacrifice their integrity to their ambition. But
proceed, my friend."

The consequences of this correspondence, Edwin
said, was a renewal of hostilities against Scotland.
Badenoch took Sir Simon Fraser as his colleague in
military duty, and a stout resistance was for some time
made on the borders; but Berwick was at last taken by
Lord Percy, and the brave Lord Dundaff killed defend-
ing the citadel. Many other places fell; and battles
were fought in which the English were every where
victorious: "For," added Edwin, "none of your gene-

erals would draw a sword under the command of Ba-
denoch; and alarmed at the consequence, the Bishop
of Dunkeld is gone to Rome to entreat the Pope to or-
der your return. The Southrons are advancing into
Scotland in every direction. They have landed again
on the eastern coast; they have possessed themselves
of all the border counties; and without your heaven-
amointed arm to avert the blow, our country must be
irretrievably lost."

Edwin had brought letters from Ruthven and the
young Earl of Bothwell, which more particularly nar-
rated these disastrous events, and enforced every argu-
ment to persuade Wallace to return. They gave it as
their opinion, that he should revisit Scotland under an
assumed name. Did he come openly, the jealousy of
the Scottish lords would be re-awakened, and perhaps
they might put the finishing stroke to their country, by
taking him off by assassination or poison. Ruthven
and Bothwell therefore entreated that, as it was his wisdom, as well as his valour, his country required, he would hasten to Scotland, and condescend to serve her unrecognised, till Bruce should be established on the throne.

While Edwin was conducted to the apartments of Lady Helen, Wallace took these letters to his prince. On Bruce being informed of the circumstances in which his country lay, and of the wishes of its most virtuous chiefs for his accession to the crown, he assented to the prudence of their advice with regard to Wallace. "But," added he, "our fortunes must in every respect, as far as I can mould them, be the same. While you are to serve Scotland under a cloud, so will I. At the moment Bruce is proclaimed King of Scotland, Wallace shall be declared its bravest friend. We will go together: as brothers, if you will!" continued he, "as I am already considered by the French nobility as Thomas de Longueville, you may personate his elder brother the Red Reaver:—Scotland does not yet know that he was slain. Were you to wear the title you bear here, a quarrel might ensue between Philip and Edward, which I perceive the former is not willing should occur openly. Edward would deem it a breach of their amity, did he permit a French prince to appear in arms against him in Scotland. But the Reaver being considered in England as an outlaw, no surprise can be excited that he and his brother should fight against Philip's ally. We will then assume their characters; and I shall have the satisfaction of serving for Scotland before I claim her as my own. When we again drive Edward over the borders, on that day we will throw off our visors, and Sir William Wallace shall place the crown on my head."

Wallace could not but approve the dignity of mind which these sentiments displayed. In the same situation, they would have been his own; and he sought not from any motive of policy, to dissuade Bruce from a delicacy of conduct which drew him closer to his heart. Sympathy of tastes is a pleasing attraction: but congeniality of principles is the cement of souls. This Wal-
lace felt in his new-born friendship with Bruce; and though his regard for him had none of that fostering tenderness with which he loved to contemplate the blooming virtues of the youthful Edwin, yet it breathed every endearment arising from a perfect equality in heart and mind. It was the true fraternal tie; and while he talked with him on the fulfilment of their enterprise, he inwardly thanked heaven for blessing him so abundantly. He had found a son in Edwin; and a brother, a tender sister, in the noble Bruce, and lovely Helen.

Bruce received Edwin with a welcome which convinced the before anxious youth that he met with a friend, rather than a rival, in the heart of Wallace. And every preliminary being settled by the three friends, respecting their immediate return to Scotland, they repaired to Philip, to inform him of Lord Ruthven's dispatches and their consequent resolutions.

The king liked all they said, excepting their request to be permitted to take an early leave of his court. He urged them to remain a few days, to await the return of a second ambassador he had sent to England. Immediately on Wallace's arrival, Philip had dispatched a request to the English king, that he would grant the Scots the peace which was their right. Not receiving any answer, he had sent another messenger with a more threatening message. The persevered hostilities of Edward against Scotland, explained the delay. But the king yet hoped for a favourable reply, and made such entreaties to Bruce and his friend to remain in Paris till it should arrive, that they at last granted a reluctant consent.

At the end of a week the ambassador returned with a conciliatory letter to Philip; but affirming Edward's right to Scotland, and his determination to have the whole realm again under his sceptre before the termination of the month.

Wallace and his royal friend now saw no reason for lingering in France. And having visited De Longueville at Chartres, they apprized him of their intention still further to borrow his name. "We will not disgrace it," cried Bruce, "I promise to return it to you, a theme for your country's minstrels!" When
the friends rose to depart, the brave and youthful penitent grasped their hands—"You go, brave Scots, to cover with glory in the field of honour, a name which my unhappy brother Guy, dyed deep in his country's blood! The tears I weep before this cross for his and my transgression, have obtained me mercy: and your design is an earnest to me from him who hung on this tree, that my brother also is forgiven."

At an early hour next day, Wallace and Bruce took leave of the French king. The queen kissed Helen affectionately, and whispered, while she tied a jewelled collar round her neck, that when she returned she hoped to add to it the coronet of Gascony. Helen's only reply was a gentle sigh, and her eye turned unconsciously on Wallace. He was clad in a plain suit of black armour with the red plume in his helmet, the ensign of the Reaver, whose name he had assumed. All of his former habit that he now wore about him, was the sword which he had taken from Edward. Prince Louis, at the moment Helen looked towards Wallace, was placing a cross-hilted dagger in his girdle. "My deliverer," said he, "wear this for the sake of the descendant of St. Louis. It accompanied that holy king through all his wars in Palestine. It twice saved him from the assassin's steel; and I pray heaven it may prove as faithful a guard to you!"

Soon after this, Douglas and Cummin entered to pay their parting respects to the king; and that over, Wallace taking Helen by the hand, led her forth, followed by Bruce and his friends, to her horse. At Dieppe they embarked for the Frith of Tay; and a favourable gale driving them through the straits of Calais, they launched out in the wide ocean.

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CHAP. XXII.

THE eighth morning from the day in which the Red Reaver's ship was re-launched from the harbour of Dieppe, Wallace, its present commander, and now the representative of that once formidable pirate, entered
between the castled shores of the Frith of Tay, and cast anchor under the towers of Dundee. As he bore the white flag of peace, no opposition was made to his landing; and the sight of Sir Edwin Ruthven, who was the first to leap on the beach, satisfied the inhabitants that all who came with him must be friends to Scotland.

When Bruce first set foot upon the land, he turned to Wallace, and said with exultation, though in a low voice, "Scotland now receives her king! This earth shall cover me, or support my throne!" "It shall support your throne, and bless it too," replied Wallace, "you are come in the power of justice, and that is the power of God. I know Him in whom I bid you confide, for He has been my shield and sword, and never yet have I turned my back upon my enemies. Trust, my dear prince, where I have trusted; and while virtue is your incense, you need not doubt the issue of your prayers." Had Wallace seen the face of Bruce at that moment, but the visor concealed it, he would have beheld an answer in his eloquent eyes which required not words to explain. He grasped the hand of Wallace with fervour, and briefly replied—"Your God shall be my God, your worship my worship, and I trust heaven for all the rest."

The chiefs did not stay longer at Dundee than was requisite to furnish them with horses to convey them to Perth, where Ruthven still bore sway. When they arrived, he was at Hunting-tower, and thither they went. The meeting was fraught with many mingled feelings. Helen had not seen her uncle since the death of her father; and, as soon as the first gratulations were over, she retired to an apartment to weep alone.

Lord Ruthven, on Cummin being presented to him, told him that he must now salute him as Earl of Badenoch, for that his brother, the late Regent, had been killed a few days before in a battle on the skirts of Ettrick Forest. He then turned to welcome Bruce, who, raising his visor, received from Ruthven the homage due to his sovereign dignity. Wallace and the prince soon engaged him in a discourse immediately connected with the design of their return, and learnt that Scotland did indeed require the royal arm and the counsel of its
best and lately almost banished friend. The whole of the eastern part of the country was in the possession of Edward's generals. They had seized on every castle in the Lowlands; and after a dauntless defence, in which the veteran knight of Thirlestane behaved with a steady valour miraculous in so old a man, he fell, and with himself his only son and his castle. The sage of Ercildoun, having protected Lady Isabella Mar at Learmont during the siege of Thirlestane, on hearing its fate conveyed her northward; but falling sick at Roslyn, he stopped there; and the messenger, he dispatched to Hunting-tower with the calamitous tidings respecting Tweedale, also bore information that several advanced parties of Southrons were hovering on the heights near Roslyn, and that an immense army was approaching.—Ercildoun added, that he understood Sir Simon Fraser was hastening forward with a small body to cut off these squadrons; but that from the contentions between Athol and Soulis for the vacant regency, he had no hopes, were his forces even equal to those of England, that he could succeed.

At this communication, Cummin bluntly proposed himself as the terminator of this dispute. "If the regency were allowed to my brother as head of the house of Cummin, that dignity now rests with me; and, give the word my sovereign," said he addressing Bruce, "and none there will dare to oppose my rights."—Ruthven approved this proposal: and Wallace, deeming it not only the best way of silencing the pretensions of those old disturbers of the public tranquillity, but a happy circumstance in putting the chief magistracy into the hands of a confident of their design, seconded the advice of Ruthven; and John Cummin, Lord Badenoch, was immediately invested with the regency, and dispatched to the army to assume it as if in right of his being next heir to the throne in default of Bruce.

Wallace sent Lord Douglas into Clydesdale to inform Lord Bothwell of his arrival, and to desire his attendance with the Lanark division and his own troops, on the banks of the Eske. Ruthven ascended the Grampians to call out the numerous clans of Perthshire: and Wallace and his prince prepared themselves
for meeting these auxiliaries before the tower of Ros-lyn. Meanwhile, as Hunting-tower would be an insecure asylum for Helen, when it should be left to domestics alone, Wallace proposed to Edwin that he should escort his cousin to Braemar and place her under the care of his mother and the widowed Countess. "Thither," continued he, "we will send Lady Isabella also, should heaven bless our arms at Roslyn." Edwin acquiesced, as he was to return with all speed to join his friend on the southern bank of the Forth; and Helen, aware that fields of blood were no scenes for her, while her heart was wrung to agony at the thought of relinquishing Wallace to dangers which every moment threatened to deprive her of him for ever, yielded a reluctant assent—not merely to go, but to take that look of him which might be the last.

The sight of her uncle and the objects around, had so recalled the days of her infancy, when in this castle she enjoyed the fond caresses of her father, that ever since she arrived, a sadness had hung over her spirits which often dissolved her into tears. She was now to bid adieu to Wallace. She remembered that a few months ago she had seen her father go out to battle whence he never returned.—Should the same doom await her with regard to Wallace!—This idea shook her whole frame with an agitation that sunk her, in spite of herself, on the bosom of Wallace as Edwin approached to lead her to her horse. Her emotions penetrated the heart against which she leaned. "My gentle sister," said Wallace, "do not despair of our final success; of the safety of all whom you regard." "Ah! Wallace," faltered she in a voice rendered hardly audible by tears, "but did I not lose my father?"—"Sweet Helen," returned he, tenderly retaining her trembling form which she now attempted, but feebly from her emotion, to extricate from his arms, "you lost him, but he gained by the exchange. And should the peace of Scotland be purchased by the lives of some who contend for her emancipation, should they even be your friends, if Bruce survives, you must still think your prayers blest. Were I to fall, my sister, in this cause, my sorrows would be over; and from the region of universal blessedness I should enjoy the sight of Scotland's happiness with unmixed felicity."
"Were we all to enter those regions at one time," faintly replied Helen, "there would be comfort in such thoughts; but as it is——" here she paused, her tears stopped her utterance. "A few years is a short separation," returned Wallace, "when we are to be hereafter united to all eternity. This is my consolation when I think of Marion,—when memory dwells with the friends lost in these dreadful conflicts: and, whatever be the fate of those who now survive, call to remembrance my words, dear Helen, and the God, who was my instructor, will send you comfort."

"Then farewell my friend, my brother!" cried she, forcibly tearing herself away, and throwing herself into the arms of Edwin, "Leave me now, and the angel of the just will bring you in glory here or hereafter to your sister Helen." Wallace fervently kissed the hand she extended to him, and with an emotion which he had thought he should never feel again for mortal woman, he left the apartment.

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CHAP. XXII.

THE day after the departure of Helen, Wallace, to indulge the impatience of his royal companion, set forth to meet the returning steps of Ruthven with his gathered legions. Having passed along the romantic borders of Invermay, the friends descended to the more precipitous banks of the Earn at the foot of the Grampians, and wound amongst the depths of those green labyrinths, till Bruce, who had never been in such mountainous wilds before, exclaimed, that they must have wandered far from any human track. "The way is as familiar to me," returned Wallace, who had often trodden it; "as the garden of Hunting-tower."

The day, which had been cloudy, suddenly turned to wind and rain; and certainly spread an air of desolation over the scene; very dreary to an eye which from infancy had been accustomed to the fertile plains of the ever-cheerful south. The whole of the road was rough, dangerous, and dreadful. The steep and black
rocks towering above their heads, seemed to threaten the precipitation of some of their impending masses into the path below. But Wallace had told Bruce they were in the right track; and he gaily breasted both the storm and the perils of the road. They ascended a mountain whose enormous piles of granite, torn by many a winter tempest, projected their barren summits from a surface of moor-land on which lay a deep incrustation of snow.—The blast now blew so strong, and the rain and sleet beat so hard, that Bruce, laughing, declared he believed the witches of his country were in league with Edward, and hid in their shrouds of mist were all assembled here to drive their lawful prince into the roaring cataracts beneath.

Thus, with torrents of water pouring down the sides of their armour, did the friends, enveloped in a sea of vapours, descend the western brow of this part of the Grampians until they came to the margin of Loch-earn. They had hardly arrived there before the rain ceased, the clouds rolled away from the sides of the montains, and discovered the vast and precipitous Benvorlich. Its base was covered with huge stones scattered in fragments, like the wreck of some rocky world, and spread abroad in wide and horrid desolation. The mountain itself, the highest in this chain of the Grampians, was in every part marked by deep and black ravines made by the rushing waters in the time of floods; but where its blue head mingled with the clouds, a stream of brightness issued that seemed to promise the dispersion of its vapours, and consequently a more secure path for Wallace to lead his friend over its perilous heights.

This appearance did not deceive.—The whole mantle of clouds with which the tops of all the mountains had been obscured, roiled away towards the west, and discovered to the eye of Wallace that this line of light which he had discerned through the mist, was the host of Ruthven descending Benvorlich in defiles. From the nature of the path, they were obliged to move in a winding direction; and as the sun now shone full upon their arms, and their lengthened lines gradually extended from the summit of the mountain to its base, no sight could contain more of the sublime; none of truer
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grandeur, to the enraptured mind of Bruce. He forgot his horror of the wastes he had passed over, in the joy of beholding so noble an army of his countrymen thus approaching to place him upon the throne of his ancestors. "Wallace," cried he, "these brave hearts deserve a more cheerful home! My sceptre must turn this Scotia deserta into Scotia felix, and so I shall reward the service they this day bring me." "They are happy in these wilds," returned Wallace:—"their flocks browse on the hills, their herds in the vallies. The soil yields sufficient increase to support its sons; and their greatest luxuries are a minstrel's song and the lip of their brides. Their ambition is satisfied with following their chief to the field; and their honour lies in serving their God, and maintaining the freedom of their country. Beware then, my dear prince, of changing the simple habits of those virtuous mountaineers. Introduce the luxurious cultivation of France into these tracts, you will infect them with artificial wants; and with every want you put a link to a chain which will fasten them in bondage whenever a tyrant chooses to grasp it. Leave them then their rocks as you find them, and you will ever have a hardy race ready to perish in their defence, or to meet death for the royal guardian of their liberties."

Lord Ruthven no sooner reached the banks of Loch-earn, than he espied the prince and Wallace.—He joined them; and marshalling his men in a wide tract of land at the head of that vast body of water, he placed himself, with the two supposed De Longuevilles, in the van, and marched through the vallies of Strathmore and Strathallan, into Stirlingshire. The Earl of Fife had the government of the castle and town of Stirling; and as he was a man much in the interest of the late Lord Badenoch the violent enemy of Wallace, Bruce negatived Ruthven's proposal to send in a messenger for the earl's division of troops: "No, my lord," said he, "like my friend Wallace, I will have no luke-warm hearts near me; all must be earnest in my cause, or be entirely out of the contest.—I am content with the brave men I see around me."
After rapid marches and short haltings they arrived safe and without any impediment at Linlithgow, where Wallace proposed staying a night to refresh the troops, which were now joined by Sir Alexander Ramsay at the head of a thousand of his clan. While the men took rest, their chiefs waked to think for them. And Wallace, with Bruce and Ruthven and the brave Ramsay, (to whom Wallace had revealed himself, but still kept Bruce unknown) were in deep consultation respecting the consequences of having put so efficient a power as that of Regent into the hands of any of the race of Cummin, when Grimsby entered to inform his master that a young knight desired to speak with Sir Guy de Longueville. "What is his name?" demanded Wallace. "He refused to tell it," replied Grimsby. "He is splendidly armed; but as he wears his beaver shut, it is impossible for me to say any thing of his countenance." Wallace looked round with a glance that inquired whether the stranger should be admitted. "Certainly," said Bruce, "but first put on your mask." Wallace closed his visor; and the moment after Grimsby re-entered with a knight of a very majestic mien, and habited in a suit of green armour studded with gold. He wore a helmet from which streamed a long feather of the same hue. Wallace rose at his entrance; the stranger advanced to him. "You are he whom I seek. —I am a Scot, and a man of few words. Accept my services; allow me to attend you in this war, never to be separated from your side, and I will serve you faithfully. Wallace replied, "And who is the brave knight to whom Sir Guy de Longueville will owe so great an obligation." "My name," answered the stranger, "shall not be revealed till he who now wears that of the Reaver whom he slew, proclaims his own in the day of victory.—I know you, sir, but your secret is as safe with me as in your own breast. Allow me to fight by your side, and I am yours for ever."

Wallace was surprised, but not confounded, by this speech. "I have only one question to ask you, noble stranger," replied he, "before I confide any part of a cause dearer to me than my own life, in your integrity; tell me whether the information you have gained with
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respect to myself, was revealed to you by any follower of my own? Or how did you become master of a secret which I believed out of the power of even treachery to betray?" "To one of your questions I will answer.—No follower of yours has betrayed your secret to me.—I came by my information in the most honourable manner; but the means I shall never reveal till I see the proper time to declare my name; and that may perhaps be in the same moment in which the assumed brother of that young Frenchman," added the stranger, turning to Bruce, "again appears publicly in Scotland as Sir William Wallace."

"I am satisfied," replied he; well-pleased that, however this knight might be, Bruce yet remained undiscovered; "I grant your request.—This brave youth, whose name I share, gives me the success of my sword; I slew the Red Reaver, and therefore make myself a brother to Thomas de Longueville. He fights on my right hand.—You shall be stationed at my left." "At the side next your heart, noble chief!" exclaimed the stranger, "let that ever be my post, there to guard the bulwark of Scotland, the life of the bravest of men."

This enthusiasm did not surprise any present; for it was the usual language of all who approached Sir William Wallace. And Bruce particularly pleased with the heart-felt energy with which it was uttered, forgot his disguise in the amiable fervour of approbation, and half-rose to welcome him to his cause; But a look from Wallace, (who on being known, had uncovered his face) arrested the motion, and he sat down again, thankful for so timely a check on his precipitancy.

In crossing the Pentland-Hills next day into Midlothian, they were met by Edwin, who had crossed from the north by the Frith of Forth, and having heard no tidings of the Scottish army in the neighbourhood of Edinburgh, had proceeded on the road he knew it must take. Wallace introduced him to the knight of the green plume: for that was the appellation by which the stranger desired to be known:—And Edwin answered the mingled inquiries of his father and Wallace after how Helen bore her journey to Mar:—"Pretty well.
there," replied he, "but much better back again."—He then explained, that on his arrival with Helen at Braemar, neither Lady Mar nor his mother would consent to remain so far from the spot where Wallace was again to contend for the safety of their country. Helen did not say anything in opposition to their wishes: and at last Edwin yielded to the tears of his mother, anxious for her husband; and to the entreaties of Lady Mar, to bring them where they might at least not long endure the misery of suspense. Having once consented, without an hour's delay he set forth with the ladies to retrace his steps to Hunting-tower; and there he left them under a guard of three hundred men whom he brought from Mar for that purpose.

Wallace much regretted the additional fatigue which the tender frame of Lady Helen had thus been compelled to undergo; but as Edwin had provided for the security of Hunting-tower, both he and Ruthven were reconciled to their being so much the nearer news of (what they trusted would be) the happy issue of their arms. Bruce whose real name had not been revealed to the other ladies of Ruthven's family, in a lowered voice asked Edwin some questions relative to the spirits in which Helen had parted with him. "In losing her," added he, "my friend and I feel but as part of what we were.—Her presence seemed to ameliorate the fierceness of our war-councils; and ever reminded me of the guardian angel by whom heaven points our way." "I left her with looks like the angel you speak of," answered Edwin; "she bade me farewell upon the platform of the eastern tower of the castle. When I gave her a parting embrace, she raised herself from my breast, and stretching her arms to heaven, while her pure soul shone in her eyes, she exclaimed, "Bless him, gracious God; bless him and his noble commander; may they ever, with the prince they love, be thine especial care!" I knelt by her, my dear friend, as she uttered these words, and touching the hem of her garments as some holy thing, hurried from the spot. When mounted on my horse, and turning down by St. Concal's well, I looked back, and there she still stood! She waved her scarf towards me, till entering
the wood I lost her from my view." "Her prayers," said Wallace, "will fight for Scotland.—Such arms are well befitting the virgins of Scotland to use against its foes; and without such unction the warrior may draw his steel in vain."

The stranger knight, the moment after his introduction to Edwin, had engaged himself in conversation with Ramsay. But Lord Ruthven, turning from the minuter inquiries of his friends respecting the fair inhabitants of Hunting-tower, interrupted the discourse between the two knights, by asking Ramsay some questions relative to the military positions on the banks of either Eske. Sir Alexander being the grandson of the Lord of Roslyn, and having passed his youth in its neighbourhood, was well qualified to answer these questions; and Wallace drawing towards the discussion, Bruce and Edwin followed his example; and in such discourse they marched along till, passing before the lofty ridge of the Corstorphine hills, they were met by several groups of peasantry, flying as if from an enemy. At sight of the Scottish banners they stopped, and informed their armed countrymen, that the new Regent John of Badenoch, had, in opposition to the advice of Sir Simon Fraser, attacked the Southron army on its vantage ground near Borthwick Castle, and was consequently beaten. His shattered troops had fallen back towards Edinburgh, hoping to cross the Forth and elude their pursuers. The country people, dismayed, fled on all sides; and these peasants, who came from Hawthorndean, magnified by their report the number of the enemy to an incredible amount.

Wallace knew how much to believe: but determining, whether great or small the power of his adversary, to intercept him at Roslyn, he sent to Cummin and to Fraser to rendezvous on the banks of the Eske. The brave troops which he led, ignorant of their real commander, obeyed his directions while they thought that Lord Ruthven was their leader. As they passed along, every village and solitary cot seemed recently deserted; and through an awful solitude they took their rapid way till the towers of Roslyn Castle hailed them as a beacon from amidst the wooded heights of the north.
Eske. "There," cried Ramsay, pointing to the embattled rock, "stands the fortress of my forefathers! It shall this day be made famous for the actions performed before its walls!"

Wallace, whose knowledge of this part of the country was not quite so familiar as that of Ramsay's, had learnt sufficient from him to decide at once which would be the most favourable position for a small and resolute band to assume against a large and conquering army; and accordingly disposing his troops, which did not amount to more than eight thousand; he dispatched about a thousand of them under the command of Ramsay to occupy the numerous caves in the southern banks of the Eske, whence he was to issue in various divisions and with shouts, of the first appearance of any confusion in the enemy's ranks.

Ruthven, meanwhile, went for a few minutes into the castle to embrace his niece, and to assure the venerable Lord of Roslyn, then almost a prisoner within his walls, of the determination of the commanders who were his coadjutors, either to drive the Southrons again beyond the borders, or themselves to perish beneath the waters of the Eske.

Edwin, who with Grimsby had volunteered the dangerous service of reconnoitring the enemy, returned in an hour, bringing in a straggler from the English camp. When they seized him, Edwin promised him his life on condition that he should tell them the strength of the advancing army. The terrified wretch did not hesitate; and from him they learnt that it was commanded by Sir John Segrave, and Ralph Confrey, a man whom Edward had intended should succeed the detestable Cressingham as treasurer of Scotland; and that deeming the country entirely subdued by the issue of the two last battles against the black and red Cummins, the English commanders were laying schemes for a general plundering; and to sweep the land at once, Segrave had divided his army into three divisions, which on their arrival at some certain spot, where to separate, and scatter themselves over the country to gather in the spoil. To be assured of this information being the truth, while Grimsby remained
to guard the prisoner, Edwin went alone into the path
he was told the Southrons were approaching, and from
a height he discovered about ten thousand of them
winding along the valley. With this confirmation of
the man's account, he brought him to the Scottish lines,
and Wallace, who well knew how to reap advantage
from the errors of his enemies, being joined by Fraser
and the discomfited Regent, made the concerted sig-
nal to Ruthven.—That nobleman immediately point-
ed out to his men the waving colours of the Southrons,
as they approached beneath the over-hanging woods
of Hawthorndean. He exhorted them by their fathers,
wives, and children, to breast the enemy at this spot,
and grapple with him till he fell.—"Scotland," cried he,
"is lost or won this day.—You are free men or slaves;
your families are your own, or the property of tyrants!
—Fight stoutly, and God will yield you an invisible
support."

The Scots answered their general by a shout, and
calling on him to lead them forward, Ruthven placed
himself with the Regent and Fraser in the van, and led
the charge. The Southrons, little expecting an assault
from an adversary they had so lately driven off the
field, were taken by surprise, but they fought well;
and resolutely stood their ground, till Wallace and
Bruce, who commanded the two flanking divisions,
closed in upon them with an impetuosity that drove
Confrey himself into the river, where an arrow from
Sir Alexander Ramsay, who now rushed from con-
cealment, finished his career, and threw him a breath-
less corse among the plunging feet of his dismayed
squadrons. As the ambuscade of Ramsay poured from
his caves, the earth seemed teeming with mailed war-
riors; and the Southrons seeing the surrounding
heights and the green defiles filled with the same ter-
rific appearances, gave way on all sides, and almost be-
lieving that the wizard power of the Sage of Ercildoun,
whom they knew was in the castle, had conjured up
this host to their destruction, they fled with precipita-
tion towards their second division, which lay a few
miles southward. Thither the conquering squadrons
of the Scots followed them. The fugitives leaping
the trenches of the encampment, called aloud to their comrades, "Arm! arm! hell is in league against us!"—Segrave was in a moment at the head of his legions, and a battle more desperate than the first blazed over the field. The flying troops of Confrey rallying around the standard of their general in chief, fought with the spirit of revenge; and being now a body of nearly twenty thousand men against eight thousand Scots, the conflict became tremendous, and in several points the Southrons gained so greatly the advantage, that Wallace and Bruce, leaving their respective stations to Edwin and the green knight, threw themselves successively into those parts where the enemy seemed to prevail, and by exhortations, examples, and prowess, a thousand times turned the fate of the day, and appeared as they shot from rank to rank, to be two comets of fire sent before the troops to consume all who opposed them. Segrave was taken, and forty brave English knights besides. The green surface of the ground was dyed red with Southron blood, and the men were on all sides calling for quarter, when the cry of "Havoc and St. George!" issued from the adjoining hill. A band of Mid-Lothianers, who, for the sake of plunder, had stolen into that part of the deserted English camp which occupied the rear of the height, seeing from its top the advancing troops of the third division of the enemy, like guilty cowards rushed down amongst their comrades, echoing the war cry of England, and exclaiming, "We are lost; a host, reaching to the horizon, is just upon us!"—Terror struck to almost every Scottish heart. The Southrons who lately cried for mercy leaped upon their feet. The fight recommenced with redoubled fury. Lord Robert Neville, at the head of the new reinforcement, charged into the centre of the Scottish legions. The rescue of Segrave was his object. Bruce and Edwin threw themselves into the breach, which his impetuous valour had made into that part of their line, and fighting man to man, would have taken Neville also, had not a follower of that nobleman, wielding a pondrous mace, struck Bruce so terrible a blow, as to fracture his helmet in twain, and cast him from his horse to the ground. The fall
of so active a leader excited as much dismay in the surrounding Scots, as it encouraged the reviving spirits of the enemy. Edwin's only hope was now to preserve his prince from being trampled on, and while he fought to that purpose, and afterwards sent the senseless body off the field to Roslyn Castle, Neville retook Segrave and the knights with him. Ruthven now contended with a feeble arm. Fatigued with the two preceding conflicts, covered with wounds, and perceiving indeed a host pouring upon them on all sides, (for the whole of Segrave's original army of thirty thousand men, excepting those who had fallen in the preceding engagements, were now assailing them) the Scots exhausted and in despair gave ground; and some throwing away their arms to fly the more unencumbered, spread the confusion, and by exposing themselves panic-struck to the swords of their enemies, occasioned so general a havoc, that the day must have ended in the universal destruction of every Scot in the field, had not Wallace perceived the crisis, and that as Guy de Longueville, he shed his blood in vain. In vain his terrified countrymen saw him rush into the thickest of the carnage: in vain he called to them by all that was sacred to man to stand to the last. He was a foreigner, and they had no confidence in his exhortations, death was before them, and they turned to fly. The fate of his country hung on an instant. The last rays of the setting sun shone full on the rocky promontory of the hill which projected over the field of combat. He took his resolution, and spurring his steed up the steep ascent, stood on the summit where he would be seen by the whole army, and taking off his helmet he waved it in the air with a shout, and having drawn all eyes upon him suddenly exclaimed—"Scots! you have this day vanquished the Southrons twice! If you be men, remember Cambuskenneth and follow William Wallace to a third victory." The cry which issued from the amazed troops was that of a people who beheld the angel of their deliverance. "Wallace!" was the charge word of every heart. The hero's courage seemed instantaneously diffused through every breast, and with braced arms and determined spirits forming at once in-
to the phalanx his thundering voice dictated, the Southrons again felt the weight of the Scottish steel; and a battle ensued which made the bright Eske run purple to the sea, and covered the pastoral glades of Hawthorndean with the bodies of their invaders.

Sir John Segrave and Neville were both taken. And ere night closed in upon the carnage Wallace granted quarter to those who sued for it, and receiving their arms, left them to repose in their before depopulated camp.

CHAP. XXIII.

WALLACE having planted Fraser and Ramsay with an adequate force in charge of the prisoners, went to the tent of the two Southron commanders to pay them the courtesy due to their bravery and rank before he retired with his victorious followers towards Roslyn Castle. He entered alone, and at sight of the warrior who had given them so signal a defeat the generals rose. Neville who had received a slight wound in one of his arms, stretched out the other to Wallace in answer to a compliment which that chieftain paid to his military conduct. "Sir William Wallace," said he, "that you were obliged to declare a name so deservedly renowned before the troops I led could be made to relinquish one step of their hard-earned advantage, was an acknowledgment in my favour almost equivalent to a victory."

Sir John Segrave, who stood leaning on his sword with a disturbed countenance, interrupted him: "The fate of this day cannot be attributed to any earthly name or hand. I believe my sovereign will allow the zeal with which I have ever served him, and yet thirty thousand as brave men as ever crossed the marches, have faile before a handful of Scots. Three victories won over Edward's troops in one day, are not events of a common nature. God alone has been our vanquisher." "I acknowledge it," cried Wallace, "and that he is on the side of justice let the return of St. Matthias's day ever remind your countrymen!"
Segrave, when he gave the victory to the Lord of Hosts, did it more from jealousy of what might be Edward’s opinion of his conduct when compared with Neville’s, than from any intention to imply that the cause of Scotland was justly heaven-defended. Such are the impious inconsistencies of unprincipled men! He frowned at the reply of Wallace, and turned gloomily away. Neville returned a respectful answer, and their conqueror soon after left them.

Edwin, with the Knight of the Green Plume, who had indeed approved his valour by many a brave deed performed at his commander’s side, awaited his return from the tent. Ruthven came up at the instant that Wallace joined them, and he heard from him that Bruce was safe under the care of the Sage of Ercildoun, and that the Regent, who had been wounded in the beginning of the day, was also in Roslyn Castle. All other of the survivors who had suffered in these three desperate battles were collected from amongst the slain and carried by Wallace’s orders into the neighbouring castles of Hawthorndean, Brunston, and Dalkeith. The rest of the soldiers were ordered to repose themselves on their arms. These duties performed, Wallace thought of satisfying the anxieties of friendship as well as loyalty, and of going to see how Bruce fared.

The moon shone brightly as the party rode forward. The river rushing along its shelving bed glittered in her beams, and pouring over the shattered fragments of many a time-precipitated cliff, fled in hoarse murmurs from the perpendicular sides of the blood-stained heights which imprisoned its struggling waters. As Wallace ascended the steep acclivity on which Roslyn Castle stands, and in crossing the draw-bridge which divides its rocky peninsula from the main land, he looked around and sighed. The scene reminded him of Ellerslie. A deep shadow lay on the woods beneath; and the pensile branches of the now leafless trees hanging down to meet the flood, seemed mourning the deaths which now polluted its stream. The water lay in profound repose at the base of these beautiful craits, as if...
peace longed to become an inhabitant of so lovely a scene.

At the gate of the castle its aged master the Lord Sinclair met Wallace to bid him welcome. "Blessed be the saint of this day," exclaimed he, "for thus bringing our best defender, even as by a miracle, to snatch us as a brand from the fire! My gates, like my heart, open to receive the true Regent of Scotland." "I have only done a Scotchman's duty, venerable Sinclair," replied Wallace, as he entered the house, "and must not arrogate a title to myself which heaven has transferred to other hands." "Not heaven, but the base envy of man," replied the old chieftain. "It was rebellion against the supreme wish of the nation, that invested the black Cummin with the regency; and some infatuation has bestowed the same title on his brother. What did he not lose till you, Scotland's true champion, reappeared to rescue her again from slavery?" "The present Lord Badenoch is an honest and a brave man," replied Wallace; "and as I obey the power which gave him his authority, I am ready, by fidelity to him, to serve Scotland with as vigorous a zeal as ever; so, noble Sinclair, when our rulers cast not trammels on our virtues, let us obey them as the vicegerents of heaven."

Wallace then asked to be conducted to his wounded friend Sir Thomas de Longueville, (for Sinclair was ignorant of the real rank of his guest,) and his rejoicing host, eager to oblige him, immediately led him through a gallery and opening the door of an apartment discovered Bruce lying extended on a couch, and an old man, whose silver beard and sweeping robes announced to be the Sage of Ercildoun, bathing his head with balsams. A young creature, beautiful as the creation of genius, hung over the prostrate chief. She held a golden casket in her hand, out of which the sage drew theunctions he applied. And Bruce himself, as he lay under the healing ministration, never withdrew his eyes from the angelic being which seemed to hover near him. At the sound of Wallace's voice, who spoke in a low tone to Ruthven as he entered the chamber, the wounded prince for a moment forgot both his pain and admiration of female loveliness, and starting on his arm
stretched out his hand to his friend,—but he as instantly fell back again. Wallace hastened forward with an agony of fear that perhaps Bruce was in greater danger than he had believed. He knelt down by him. Bruce recovered a little from the swoon into which the suddenness of his attempt to rise had occasioned. Feeling a hand grasping his, he guessed to whom it belonged, and gently pressing it, smiled; and in a moment afterwards opening his eyes, in a low voice articulated— "My dear Wallace you are victorious?" "Completely so, my prince and king," returned he in the same tone; "all is now plain before you; speak but the word and render Scotland happy!" "Not yet, O! not yet," whispered he. "My more than brother, allow Bruce to be himself again before he is known in the land of his fathers! I have but yet began my probation. Not a Southron must taint our native lands when my name is proclaimed in Scotland."

Wallace saw that his prince was not in a state to bear farther argument; and as all had retired far from the couch when he approached it, in gratitude for this propriety (for it had left him and his friend free to converse unobserved,) he turned towards the other inmates of the chamber. The sage advanced to him; and recognising in his now manly form the fine youth he had seen with Sir Ronald Crawford at the claiming of the crown; he saluted him with a paternal affection which tempered the sublime feelings with which he approached the resistless champion of his country: and then beckoning the beautiful girl who had so riveted the attention of Bruce, she drew near the sage. He took her hand: "Sir William Wallace," said he, "this sweet child is a daughter of the brave Mar who died in the field of glory on the Carron.—Her grandfather fell a few weeks ago, defending his castle; and I am almost all that is left to her." Isabella, for it was she, covered her face to conceal her emotions. "Dear lady," said Wallace, "these venerable heroes were both known and beloved by me. And now that heaven has resumed them to itself, as the last act of friendship that I am perhaps fated to pay their offspring, I shall convey you to a sister whose matchless heart yearns to receive so dear a consolation."
To disengage Isabella's thoughts from the afflicting remembrances which were bathing her cheeks with tears, Ercildoun put a cup of the mingled juice of herbs into her hand and commissioned her to give it to their invalid. Wallace now learnt that his friend's principal wound was in the head, accompanied by so severe a concussion of the brain, that it would be many days before he could remove from off his bed without danger. Anxious to release him from even the scarcely-breathed whispers of his martial companions who stood at some distance from his couch, Wallace immediately proposed leaving him to repose; and beckoning Edwin, who was bending in affectionate silence over his prince, he withdrew; leaving none others than the good sage and the tender Isabella, whose soft attentions seemed to beguile Bruce of every pain, to administer to his comfort.

Wallace then accompanied Sinclair to the apartment of the Regent; and finding him in a fair way of recovery, after sitting an hour with him he bade his friends adieu for the night, and retired to his own repose.

Next morning he was aroused at day-break by the abrupt entrance of Andrew Lord Bothwell into his chamber. The well-known sounds of his voice made Wallace start from his pillow and extend his arms to receive him. — "Murray! my brave, invaluable Murray!" cried he, "thou art welcome once more to the side of thy brother in arms. Thee and thine must ever be first in my heart!" The young Lord Bothwell for some time returned his warm embrace in eloquent silence; at last, sitting down by Wallace's bed, as he grasped his hand he said, pressing it to his breast, "I feel a happiness here, which I have never known since the day of Falkirk. You quitted us, Wallace, and all good seemed gone with you, or buried in my father's grave. But you return! you bring conquest and peace with you; you restore our Helen to her family; you bless us with yourself!—And shall you not again see the gay Andrew Murray? It must be so, my friend, melancholy is not my climate; and I shall now live in your beams." — "Dear Murray!" returned Wallace, "this generous enthusiasm can only be equalled by my
joy in all that makes you and Scotland happy." He then proceeded to impart to him, in confidence, all that related to Bruce; and to describe the minutiae of those plans for his establishment, which had only been hinted in his letters from France. Bothwell entered with ardour into these loyal designs, and regretted that the difficulty he found in persuading the Lanarkers to follow him to any field where they did not expect to find their beloved Wallace, had deprived him of the participation he wished in the late danger and new glory of his friend. "To compensate for that privation," replied Wallace, "while our prince is disabled from in person pursuing his victories, we must not allow our present advantages to lose their expected effects. You shall accompany me through the Lowlands, where we must recover the places which the ill-fortune of James Cummin has lost."

Murray gladly embraced this opportunity of again sharing the field with Wallace. And when the chiefs joined Bruce, (where Douglas was already seated by his couch,) after Bothwell was presented to his young sovereign, they entered into discourse relative to their future different posts of duty. Wallace suggested to his royal friend that, as his restoration to health could not be so speedy as the cause required, it would be necessary not to await the event, but immediately begin the recovery of the border counties before Edward could reinforce their Southron garrisons. Bruce sighed, but with a generous glow suffusing his pale face, he said—"Go, my friend! Bless Scotland what way you will, and let my ready acquiescence convince future ages that I love my country beyond my own fame: for its sake I relinquish to you the whole glory of delivering it out of the hands of the tyrant who has so long usurped my rights. Men may say when they hear this, that I do not merit the crown you will put upon my head; that I have lain on a couch while you fought for me; but I will bear all obloquy, rather than deserve its slightest charge by withholding you an hour from the great work of Scotland's peace."—"It is not for the breath of men, my dear prince," returned Wallace, "that either you or I act. It is sufficient for us that
we effect their good; and whether the agent be one or the other, the end is the same. Our deeds and intentions have one great judge; and he will award the only true glory.”

Such were the principles which filled the hearts of these two friends, worthy of each other and alike honourable to the country that gave them birth.

Though the wounded John Cummin remained possessed of the title of Regent, Wallace was virtually endowed with the authority. Whatever he suggested was acted upon as by a decree:—all eyes looked up to him as to the cynosure by which every order of men in Scotland were to shape their course. The jealousies which had driven him from his former supreme seat, seemed to have died with their prime instigator the late regent; and no chief of any consequence, excepting Soulis and Athol, who retired in disgusts to their different castles, breathed a word in opposition to the general gratitude.

Wallace, having sent back his prisoners to their country on the same terms which he formerly dictated, commenced his march farther into the Lowlands, where the fame of his victories seconded by the enthusiasm of the people and the determination of his troops, soon made him master of all the fortresses. His own valiant band, headed by Scrymgeour, had recognised their beloved leader with rapturous joy, and followed his standard with a zeal that rendered each individual a host in himself. Hardly three weeks were consumed in these conquests, and not a foot of land remained south of the Tay in the possession of England, excepting Berwick. Before that often disputed strong hold, Wallace drew up his forces to commence a regular siege: and the governor, intimidated by the powerful works which he saw the Scottish chief forming against the town, dispatched a messenger to Edward with the tidings; and to tell him, that if he would not grant the peace for which the Scots fought, or immediately send succors to Berwick, he would find it necessary to begin the conquest of the kingdom anew.
While Wallace, accompanied by his brave friends, was thus carrying all before him from the Grampian to the Cheviot hills, Bruce was rapidly recovering. His eager wishes seemed to heal his wounds; and on the tenth day after the departure of Wallace, he left that couch which had been beguiled of its irksomeness by the smiling attentions of the tender Isabella. The ensuing sabbath beheld him restored to full vigour; and having imparted his intentions to the Lords Ruthven and Douglas, who were both with him, the next morning he joyfully buckled on his armour. Isabella, when she saw him thus clad, started, and the roses left her cheek.

"I am armed to be your guide to Hunting-tower," said he, with a look that shewed he read her thoughts. He then called for pen and ink to write to Wallace.

Thus, with a spirit which wrapt him in felicity; for victory hailed him from without, and love seemed to woo him to the dearest transports within; he wrote the following letter to Wallace:

"I am now well, my best friend! This day I attend my lovely nurse, with her venerable guardian, to Hunting-tower. Eastward of Perth almost every castle of consequence is yet filled by the Southrons, whom the folly of James Cummin allowed to re-occupy the places whence you had so lately driven them. I go to root them out, to emulate in the north what you are now doing in the south! You shall see me again when the banks of the Spey are as free as you have made the Forth. In all this I am yet Thomas de Longueville. Isabella, the sweet soother of my hours, knows me as no other, for would she not despise the unfamed Bruce? To deserve and win her love as De Longueville, and to marry her as King of Scotland, is the fond hope of your friend and brother Robert——"
"P. S. I shall send you dispatches of my proceedings."—

Wallace had just made a successful attack upon the outworks of Berwick when this letter was put into his hand. He was surrounded by his chieftains, and having read it, he informed them that Sir Thomas de Longueville was going to Hunting-tower, whence he intended to make excursions to rid the neighbouring castles of the enemy.

"The hopes of his enterprising spirit," continued Wallace, "are so seconded by his determination that what he promises he will perform, and we may soon expect to hear that we have no enemies in the Highlands."

But in this he was disappointed. Day after day passed away, and no tidings arrived from the north. Wallace became anxious, and Bothwell and Edwin began to share his uneasiness. Continued successes against Berwick had assured him of a speedy surrender, when a Southron reinforcement being thrown in by sea the confidence of the garrison was re-excited, and the ramparts being doubly manned, Wallace saw the only alternative was to attempt the possession of their ships and turn the siege into a blockade. Should Bruce be prosperous in the Highlands, he would have full leisure to await the fall of Berwick upon this plan, and much blood might be spared. Intent and execution were twin-born in the breast of Wallace. By a masterly stroke he effected his design on the shipping; and having closed the Southrons within their walls, he dispatched Lord Bothwell to Hunting-tower to see Ruthven, to learn the state of military operations there, and above all, he hoped to bring back good tidings of the prince.

On the evening of the very day in which Murray left Berwick a desperate sally was made by the garrison, but they were beaten back with great slaughter, and with such effect that Wallace gained possession of one of their most commanding towers. The contest did not end till night; and after passing some time in the council-tent listening to the suggestions of his friends relative to the use that might be made of the new acquisition, he retired to his own quarters at a late hour. At these momentous periods he never
seemed to need sleep: and seated at his table, settling the dispositions for the succeeding day, he marked not the time till the flame of his exhausted lamp expired in the socket.—He replenished it; and had again resumed his military labours, when the curtain which covered the door of his tent was drawn aside and an armed man entered. Wallace looked up; and seeing that it was the knight of the green plume, asked if any thing had occurred from the town.

"Nothing," replied the knight, in an agitated voice, and seating himself beside Wallace. "Any evil tidings from my friends in Perthshire?" demanded Wallace, who now hardly doubted that ill news had arrived of Bruce. "None," was the knight's reply, "but I come to fulfil my promise to you; to unite myself for ever, heart and soul, to your destiny; or you behold me this night for the last time." Wallace, surprised at this address and at the emotion which shook the frame of the unknown warrior, answered him with expressions of esteem, and added: "If it depends on me to unite so brave a man to my friendship for ever, only speak the word, declare your name, and I am ready to seal the compact." "My name," returned the knight, "will indeed put these protestations to the proof. I have fought by your side, Sir William Wallace. I would have died at any moment to have spared that breast a wound; and yet I dread to raise this visor, to shew you who I am. A look will make me live, or blast me." "Your language confounds me, noble knight," replied Wallace, "I know of no man living, saving either of the base violators of Lady Helen Mar's liberty, who need tremble before my eyes. It is not possible that either of these men is before me; and whoever you are, whatever you may have been, brave chieftain, your deeds have proved you worthy of a soldier's friendship, and I pledge you mine."

The knight was silent.—He took Wallace's hand—he grasped it;—the arms that held it did indeed tremble. Wallace again spoke.—"What is the meaning of this? I am no tyrant, no monarch, to excite these dreads. I have a power to benefit, but none to injure." "To benefit and to injure!" cried the knight in a tran-
sport of emotion; "you have my life in your hands. Oh! grant it, as you value your own happiness and honour! Look on me, and say whether I am to live or die." As the warrior spoke, he cast himself impetuously on his knees, and threw open his visor. Wallace saw a fine but flushed face.—It was much overshadowed by the helmet. "My brave friend," said he, attempting to raise him by the hand which clasped his; "your words are mysteries to me; and so little right can I have to the power you ascribe to me, that, although it seems to me as if I had seen your features before, yet —" "You forget me," cried the knight starting on his feet and throwing off his helmet to the ground: "Again look on this face; and stab me at once by a second declaration that I am remembered no more!"

The countenance of Wallace now showed that he too well remembered it. He was pale and aghast. "Lady Mar," cried he, "not expecting to see you under a warrior's casque, you will pardon me that when so apparelled I should not immediately recognise the widow of my friend." "Ingrate! ingrate!" cried she, turning pale as himself; "and is it thus you answer the sacrifices I have made for you? For you I have committed an outrage on my nature; I have put on me this abhorrent steel; I have braved the dangers of many a hard-fought day;—and all to guard your life; to convince you of a love unexampled in woman! and thus you recognise her who has risked honour and life for you, with coldness and reproach!" "With neither, Lady Mar," returned he, "I am grateful for the generous motives of your conduct; but for the sake of the fair fame you confess you have endangered; in respect to the memory of him whose name you bear; I cannot but wish that so hazardous an instance of interest in me had been left undone." "If that is all," returned Lady Mar, drawing towards him; "it is in your power to ward from me every stigma! Who will dare to cast one reflection on my fair fame when you bear testimony to my purity? Who will asperse the name of Mar, when you displace it with that of Wallace? Make me yours, dearest of men," cried she clasping his hands, "and you will receive one to your
heart who never knew how to love before; who will be
to you what woman never yet was; and who will bring
you territories, if not more, yet nearly equal to those
of the King of Scotland. My father, who held them
during Lord Mar's life, is no more; and now, Countess
of Strathearn and Princess of the Orkneys, I have it in
my power to bring a sovereignty to your head and the
fondest of wives to your bosom." As she vehemently
spoke, and clung to Wallace as if she had
already a
right to seek
comfort within his
arms, her tears and
violent agitation so
disconcerted him that
for a
few
moments he could not
find a reply. This
short
endur-
ance of her
passion aroused
her
almost
drooping
hopes; and
to intoxicated with so
rapturous an
illusion she
threw
off the little restraint in which her
awe of Wallace's
coldness had confined her, and flinging herself on his
breast, poured forth all her love and fond ambitions for
him. In vain he attempted to interrupt her, to raise
her with gentleness from her indecorous situation; she
had no perception but for the idea which had now taken
possession of her heart, and whispering to him softly,
she said, "Be but my husband, Wallace, and all rights
shall perish before my love and your aggrandizement.
In these arms you shall bless the day you first saw
Joanna Strathearn!"
The prowess of the knight of the green plume, the
respect he owed to the widow of the Earl of Mar, the
tenderness he ever felt for all of woman-kind, were all
forgotten in the disgusting blandishments of this deter-
mined wanton. She wooed to be his wife; but not
with the chaste appeal of the widow of Mahlon. "Let
me find favour in thy sight, for thou hast comforted
me!" said the fair Moabitess, who in a strange land
cast herself at the feet of her deceased husband's
friend; "Spread thy garment over me, and let me be
thy wife!" She was answered, "I will do all that thou
requirest, for thou art a virtuous woman!" But nei-
ther the actions nor the words of Lady Mar bore wit-
ess that she deserved this appellation. They were
the dictates of a passion as impure as it was intemper-
ate. Blinded by its fumes she forgot the nature of the
heart she sought to pervert to sympathy with hers.
She saw not that every look and movement on her part filled Wallace with aversion; and not until he forcibly broke from her did she doubt the success of her fond caresses.

"Lady Mar," said he, "I must repeat that I am not ungrateful for the proofs of regard you have bestowed on me; but such excess of attachment is lavished upon a man that is a bankrupt in love. I am cold as monumental marble to every touch of that passion to which I was once but too entirely devoted. Bereaved of the object, I am punished; thus is my heart doomed to solitude on earth, for having made an idol of the angel that was sent to cheer and guide me in the path to heaven." Wallace said even more than this. He remonstrated with her in the gentlest manner, on the shipwreck she was making of her own happiness in adhering thus tenaciously to a man who could only regard her with the general sentiment of esteem. He urged her beauty and yet youthful years. How many would be eager to win her love and to marry her with honour; when, under the circumstances into which she had thrown herself with him, should she persist, nothing could accrue but disappointment and disgrace. While he continued to speak to her with the tender consideration of a brother, she, who knew no gradations in the affections of the heart, doubted his words and believed that a latent fire glowed in his breast which her art might still blow into a flame. She threw herself upon her knees, she wept, she implored his pity, she wound her arms around his and bathed his hands with her tears; but still he continued to urge her by every argument of female delicacy to relinquish her ill-directed love, and to return to her domains before her absence could be generally known.—She looked up to read his countenance: a friend's anxiety, nay, authority, was there, but no glow of passion; all was calm and determined. Her beauty then had been shewn to a man without eyes; her tender eloquence poured on an ear that was deaf; and her blandishments lavished on a block of marble! In a paroxysm of despair she dashed the hand which she held far from her, and standing proudly on her feet.—"'Hear me, thou man of stone!"
cried she, "and answer me on your life and honour, for both depend on your reply, Is Joanna Strathearn to be your wife or not?"

"Cease to urge me, unhappy lady," returned Wallace; "on what you already know the decision of this ever widowed heart." Lady Mar looked steadfastly at him: "Then receive my last determination!" cried she, and drawing near him with a desperate and portentous expression in her countenance, as if she meant to whisper in his ear, she on a sudden plucked St. Louis's dagger from his girdle and struck it into his breast. Before it could penetrate to a mortal depth he caught the hand which grasped the hilt. Her eyes glared with the fury of a maniac, and with a horrid laugh she exclaimed, "I have slain thee, insolent triumpher in my love and agonies!—Thou shalt not now deride me in the arms of thy minion: for I know that it is not for the dead Marion you have trampled on my heart, but for the living Helen!" As she spoke, he moved her hold from the dagger, and drew the weapon from the wound. A torrent of blood flowed over his vest and stained the hand that grasped hers. She turned of a deadly paleness, but a demoniac joy still gleamed in her eyes. "Lady Mar," cried he, "I pardon this outrage. Go in peace, and I shall never breathe to man or woman the occurrences of this night. Only remember, that with regard to Lady Helen, my wishes are as pure as her own virgin innocence." "So they may be now, vainly-boasting, immaculate Wallace!" answered she, with bitter derision, "men are saints, when their passions are satisfied. Think not to impose on her who knows how this vestal Helen followed you in page's attire, and without one stigma being cast on her maiden delicacy! I am not to learn the days and nights she passed alone with you in the woods of Normandy!—Did you not follow her to France?—Did you not tear her from the arms of Lord Aymer de Valence? And now, relinquishing her yourself, you leave a dishonoured bride to cheat the vows of some honester man!—Wallace, I now know you: and as I have been fool enough to love you beyond all woman's love, I
swear by the powers of heaven and hell, to make you feel the weight of woman's hatred!"

Her denunciations had no effect on Wallace: but her slander against her unoffending daughter-in-law agitated him with an indignation that almost dispossessed him of himself. In few but hurried and vehement words, he denied all that she had alleged against Helen, and appealed to the whole court of France to bear witness to her spotless innocence. Lady Mar exulted in this emotion, though every sentence, by the interest it displayed in its object, seemed to establish the truth of that suspicion which she had only uttered as the mere ebullition of her spleen. Triumphant in the belief that he had found another as frail as herselfi, and yet maddened that that other should have been preferred before her, her jealous pride took fresh flame.—"Swear," cried she, "till I see the blood of that false heart forced to my feet to ratify the oath, and still I shall believe the base daughter of Mar a wanton. I go, not to proclaim her dishonour to the world, but to deprive her of her lover; to yield the rebel Wallace into the hands of justice! When on the scaffold, proud exulter in those now detested beauties, remember that it was Joanna Strathearn who laid thy head upon the block; who consigned those limbs, of heaven's own statuary, to decorate the spires of Scotland! Remember that my curse pursues you here and hereafter!" A livid fire seemed to dart from her eyes; her countenance was torn as by some internal fiend; and with the last malediction thundering from her tongue she darted from his sight.

CHAP. XXV.

THE next morning Wallace was recalled from the confusion into which his nocturnal visitor had thrown his mind, by the entrance of Ker, who came as usual with the reports of the night and to receive his orders for the day. In the course of their conversation, Ker mentioned that about three hours after sun-rise the knight of the green plume had left the camp with his dispatch-
for Stirling. Wallace was scarcely surprised at this ready falsehood of Lady Mar's; and not intending to betray her, he merely said; "It is well; and long ere he appears again, I hope we shall have good tidings from our friends on the Tay."

But day after day passed, and notwithstanding Bothwell's embassy, no accounts arrived.—The Countess had left behind an emissary who did as she had done before, intercept all messengers from Perthshire.

The morning after the night in which she had clandestinely stolen from Hunting-tower, she ordered the seneschal of that castle (her only confident in this transaction) to tell Lady Ruthven that he had just spoken with a knight who came to say that the Countess of Strathearn and Mar had commanded him to tell the family that she was gone on a secret mission to Norway, and therefore desired her sister-in-law, for the sake of the cause most dear to her, that neither she nor any in the castle would inform Lord Ruthven or his friends of her departure till she should return with, she hoped, happy news for Scotland. The man said, that after declaring this the knight rode hastily away. But this precaution, which did indeed impose on the innocent credulity of her husband's sister and daughter, failed to satisfy the countess herself. Fearful that Helen might communicate her flight to Wallace and so excite his suspicion that she was not far from him, from the moment of her joining him at Linlithgow she intercepted every letter from Hunting-tower; and continued to do so after Bruce went to that castle, jealous of what might be said of Helen by this Sir Thomas de Longueville, in whom he seemed so undeservedly to confide. To this end, all packets from Perthshire were conveyed to her by a spy she had in the camp; and all which were sent thence, were stopped at Hunting-tower (through which channel they were directed to go,) and by the treacherous seneschal thrown into the flames. No letters ever came from Helen: a few bore Lord Ruthven's superscription; and all the rest were addressed by Sir Thomas de Longueville to Wallace. She broke the seals of this correspondence; but she looked in vain on their contents. Bruce and his friend, as well
as Ruthven, wrote in a cypher; and only one passage, which the former had by chance written in the common character, could she ever make out.—It ran thus:

"I have just returned to Hunting-tower after the capture of Kinsouns. Lady Helen sits by me on one side, Isabella on the other. Isabella smiles on me like a Houri. Helen's look is not less gracious, for I tell her I am writing to Sir William Wallace. She smiles, but it is with such a smile as that with which a saint would relinquish to heaven the dearest object of its love." "Helen," said I, "what shall I say from you to your friend?" She blushed. "That I pray for him." "That you think of him?" "That I pray for him," repeated she more emphatically; "that is the way I always think of my preserver." Her manner checked me, my dear Wallace; but I would give worlds that you could bring your heart to make this sweet vestal smile as I do her sister!"

Lady Mar crushed the registered wish, so hostile to her hopes, in her hand; and though she was never able to decypher a word more of Bruce's numerous letters, (many of which, could she have read, contained complaints of that silence which she had so cruelly occasioned on both sides,) she took and destroyed them all.

She had ever shunned the penetrating eyes of Bothwell; and to have him on the spot when she should discover herself to Wallace, she thought would only invite his discomfiture; and therefore, in affecting to share the general anxiety respecting the affairs in the north, she suggested to Ramsay the propriety of sending some one of peculiar trust to make inquiries. By a little art she easily managed that the young chieftain should propose Bothwell to Wallace; and on the very night that her machinations had prevailed to dispatch him on this embassy, impatient, yet doubting and agitated she went to declare and throw herself on the bosom of the man for whom she thus sunk herself in shame and falsehood.

Wallace, though he heard the denunciation with which she left his presence, did not conceive that it was more than the evanescent rage of disappointed passion; and anticipating persecutions rather from her love than her revenge, he was relieved and not alarmed by the in-
telligence that the knight of the green plume had really taken his departure. More delicate of Lady Mar's honour than she was of her own, when he met Edwin at the works he silently acquiesced in his belief, that their late companion was gone with dispatches to the Regent who was now removed to Stirling.

After frequent desperate sallies from the garrison, in which the Southrons were always beaten back with great loss, the lines of circumvallation were at last finished and Wallace hourly anticipated the surrender of the enemy. Reduced for want of provisions, and seeing all hope of succours cut off by the seizure of the fleet, the inhabitants, detesting their new rulers, rose in strong bodies, and lying in wait for the soldiers of the garrison, murdered them secretly and in great numbers; and by the punishments which the governor thought proper to inflict on the guilty and guiltless (as he could not discover who were actually the assassins,) the distress of the town was augmented to a most horrible degree. Such a state of things could not be long maintained; and the Southron commander perceiving the peril of his troops, and foreseeing that should he continue in the fortress they must all assuredly perish either by the insurrection within or the enemy from without, he determined no longer to await the appearance of a relief which might never arrive; and to stop the internal confusion, he sent a flag of truce to Wallace accepting and signing his offered terms of capitulation. By this deed he engaged to open the gates to him at sun-set, but begged the interval between noon and that hour, that he might settle the animosities between his men and the people, before he should surrender his brave followers entirely into the hands of the Scots.

Having dispatched his assent to this request of the governor's, Wallace retired to his own tent.—That he had effected his purpose without the carnage which must have ensued had he again stormed the place, gratified his humanity; and congratulating himself on such a termination of the siege, he turned with more than usual cheerfulness towards a herald who brought him a packet from the north.—The man withdrew, and
Wallace broke the seal; but what was his astonishment to find it an order for him to immediately repair to Stirling and there answer, before the Regent and the abthanes of Scotland on his allegiance to his country, certain charges brought against him by an authority too illustrious to set aside without examination. At the close of this citation, they added, "The Scots, of whom Sir William Wallace has so long declared himself the champion, will now be proud to shew their present power in the impartiality with which they will award the sentence of justice." He had hardly had time to read this extraordinary mandate, when Sir Simon Fraser, his second in command, entered and with consternation in his looks put an open letter into his hand.—It ran as follows:

"Allegations of treason against the liberties of Scotland having been preferred against Sir William Wallace, until he clears himself of the charge, you, Sir Simon Fraser, are directed to assume the command of the forces which form the blockade of Berwick; and you are therefore ordered to see that the accused sets forward to Stirling, under a strong guard, within an hour after you receive this dispatch.

Signed, "JOHN CUMMIN, Earl of Badenoeh, and Lord Regent of Scotland."

Stirling-Castle.

Wallace returned the letter to Fraser with an undisturbed countenance; "I have received a similar order from the Regent," said he; "and though I cannot guess the source whence these accusations spring I fear not to meet them, and shall require no guard to speed me forward to the scene of my defence. I am ready to go my friend: and happy to resign the brave garrison that has just surrendered, to your honour and amity." Fraser answered that he should be emulous to follow his example in all things, and to abide by his agreements with the Southron governor. He then, by Wallace's desire retired to prepare the army for the departure of their commander; and much against his own will, to call out the escort that was to attend him to Stirling.

"It is right," added Wallace, "that I should pay every respect to the tribunal of my country; and with regard
to this small ceremonial of a guard I deem it proper to submit to the ordinance of its rulers."

When the marshal of the army read to the officers and men the orders of the Regent, that they must obey Sir Simon Fraser instead of Sir William Wallace who was summoned to Stirling on a charge of treason, a wordless consternation seized on one part of the troops and as violent an indignation agitated the other to tumult. The brave Scots who had followed the Chief of Ellerslie from the first hour of his appearing as a patriot in arms, could not brook this aspersion upon their leader's honour; and had it not been for the vehement exhortations of the no less incensed though more moderate Scrymgeour and Ramsay, they would have arisen in instant revolt. However, they would not be withheld from immediately quitting the field and marching directly to Wallace's tent. He was conversing with Edwin when they arrived, and in some measure he had broken the shock to him of so dishonouring a charge on his friend, by his being the first to communicate it. In vain Edwin strove to guess who could be the inventor of so dire a falsehood against the truest of Scots, and he awakened that alarm in Wallace for Bruce which could not be excited for himself, by suggesting that perhaps some intimation had been given to the most ambitious of the abthanes respecting the arrival of their rightful prince. "And yet," returned Wallace, "I cannot altogether suppose that, for even their desires of self-aggrandizement could not torture my share in Bruce's restoration to his country into any thing like treason; our friend's rights are too undisputed for that; and all I should dread by a premature discovery of his being in Scotland, would be secret machinations against his life. There are men in this land who might attempt it; and it is our duty my dear Edwin, to suffer death upon the rack rather than betray our knowledge of him. But," added he with a smile, "we need not disturb ourselves with such thoughts; for the Regent is in our prince's confidence, and did this accusation relate to him he would not on such a plea have arraigned me as a traitor."

Edwin again revolved in his mind the nature of the
charge and who the villain could be who had made it, and at last suddenly recollecting the Knight of the Green Plume, he asked if it were not possible that as that stranger had sedulously kept himself from being known, he might not be a traitor? “I must confess to you,” continued Edwin, “that this knight, who ever appeared to dislike your closest friends, seems to me the most probable instigator of this mischief, and is perhaps the author of the strange failure of communication between you and Bruce! Accounts have not arrived even since Bothwell went, and that is more than natural.”

Wallace changed colour at this last suggestion, but merely replied, “a few hours will decide your suspicion, for I shall lose no time in confronting my enemy.” I go with you,” said Edwin, “for never while I live will I consent to lose sight of my dearest friend again!”

It was at this moment that the tumultuous noise of the Lanarkers was heard without. The whole band rushed into the tent; and Stephen Ireland, who was foremost, raising his voice above the rest exclaimed, “They are the traitors, my lord, who would accuse you! It is determined by our corrupted Thanes, that Scotland shall be sacrificed, and you are to be made the first victim. Think they then that we will obey such parricides? Lead us on, thou only worthy of the name of Regent, and we will hurl these usurpers from their thrones!”

This demand was reiterated by every man present; was echoed by those who surrounded the tent. The Bothweller’s and Ramsay’s followers had joined the men of Lanark; and the mutiny against the orders of the Regent became general. Wallace walked out into the open field, and mounting his horse, rode forth amongst them. At sight of him the air resounded with their acclamations, and they ceased not to proclaim him their only leader, till taking off his helmet and stretching out his arm to them in token of silence they became profoundly still. “My friends and brother soldiers,” cried he, “as you value the honour of William Wallace, for this once yield to him implicit obedience.” “For ever!” shouted the Bothwell-men.
"We will never obey any other!" rejoined his faithful Lanarkers, and with an increased uproar they demanded to be led to Stirling. His extended hand again stilled the storm, and he resumed: "You shall go with me to Stirling but as my friends only, never as the enemies of the Regent of Scotland. I am charged with treason: it is his duty to try me by the laws of my country; it is mine to submit to the inquisition— I fear it not, and I invite you to accompany me; not to brand me with infamy by passing between my now darkened honour and the light of justice; not to avenge an iniquitous sentence passed on a guiltless man; but to my acquittal; and in that, my triumph over them who through my breast strike at a greater than I."

At this mild persuasive every upraised sword dropped before him, in token of obedience; and Wallace turning his horse into the path which led towards Stirling, his men, with a silent determination to share the fate of their master, fell into regular marching order and followed him. Edwin, confounded at the present situation of his ungratefully-suspected friend, rode by his side as much wondering at the unaffected composure with which he sustained such a weight of insult, as at the Regent who could be so unjust to tried virtue as to lay it upon him.

At the west of the camp the detachment appointed to guard Wallace to Stirling came up with him.—It was with difficulty that Fraser could find an officer who would command it; and he who did at last consent, appeared before his prisoner with down-cast eyes, seeming rather the culprit than the guard. Wallace observing his confusion, said a few gracious words to him; and the officer more overcome by this than he could have been with his reproaches, burst into tears and retired into the rear of his men.

Wallace entered on the carse of Stirling, that scene of his many victories, and beheld its northern horizon white with tents.—A few miles beyond the Carron an armed troop, headed by young Lord Fife the son of him who fell at Falkirk, and the heralds of the Regent, met him.—Officers appointed for the purpose had apprized ed the abthanes of Wallace having left Berwick; and
knowing by the same means, all his movements, this
cavalcade was ready to hold his followers in awe and to
conduct him without opposition to Stirling. In case
it should be insufficient to quail the spirit of the brave
Lanarkers, or to intimidate him who had never yet
been made to fear by mortal man, the Regent having
summoned all the vassals of the various seigniories of
Cummin, had planted them in battle array before the
walls of Stirling. But whether they were friends or
foes, was equally indifferent to Wallace, for secure in
his own integrity, he went as confidently to this trial
as to a triumph. In either case he should demonstrate
his fidelity to Scotland; and though inwardly marvel-
ling at such a panoply of war being called out to in-
duce him to comply with so simple an act of obedience
to the laws, he met the heralds of the Regent with as
much ease as if they had been coming to congratulate
him on the capitulation, the ratification of which he
brought in his hand.

By his order his faithful followers, who took a pride
in obeying with the most scrupulous strictness the in-
junctions of their now deposed commander, encamped
under Sir Alexander Scrymgeour and Ramsay near
Ballochgeich, to the north-west of the castle. It was
then night. In the morning at an early hour Wallace,
attended by Edwin, was summoned before the council
in the citadel.

On his re-entrance into that room which he had left
the dictator of the kingdom, when every knee bent
and every head bowed to his supreme mandate, he
found not one who even greeted his appearance with
the commonest ceremony of courtesy. Badenoch the
Regent sat upon the throne, pale, and with evident
symptoms of being yet an invalid. The Lords Athol
and Buchan, and the numerous chiefs of the clans of
Cummin, were seated on his right: on his left were
arranged the Earls of Fyfe and Lorn, Lord Soulis, and
every Scottish baron of power who had at any time
shewn himself hostile to Wallace: others, who were
of easy faith to a tale of malice, sat with them; and
the rest of the assembly was filled up with men of bet-
ter families than personal fame, and whose names
swelled a catalogue without adding any true importance to the side on which they appeared. A few, and those a very few, who respected Wallace, were present, and they, not because they were sent for, (great care having been taken not to summon his friends) but in consequence of a rumour of the charge having reached them; and these were the lords Lennox and Loch-awe with Kirkpatrick and two or three chieftains from the western Highlands. None of them had arrived till within a few minutes of the council being opened, and Wallace was entering at one door as they appeared at the other.

At sight of him a low whisper buzzed through the hall, and a marshal took the plumed bonnet from his hand, which, out of respect to the nobility of Scotland, he had raised from his head at his entrance. The man then preceding him to a spot directly in front of the throne, said, in a voice which declared the reluctance with which he uttered the words, "Sir William Wallace, being charged with treason, by an ordinance of Fergus the first you must stand uncovered before the representative of the majesty of Scotland until that loyalty is proved which will again restore you to a seat amongst her faithful barons."

Wallace, with the same equanimity as that with which he would have mounted the regal chair, bowed his head to the marshal in token of acquiescence. But Edwin, whose indignation was re-awakened at this exclusion of his friend from the privilege of his birth, said something so warm to the marshal that Wallace in a low voice was obliged to check his vehemence by a declaration that it was his determination, (however obsolete the custom and revived in his case only) to submit himself in every respect to whatever was exacted of him by the laws of his country.

On Loch-awe and Lennox observing him stand thus before the bonneted and seated chiefs, (a stretch of magisterial prerogative which had not been exercised for many a century by any but a king) they took off their caps, and bowing to Wallace, refused to occupy their places on the benches while the defender of Scotland stood. Kirkpatrick drew eagerly towards
him and throwing down his casque and sword at his feet, cried in a loud voice, "lie there till the only true man in all this land commands me to take ye up in his defence. He alone had courage to look the Southrons in the face and to drive their king over the borders, while his present accusers skulked in their chains!" Wallace regarded this ebullition from the heart of the honest veteran with a look that was eloquent to all. He would have animatedly praised such an instance of fearless gratitude expressed to another, and when it was directed to himself, his ingenuous soul shewed what he felt in every feature of his beaming countenance.

"Is it thus, presumptuous knight of Ellerslie?" cried Soulis, "that by your looks you dare to encourage contumely to the Lord Regent and his peers!" Wallace did not deign him an answer, but turning calmly towards the throne, "Representative of my king!" said he, "in duty to the power whose authority you wear, I have obeyed your summons; and I here await the appearance of the accuser who has had the hardihood to brand the name of William Wallace with disloyalty to prince or people."

The Regent was embarrassed. He did not suffer his eyes to meet those of Wallace, but looked from side to side in manifest confusion during this address; and when it ended, without a reply to the chief, he turned to Lord Athol and called on him to open the charge. Athol required not a second summons: he rose immediately, and in a bold and positive manner accused Wallace of having been won over by Philip of France to sell those rights of supremacy to him which, with a feigned patriotism, his sword had wrested from the grasp of England. For this treachery Philip was to endow him with the sovereignty of Scotland; and as a pledge of the compact, he had invested him with the principality of Gascony in France. "This is the groundwork of his treason," continued Athol, "but the catastrophe is yet to be cemented by our blood. I have seen a list in his own hand writing, in which are the names of those chiefs whose lives are to pave his way to the throne."

At this point of the charge, Edwin, wrought up be-
and longer forbearance, sprang forward, but Wallace perceiving the intent of his movement caught him by the arm, and by a look reminded him of his recently repeated engagement to keep silent.

"Produce the list," cried Lord Lennox, "no evidence that does not bring proofs to our eyes, ought to have any weight with us against the man who has bled in every vein for Scotland." "It shall be brought to your eyes," returned Athol; "that, and other damning proofs, shall convince this too credulous country of its long abused confidence." "I see them now!" cried Kirkpatrick, who had frowningly listened to Athol; "the abusers of my country's confidence betray themselves at this moment by their eagerness to impeach her friends; and I pray heaven that before they mislead others into so black a conspiracy, the lie in their throats may choke its inventors!" "We all know," cried Athol, turning on Kirkpatrick, "te whom you belong. —You were bought with the horrid grant to mangle the body of the slain Cressingham; a deed which has brought a stigma on the Scottish name never to be erased but by the immolation of its perpetrators. For this savage triumph did you sell yourself to William Wallace: and a bloody champion would you always prove of a most secretly murderous master!"

"Hear you this, and bear it?" cried Kirkpatrick, and Edwin in one breath and grasping their daggers; Edwin's the next moment flashed in his hand. "Seize them!" cried Athol, "my life is threatened by his myrmidons." —Two marshals instantly approached to put the order in execution; but Wallace, who had hitherto stood in silent dignity allowing his calumniator to disgorge all his venom before he would condescend to point out to them who never ought to have suspected him where the poison lay, now turned to the men, and with that tone of justice which had ever commanded from his lips, he bade them forbear:—"Touch these knights at your peril, marshals!" said he, "No man in this chamber is above the laws; and they protect every Scot who resents unjust aspersions upon his own character, or irrelevant and prejudicing attacks on that of an arraigned friend. It is before the majesty of
the law that I now stand; but were injury to usurp its place, not all the lords in Scotland should detain me a moment in a scene so unworthy of my country." The marshals retreated; for they had been accustomed to regard with implicit deference the opinion of Sir William Wallace on the laws; and though he now stood in the light of their violater, yet memory bore testimony that he had always read them aright and to this hour had ever appeared to make them the guide of his actions.

Athol saw that none in the assembly had courage to enforce this act of his violence, and blazing with fury he poured his whole wrath upon Wallace;—"Imperious, arrogant traitor!" cried he, "This presumption only deepens our impression of your guilt!—Demean yourself with more reverence to this august court, or expect to be sentenced on the proof which such insolence amply gives; we require no other to proclaim your domineering spirit, and to at once condemn you as the premeditated tyrant of our land."—"Lord Athol," replied Wallace, "what is just, I would say in the face of all the courts in Christendom. It is not in the power of man to make me silent when I see the laws of my country outraged and my countrymen oppressed. Though I may submit my own cheek to the blow, I will not permit their's to share the stroke. I have answered you, earl, to this point; and I am ready to hear you to the end."

Athol resumed.—"I am not your only accuser, proudly-confident man; you shall see one whose truth cannot be doubted, and whose first glance will bow that haughty spirit and cover that bold front with the livery of shame! My Lord," cried he, turning to the Regent, "I shall bring a most illustrious witness before you; one who will prove on oath that it was the intention of this arch-hypocrite, this angler for women's hearts, this perverter of men's understandings, before another moon to bury deep in blood the very people whom he now insidiously affects to protect! But to open your and the nation's eyes at once; to overwhelm him with his fate; I now call forth the evidence."

The marshals opened a door in the side of the hall
and led a lady forward habited in regal splendour and covered from head to foot with a veil of so transparent a texture, that her costly apparel and majestic contour were distinctly seen. She was conducted to a chair that was elevated on a tapestried platform at a few paces from where Wallace stood. On her being seated the Regent rose and in a tremulous voice addressed her.

"Joanna, Countess of Strathearn and Mar, and Princess of the Orkneys, we adjure thee by thy princely dignity, and in the name of the King of Kings, to bear a just witness to the truth or falsehood of the charges of treason and conspiracy now brought against Sir William Wallace."

The name of his accuser made Wallace start: and the sight of her unblushing face, for she threw aside her veil the moment she was addressed, overspread his cheek with a tinge of that shame for which she was now too hardened in determined crime to feel herself. Edwin gazed at her in speechless horror, while she, casting a glance on Wallace in which the full purpose of her soul was declared, turned with a more softened though majestic air to the Regent and spoke.

"My lord!" said she, "you see before you a woman who never knew what it was to feel a self-reproachful pang till an evil hour brought her to receive an obligation from that insidious, treacherous man. But, as my first passion has ever been the love of my country, I will prove it to this good assembly by making before them the confession of what was once my heart's weakness: and by that candour I trust they will fully honour the rest of my narrative."

A clamour of approbation resounded through the hall. Lennox and Loch-awe looked on each other with amazement. Kirkpatrick, recollecting the scenes at Dumbarton, exclaimed—"Jezabel!"—but the ejaculation was lost in the general burst of applause; and the Countess, after having cast down her eyes with affected sensibility, again looked up and resumed,

"I am not to tell you, my lord, that Sir William Wallace released the late Earl of Mar and myself from Southron captivity at Dumbarton and in this citadel. Our
deliverer was what you see him; fraught with attractions which he too successfully directed against the peace of a young woman, married to a man of paternal years. While to all the rest of the world he seemed to consecrate himself to the memory of his murdered wife, to me alone he unveiled his impassioned heart. I revered my nuptual vow too sincerely to listen to him with the complacency he wished: but, I blush to own, that his tears, his agonies of love, his youthful graces, and the virtues I believed he possessed, (for well he knows to assume!) co-operating with my ardent gratitude, wrought such a change in my breast that I became wretched: no guilty wish was there; but, admiration of him, a pity which undermined my health, and left me miserable! I forbade him to approach me. I tried to wrest him from my memory; and nearly had succeeded, when I was informed by my late husband's nephew, the youth who now stands beside Sir William Wallace, that he was returned under an assumed name from France. Then I feared that all my inward struggles were to re-commence. I had once conquered myself: for, abhorring the estrangement of my thoughts from my wedded lord during his life, on his death I had, in penance for my involuntary crime, refused Sir William Wallace my hand. His re-appearance filled me with tumults which only they who would sacrifice all they prize to a sense of duty can know. Edwin Ruthven left me at Hunting-tower. That very evening, as I was walking alone in the garden, I was surprised by the sudden approach of an armed man. He threw a scarf over my head to prevent my screams, but I fainted with terror. He then took me from the garden by the way he had entered, and placing me on a horse before him, galloped with me whither I know not! but on my recovery I found myself in a chamber with an old woman standing beside me, and the same warrior, who was dressed in green armour with his visor so closed that I could not see his face. On my expressing alarm at my situation he addressed me in French, telling me that he had provided a man to carry an excuse to Hunting-tower which would prevent all pursuit; and then he put a letter into my hand which he said he
brought from Sir William Wallace. Anxious to know what he intended by this act; and believing that a man who had sworn to me such devoted love could not seriously premeditate further outrage I broke the seal, and as nearly as I can recollect read to this effect:

"That his passion was so imperious that he was determined to make me his even in spite of the sublime sentiments of female purity which, while they tortured him, rendered me dearer in his eyes. He told me that as he had often read in my downcast blushes the sympathy which my too severe virtue made me conceal,—he would now wrest me from my cheerless widowhood; and having nothing in reality to reproach myself with, compel me to be happy. His friend, the only confident of his love, had brought me to a spot whence I could not fly: there I should remain till he could leave the army for a few days, and, (he throwing himself on my compassion and tenderness,) receive him as the most faithful of lovers, the fondest of husbands.

"This letter," continued the Countess, "was followed by many others, and, suffice it to say, that the latent affection in my heart and his subduing love, were too powerful advocates in his cause. How his letters were brought I know not, but they were duly brought to me by the old woman, who remained firm against answering me any questions. She likewise carried away my perhaps too fond replies. At last the Knight of the Green Plume re-appeared." "Prodigious villain!" broke from the lips of Edwin. The Countess turned her eye on him for a moment, and then resumed: "He was the warrior who had borne me from Hunting-tower, and from that hour until the period I now speak of, I had never seen him. He put another packet into my hand, desiring me to peruse it with attention and return Sir William Wallace a verbal answer by him. Yes, was all he required. I retired to open it, and what was my horror when I read a perfect development of the treasons for which he was now brought to an account!—By some mistake of my character he had conceived me to be ambitious, and knowing himself master of my heart, he fancied himself lord of my conscience also. He wrote, that until
he saw me he had no other end in his exertions for Scotland than her rescue from a foreign yoke; but, added he, from the moment in which I first beheld my adored Joanna, I aspired to place a crown on her brows! He then told me that he did not deem the time of its presentation to him on the carse of Stirling a safe period for its acceptance, neither was he tempted to run the risk of maintaining an unsteady throne when I was not free to enjoy it; but since the death of Lord Mar every wish, every hope was reawakened, and he had determined to become a king.—Philip of France had made secret articles with him to this end. He was to hold Scotland of him. —And to make the surrender of his country's liberties sure to Philip, and the sceptre to himself and his posterity, he attempted to persuade me that there would be no crime in destroying the chiefs whose names he enrolled in this list. The pope, he added, would absolve me for a transgression dictated by love, and on our bridal day he proposed that the deed should be done.—He would invite all these lords to a feast, and poison or the dagger should soon lay them at his feet.

"So impious a proposal immediately restored me to myself. My love at once turned to the most decided abhorrence; and hastening to the Knight of the Green Plume, I told him to carry my resolution to his master, that I would never see him more till I should appear as his accuser before the tribunal of his country. The knight tried to dissuade me from my purpose, but in vain: and becoming alarmed at my threats of the punishment that would await himself as the agent of such a treason, a sudden remorse seized him and he confessed to me that the scene of his first appearance at Linlithgow was devised by Wallace who, unknown to all others, had brought him over from France as an assistant in schemes not to be confided to Scotland's friends. If I would guarantee his life, he offered to take me from the place where I was then confined and convey me safe to Stirling. All he asked was, that I would leave every letter behind me, and suffer my eyes to be blindfolded.—This I consented to, but the list I had undesignedly put in my bosom.—My head was again
wrapped in a thick veil, and we set out. It was very
dark, and we travelled long and swiftly till we come to
a wood. There was no moon nor stars to point out
any habitation.—But I was fatigued; my conductor
persuaded me, and I dismounted to take rest. I slept
beneath the trees. In the morning when I awoke, I
in vain looked round for the knight and called him; he
was gone, and I saw him no more. I then made the
best of my way to Stirling to warn my country of its
danger, and to unmask to the world the direst hypo-
crite that ever prostituted the name of virtue.”

The Countess ceased; and a hundred voices broke
out at once, pouring invectives on the murderous ambi-
tion of Sir William Wallace, and invoking the Regent
to pass some signal condemnation on so monstrous a
crime. In vain Kirkpatrick thundered forth all that was
in his indignant soul; he was unheard in the general
tumult: but going up to the Countess, he accused her
to her face of ingratitude and falsehood and charged her
with a design, from some really treasonable motive, to
destroy the only sure hope of her country.

“And will you not speak?” cried Edwin, in agony
of spirit clasping Wallace’s arm, “will you not speak,
before these ungrateful men shall dare to brand your
ever honoured name with infamy?—Make yourself
be heard, my noblest friend! and confute that wicked
woman, who too surely has proved what I suspected,
that this knight came to be a traitor.” “I will speak
my Edwin,” returned Wallace, “at the proper mo-
ment, but not in this tumult of my enemies.—Rely on
it that your friend will submit to no unjust decree.”

“Where is this Knight of the Green Plume?” cried
Lennox, who was almost startled in his opinion of Wal-
lace by the consistency of the Countess’s narrative;
“No mark of dishonour shall be passed on Sir William
Wallace without the strictest scrutiny. Let the mys-
terious stranger be found and confronted with Lady
Strathearn.” Notwithstanding the earl’s insisting on
impartial justice she perceived the doubt in his counte-
nance, and eager to maintain her advantage, she re-
plied—“The knight I fear has fled beyond our search:
but, that I may not want a witness to corroborate the
love I once felt for this arch-hypocrite, and consequently the sacrifice I must have made to loyalty in this unveiling him to the world, I call upon you, Lord Lennox, to say whether you did not observe at Dumbarton Castle the state of my too grateful heart!"

Lennox, who well remembered her conduct in the citadel of that fortress, hesitated to answer, aware that his reply would substantiate a guilt which he now feared was but too strongly made manifest. Every ear hung on his answer. Wallace saw what was passing in his mind, and determined to allow all men to shew what was in their hearts towards him and justice, before he would interrupt them with his defence he looked towards the earl and said, "Do not hesitate, my lord, speak all that you know or think of me. Could the deeds of my life be written on yon blue vault," added he, pointing to the heavens, "and my breast be laid open for men to scan, I should be content: for then I should be known to Scotland as I am to my Creator, and the evidence which now makes even friendship doubt, would meet the reception due to calumny."

Lord Lennox felt the last remark, and filled with remorse for having for a moment credited any thing against the frank spirit which gave him this permission, he replied, "To Lady Strathearn's question I must answer, that at Dumbarton I did perceive her preference of Sir William Wallace, but I never saw any thing in him to warrant the idea that it was reciprocal. And yet, were it even so, that bears nothing to the point of the Countess's accusation; and notwithstanding her princely rank and the deference all would pay to the widow of Lord Mar, we cannot as true Scots relinquish our faith in a man who has so eminently served his country, to any single witness."

"No!" cried Loch-aw, "If the Knight of the Green Plume be above ground, he shall be brought before this tribunal. He alone can be the traitor, and must have deceived the Countess by this device against Sir William Wallace." "No, no!" interrupted she, "I read the whole in his own hand-writing; and this list of the barons condemned by him to die, will fully evince his guilt: even your name, too generous earl,
is in the horrid catalogue."—As she spoke she rose eagerly to hand him the scroll.

"Let me now speak, or stab me to the heart," hastily whispered Edwin to his friend. Wallace did not withhold him, for he guessed what would be the remark of his ardent soul. "Hear that woman!" cried the vehement youth to the Regent, "and say whether she now speaks the language of one who had ever loved the virtues of Sir William Wallace? Were she innocent of malice towards the deliverer of Scotland, would she not have rejoiced in Lord Loch-awe's supposition that the Green Knight was the traitor?—And if that scroll she has now given into the hand of his lordship be too nicely forged for her to detect its not being indeed the hand-writing of the noblest of men, would she not have shewn some sorrow, at least, at being obliged to maintain the guilt of one she professes once to have loved?—But here her malice has over-stepped her art; and after having promoted the success of her tale by so cunningly mingling truths of no moment with falsehoods of capital import that in acknowledging the one we seem to grant the other, she falls into her own snare, and even a boy, as you see, can discern that however vile the Green Knight may be, she shares his wickedness!"

While Edwin spoke Lady Strathearn's countenance underwent a thousand changes: twice she attempted to rise and interrupt him, but Sir Roger Kirkpatrick having fixed his eyes on her with a menacing determination to prevent her, she found herself obliged to remain quiescent. Full of a newly excited fear that Wallace had confided to her nephew the last scene in his tent, she started up as he seemed to pause, and with assumed mildness again addressing the Regent, said, that before the words of any follower of Wallace could sink into impartial minds she thought it just to inform the council of the infatuated attachment of Edwin Ruthven to the accused, and she concluded by asserting that she had ample cause for knowing that the boy was so bewitched by the commander, who had flattered his youthful vanity by loading him with the distinctions only due to approved valour in manhood, that he was
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ready at any time to sacrifice every consideration of truth, reason, and duty, to please Sir William Wallace.

"That may be, lady," said Lord Loch-awe, interrupting her, "but as I know no occasion in which it is possible for Sir William Wallace to falsify the truth, I call upon him, in justice to himself and to his country, to reply to three questions!"—Wallace bowed to the venerable earl, and he proceeded—"Sir William Wallace, are you guilty or not guilty of the charge brought against you of a design to mount the throne of Scotland by means of the King of France?"

Wallace replied, "I never designed to mount the throne of Scotland either by my own means, or by any other man's."

Loch-awe proceeded, "Was this scroll, containing the names of certain Scottish chiefs noted down for assassination, written by you, or under your connivance?"

"I never saw the scroll, nor heard of the scroll, until this hour. And harder than death is the pang at my heart when a Scottish chief finds it necessary to ask me such a question regarding any individuals of a people, to save even the least of whom, he has ever seen me ready to risk my life!"

"Another question," replied Loch-awe, and then, "bravest of men, if your country acquires you not in thought and deed, Campbell of Loch-awe sits no more amongst its judges!—What is your knowledge of the Knight of the Green Plume, that you should intrust him, in preference to any Scottish friend, with your wishes respecting the Countess of Strathearn?"

Wallace's answer was brief, "I never had any wishes respecting the wife or widow of my friend the Earl of Mar that I did not impart to every chieftain in the camp, and those wishes went no further than for her safety. As to love, that is a passion I shall know no more; and Lady Strathearn can alone say what is the end she aims at by attributing feelings to me, with regard to her, which I never conceived and words which I never uttered. Like this passion, with which she says she inspired me," added he, turning his eyes steadily on her face, "was the Knight of the Green
Plume! You are all acquainted with the manner of his introduction to me at Linlithgow; you all know, with the account that he then gave of himself, as much of him as I did, till on the night that he left me at Berwick—and then I found him, like this story of Lady Strathearn, all a fable."

"Name him, on your knighthood!" exclaimed Buchan, "for yet he shall be brought to support the veracity of my illustrious kinswoman and fully to unmask to the world his insidious accomplice!"

"Your kinswoman, Earl Buchan," replied Wallace, can best answer you that question."

Lord Athol approached the Regent with an inflamed countenance and whispering something in his ear, this unworthy representative of the generous Bruce rose immediately from his seat and said, "Sir William Wallace you have replied to the questions of Lord Loch-awe, but where are your witnesses to prove that what you have spoken is the truth?"

Wallace for a moment was struck with surprise at the tone and words of this address from a man who, whatever might be demanded of him in the fulfilment of his office, he had believed to be not only his friend but, by the confidence reposed in him both by Bruce and himself, fully aware of the impossibility of these allegations being true. But Wallace now saw with an eye that pierced through the souls of the whole assembly, and with collected firmness he replied,—"My witnesses are in the bosom of every Scotsman."

"I cannot find them in mine," interrupted Athol. —"Nor in mine!" was echoed from various parts of the hall.

" Invalidate the facts brought against you by something more than this rhetorical appeal," added the Regent, "else, I fear, the sentence of the law must be passed on such a tacit acknowledgment of guilt."

"Acknowledgment of guilt!" cried Wallace, with a flush of godlike indignation suffusing his noble brow, "If any one of the chieftains who have just spoken, knew the beat of an honest heart, they would not have declared that they heard no voice proclaim the integrity of William Wallace. Let them then recollect the
carse of Stirling, where I refused the crown which my accuser alleges I would yet obtain by blood. Let them remember the banks of the Clyde, where I rejected the Scottish throne offered me by Edward! Let these facts bear witness for me, and if they be insufficient, look on Scotland now for the third time rescued by my arm from the grasp of an usurper and made entirely free!—That scroll locks the door of the kingdom upon her enemies.” As he spoke he threw the capitulation of Berwick upon the table. It seemed to strike a pause into the minds of the lords; they gazed with pallid countenances and without a word on the parchment where it lay, and he proceeded—“If my actions that you know, do not convince you of my integrity, then believe the unsupported evidence of words, the tale of a woman whose mystery, were it not for the memory of the honourable man whose name she once bore, I would publicly unravel:—Believe her; and leave Wallace nought of his country to remember, but that he has served it, and that it is unjust!”

“Noblest of Scots?” cried Loch-awe, coming towards him, “did your accuser come in the shape of an angel of light, still we should believe your life in preference to her testimony, for God himself speaks on your side: My servants, he declares, ye shall know by their fruits! And has not yours been peace to Scotland, and good will to all men!” “They are the labyrinthian folds of his hypocrisy!” cried Athol, alarmed at the awe-struck looks of most of the assembly. “They are the bates by which he cheats fools!” re-echoed Soulis. “They are snares which shall catch us no more!” was now the general exclamation; and in proportion to the transitory respect which had made them bow though but for a moment to virtue,—they now vociferated their contempt both of Wallace and this his last achievement. Kirkpatrick inflamed with rage, first at the manifest determination to misjudge his commander, and then at the contumely with which their envy affected to treat him, threw off all restraint and with the bitterness of his reproaches still more incensed the jealousy of the nobles and augmented the tumult. Lennox vainly attempted to make himself heard, drew
towards Wallace, hoping by that movement, at least to shew on whose side he thought justice lay. At this moment, while the uproar raged with redoubled clâmour demanding that sentence should instantly be passed upon the traitor, the door burst open and Bothwell, covered with dust and followed by a throng of armed knights, rushed into the centre of the hall.

"Who is it you arraign?" cried the young chief, looking indignantly around him; "Is it not your deliverer you would destroy. The Romans could not pass sentence on the guilty Manilius in sight of the capital he had preserved; but you, worse than heathens, bring your benefactor to the scene of his victories, and there condemn him for serving you too well! Has he not plucked you this third time out of the furnace that would have consumed you? And yet in this hour you would sacrifice him to the disappointed passions of a woman! Falsest of thy sex!" cried he, turning to the dismayed Countess, who, before seated in anticipated triumph, now shrank before the penetrating eyes of Andrew Murray:—"Do I not know thee? Have I not read thine unfeminine, thy vindictive heart? You would destroy the man you could not seduce! Wallace!" cried he, "speak; would not this woman have persuaded thee to disgrace the name of Mar? and when my uncle died, did she not urge you to intrigue for that crown which she knew you had so loyally declined?"

"My errand here," answered Wallace, "is to defend myself not to accuse others. I have shewn that I am innocent, and my judges will not look on the proofs. They obey not the laws in their judgment, and whatever may be the decree, I shall not acknowledge its authority." As he spoke he turned away and walked with a firm step out of the hall.

His disappearance gave the signal for a tumult more threatening to the welfare of the state than if the armies of Edward had been in the midst of them. It was brother against brother, and friend against friend. The Lords Lennox and Loch-awe were vehement against the unfairness with which Sir William Wallace had been treated. Kirkpatrick declared that no arguments could be used with men so devoid of reason:
and words of reproach and reviling passing between him and Athol and others, swords were at last drawn. And while Bothwell was loudly denouncing the Regent for having allowed any examination to be put upon the ever faithful champion of Scotland, Lady Strathearn seeing herself neglected, and fearful that the party of Wallace might at last gain the ascendency, fainted away and was carried out of the assembly.

CHAP. XXVI.

THE Regent, having with difficulty interrupted the fierce attack which the enemies and friends of Wallace made on each other, saw with satisfaction (although several of the Cummins were maimed and Lord Athol himself severely wounded by Kirkpatrick) that none were mortally hurt. With horrid menaces the two parties separated, the one to the Regent's apartments, the other to the camp of Wallace.

Lord Bothwell found his friend on the platform before his tent, trying to allay the storm which was raging in the bosoms of his followers against the injustice of the Regent and the ingratitude of the Scottish lords. At sight of Lord Bothwell their clamour to be led instantly to revenge the indignity offered to their general, redoubled, and Murray, not less incensed, turning to them, said, "My friends, keep quiet for a few hours and then what honour commands we will do." At this assurance they retired to their quarters, and Bothwell entered with Wallace and Edwin into the tent.

"Before you utter a word concerning the present scenes," cried Wallace, "tell me how is the hope of Scotland, the only earthly stiller of these horrid tumults?" "He is ill," replied Bothwell, "after regaining, by a valour worthy of his destiny, every fortress north of the Forth. As his last and greatest achievement, he made himself master of Scone; but in storming its walls he received another wound on his head, and the next day was attacked by so virulent a
fever that he now lies at Hunting-tower reduced to infant weakness. All this you would have known had you received his letters; but doubtless; villany has been here too, for none of yours have reached his hands." This intelligence of Bruce was a more mortal blow to Wallace than all that he had just sustained in his own person. He remained silent, but his mind was thronged with thoughts.—Was Scotland to be indeed lost? Was all that he had suffered and achieved, to have been done in vain; and should he now be fated to behold her again made a sacrifice to the jealousy of her contending nobles? Bothwell continued to speak, and told him that in consequence of their prince's anxiety to know how the siege of Berwick proceeded, (for still no letters arrived from that quarter,) he had set off on his return. At Dumfermling he was informed of the charge made against Wallace, and turning his steps westward, he hastened to give that support to his friend's innocence which the malignity of his enemies might render necessary. "The moment I heard how you were beset," continued Bothwell, "I dispatched a man back to Lord Ruthven to tell him not to alarm Bruce with such tidings, but to bring all the forces which were now useless in Perthshire, to maintain your honour and rights." "No force, my dear Bothwell, must be used to hold me in a power which will only keep alive a spirit of discord in my country. If I dare apply the words of my Divine Master, I would say, I came not to bring a sword, but peace to the people of Scotland! Then, if they are weary of me, let me go. Bruce will recover; they will rally round his standard, and all will be well." "Oh, Wallace! Wallace!" cried Bothwell, "the scene I have this day witnessed is enough to make a traitor of me. I could forswear my insensible country; I could immolate its ungrateful chiefants on those very lands which your generous arm restored to these worthless men!" He threw himself into a seat and leaned his burning forehead against his hand.—"Cousin you declare my sentiments," rejoined Edwin; "my soul can never again associate with these sons of Envy. I cannot recognise a countryman in one of them; and should Sir William Wallace quit a land so
unworthy of his virtues, where he goes, I will go; his asylum shall be my country, and Edwin Ruthven will forget that he ever was a Scot.” “Never,” cried Wallace turning on him one of those looks which struck conviction into the heart; “Is man more just than God? Though a thousand of your countrymen offend you by their crimes, yet while their remains one honest Scot, for his sake and his posterity it is your duty to be a patriot. A nation is one great family; and every individual in it is as much bound to promote the general good, as a son or a father is to maintain the welfare of his nearest kindred. And if the transgression of one brother be no excuse for the omission of another, in like manner, the ruin these turbulent lords would bring upon Scotland, is no excuse for your desertion of its interest. I would not leave the helm of my country did she not thrust me from it; but, though cast by her into the waves, would you not blush for your friend, should he wish her aught else than a peaceful haven.” Edwin spoke not, but putting the hand of Wallace to his lips, left the tent. “Oh!” cried Bothwell, looking after him, “that the breast of woman had but half that boy’s tenderness! And yet, all of that dangerous sex are not like this hyena-hearted Lady Strathearn. Tell me, my friend, did she not, when she disappeared so strangely from Hunting-tower, fly to you? I now suspect, from certain remembrances, that she and the Green Knight are one and the same person. Acknowledge it, and I will unveil her at once to the court she has deceived.” “She has deceived no one,” replied Wallace, “before she spoke the members of the court were determined to brand me with guilt; and her charge merely supplied the place of others, which, wanting that, they would have devised against me. Whatever she may be, my dear Bothwell, for the sake of him whose name she once wore, let us not expose her to open shame. Her love or her hatred are alike indifferent to me now; for to neither of them do I owe that innate malice of my countrymen which has only made her calumny the occasion of manifesting their resolution to make me infamous. But that, my friend, is beyond their com-
have done my duty to Scotland; and that conviction must live in every honest heart; aye, and with the dishonest too: for did they not fear my integrity they would not have thought it necessary to deprive me of my power. May heaven shield Bruce, for I dread that Badenoch’s next shaft may be at him!” “No,” cried Bothwell, “all is levelled at his best friend. In a low voice I accused the Regent of disloyalty to his prince in permitting this outrage on you, and his basely envious answer was: Wallace’s removal is Bruce’s security: Who will acknowledge him when they know that this man is his dictator?” Wallace sighed at this reply; but it confirmed him in his resolution, and he told Bothwell that he saw no alternative, if he wished to still the agitations of his country and to preserve its prince from premature discovery, than for him indeed to remove the subject of all those contentions from their sight. “Attempt it not!” exclaimed Bothwell, “propose but a step towards that end, and you will determine me to avenge my country at the peril of my own life on all that accursed assembly who have menaced yours!” In short, the young earl’s denunciations were so vehement and in earnest against the lords in Stirling that Wallace thought it dangerous to exasperate him farther, and therefore consented to remain in his camp till the arrival of Ruthven should bring him the advantage of his counsel.

The issue shewed that Bothwell was not mistaken. The majority of the Scottish nobles envied Wallace his glory, and hated him for those virtues which drew the eyes of the people to compare him with their vicious courses. The Regent, hoping to become the first in Bruce’s favour, was not less urgent to ruin the man who was at present the highest in that prince’s esteem. He had therefore entered warmly into the project of Lady Strathearn; but when, during a secret conference between them previous to her open charge of Wallace, she named Sir Thomas de Longueville as one of his foreign emissaries, Cummin replied, “If you would have your accusation succeed, do not name that knight at all. He is my friend. He is now ill near Perth, and must
know nothing of this affair till it is over. Should he live, he will nobly thank you for your forbearance; should he die, I will repay you as becomes your nearest kinsman." All were thus united in the effort to hurl Wallace from his station in the state.—And that, they believed done, they quarrelled amongst themselves in deciding who was to fill the great military office which his prowess had rendered a post rather of honour than of danger.

In the midst of these feuds Sir Simon Fraser appeared suddenly in the council-hall. His countenance proclaimed that he brought bad tidings. Lennox and Loch-awe (who duly attended in hopes of bringing over some of the more pliable chiefs to embrace the cause of Wallace,) listened with something like exultation to his disastrous information. As soon as the English governor had gained intelligence of the removal of Wallace from the command at Berwick, and of the consequent consternation of the troops, instead of surrendering at sun-set as was expected, he sallied out at the head of the whole garrison, and taking the Scottish troops by surprise, gave them a total defeat. Every out-post around the town was re-taken by the Southrons; the army of Fraser was cut to pieces, or put to flight; and himself now arrived in Stirling, smarting with many a wound, but more under his dishonour, to shew to the Regent of Scotland the evil of having superseded the only man whom the enemy feared. The council stood in silence staring on each other; and to add to their dismay, Fraser had hardly ended his narration, before a messenger from Teviotdale arrived in breathless haste to inform the Regent that King Edward was himself within a few miles of the Cheviots, and that he must even now have poured his thousands over those hills upon the plains beneath. While all was indecision, tumult, and alarm, in the citadel, Lenox hastened towards Wallace's camp with the news.

Lord Ruthven and the Perthshire chieftains were already there. They had arrived early in the morning with most unpromising tidings of Bruce. The state of his wound had induced a constant delirium.—But
still Wallace clung to the hope that his country was not doomed to perish; that its prince's recovery was only protracted. In the midst of this anxiety Lennox entered, and relating what he had just heard, turned the whole current of his auditor's ideas. Wallace started from his seat, and again felt that he had yet longer to stay in Scotland. His hand mechanically caught up his sword which lay upon the table, and looking around to these words of Lennox: "There is not a man in the citadel who does not appear at his wit's end, and incapable of facing this often-beaten foe; will you, Wallace, again condescend to save a country that has treated you so ungratefully?" "I would die in its trenches!" cried the chief, with a generous forgiveness of all his injuries suffusing his magnanimous heart.

Lord Loch-awe soon after appeared, and corroborating the testimony of Lennox, added, that on the Regent sending word to the troops on the south of Stirling that in consequence of the treason of Sir William Wallace the supreme command was taken from him; and as they were now called upon to face a new excursion of the enemy, they must immediately march under the orders of Sir Simon Fraser, they began to murmur amongst themselves: and saying that since Wallace was found a traitor they knew not who to trust, but that certainly it should not be a beaten general, they slid away from their standards, and when Loch-awe left them, were dispersing on all sides like an already discomfited army.

For a day or two the paralyzed terrors of the people and the tumults in the citadel were portentous of immediate ruin. A large detachment from the royal army had entered Scotland by the marine gate of Berwick, and, headed by De Warenne, was advancing rapidly towards Edinburgh Castle. Not a soldier belonging to the regency remained on the carse; and the distant chieftains to whom he sent for aid refused it, saying, that the discovery of Wallace's patriotism having been a delusion, had made them suspect all men; and that locking themselves within their own castles, each true Scot would there securely view a struggle in which they could feel no personal interest.
Seeing the danger of the realm, and hearing from the lords Ruthven and Bothwell that their troops would follow no other leader than Sir William Wallace, the Regent, hopeless of any prompt decision from amongst the confusion of his council, and urged by time-serving Buchan, yielded a tacit assent to the only apparent means of saving his sinking country. He turned ashy pale as his silence granted to Lord Loch-awe the necessity of imploring Sir William Wallace again to stretch out his arm in their behalf. With this embassy the venerable chieftain returned exulting to Balloch-geich; and the so lately branded Wallace, branded as the intended betrayer of Scotland, was solicited by his very accusers to assume the trust of being their sole defence.

"Such is the triumph of virtue!" whispered Edwin to his friend as he vaulted on his horse. A luminous smile from Wallace acknowledged that he felt the tribute, and looking up to heaven ere he placed his helmet on his head, he said, "Thence comes my power, and the satisfaction it brings, whether attended by man's applause or his blame, he cannot take from me. I now, perhaps for the last time, arm this head for Scotland: may the God in whom I trust again crown it with victory, and for ever after bind the brows of our rightful sovereign with peace!"

While Wallace pursued his march, the Regent, confounded at the turn which events had taken, and hardly knowing whether to make another essay to collect forces for the support of their former leader, or to follow the refractory councils of his lords and await in inactivity the issue of the expected battle, was quite at a stand. He knew not how to act: but a letter from Lady Strathearn decided him.

Though partly triumphant in her charges yet the accusations of Bothwell had disconcerted her; and the restoration of Wallace to his undisputed authority in the state, seemed to her so probable, that she resolved to take an immediate step which would confirm her influence over the discontented of her country and most likely insure the vengeance she panted to bring upon Wallace's head. To this end, on the very evening that
she was carried swooning from the council-hall, she set forward to the Borders; and easily passing thence to the English camp (then pitched at Alnwick,) was soon admitted to the castle where De Warenne was lodged. She was too well taught in the school of vanity not to have remarked the admiration with which that earl had regarded her while he was a prisoner in Stirling; and hoping that he might not be able to withstand the persuasions of her charms when united with rank and riches, she opened her mission to him with no less art than effect. De Warenne understood from her that Wallace, on the strength of a passion he had conceived for her and which she treated with disdain, had repented of his former refusals of the crown of Scotland; and was now attempting to compass that dignity by the most complicated intrigues, under a belief that she would not repeat her rejection of his hand when it could offer her a sceptre. She then related how, at her instigation, the Regent had deposed him from his military command; and she ended with saying, that impelled by loyalty to Edward (whom her better reason now recognised as the lawful sovereign of her country,) she had come to exhort that monarch immediately to renew his invasions into the kingdom. De Warenne, intoxicated with her beauty and enraptured by a manner which seemed to tell him that a softer sentiment than usual had made her select him as her ambassador to the king, greedily drank in all her words; and ere he allowed the conference to break up, he had thrown himself at her feet and implored her, by every impassioned argument, to grant him the privilege of presenting her to Edward as his intended bride. De Warenne was in the meridian of life; and being fraught with a power at court, beyond all other of his peers, she determined to accept his hand and wield her new influence to the destruction of Wallace, should she even be compelled in that act to precipitate her country in his fall. De Warenne drew from her a half-reluctant consent: and while he poured forth the transports of a happy lover, he internally congratulated himself on his good fortune. He was not so much enamoured of the fine person of Lady Strathearn, as to be altogether insensible to the advantages which his al-
liance with her would give to Edward in his Scottish pretensions; and as it would consequently increase his own importance with that monarch, he lost no time in communicating the circumstance to him. Edward, who suspected something in this sudden attachment of the Countess which, if known, might cool the ardour of his officer for uniting so useful an agent to his cause, highly approved De Warenne's conduct in the affair; and to hasten the nuptials, proposed being present at their solemnization that very evening. The vows which Lady Strathearn pledged at the altar to De Warenne, were pronounced by her as those by which she swore to complete her revenge on Wallace, and by depriving him of life prevent the climax to her misery of seeing him (what she believed he intended) the husband of Helen Mar. The day after she became De Warenne's wife (s) she accompanied him, attended by a retinue, correspondent to his rank as Lord Warden of Scotland, by sea to Berwick; and from that place she dispatched messengers to the Regent and other nobles her kinsmen, fraught with promises which Edward, in the event of success, had solemnly pledged himself to ratify. Her embassador arrived at Stirling the day succeeding that in which Wallace and his troops left it. The letters he brought were eagerly opened by Badenoch and his chieftains, and they found their contents to this effect. She announced to them her marriage with the Lord Warden, who was then at the head of a mighty force determined on the subjugation of the country; and therefore besought the Regent and his council not to raise a hostile arm against him, if they would, not merely escape the indignation of a great king, but ensure his favour. She cast out hints to Badenoch, as if Edward meant to reward his acquiescence with the crown of Scotland; and with similar baits, proportioned to the views of all her other kinsmen, she smoothed their anger against that monarch's former insults, and persuaded them at least to remain inactive during the last struggle of their country.

Meanwhile, Wallace, taking his course along the banks of the Forth, as the night drew near encamped his little army at the base of the craigs cast of Edin-
burgh Castle. His march having been long and rapid the men were much fatigued, and now were hardly laid upon their heather beds before they fell asleep. Wallace gained information from his scouts, that the main body of the Southrons had approached within a few miles of Dalkeith. Thither he hoped to go next morning; and there, he trusted, strike the conclusive blow for Scotland by the destruction of a division, which he understood comprised the flower of the English army. With these expectations he gladly saw his troops turn to that repose which was to re-brace their strength for the combat; and as the hours of night stole on, while his possessed mind waked for all around, he was well-pleased to see his ever-watchful Edwin sink back into a profound sleep.

It was his custom, once at least in the night, to go himself the rounds of his posts to see that all was safe. The air was serene, and he walked out on this duty. He passed from line to line, from station to station, and all was in order. One post alone remained to be visited, and that was placed as a point of observation on the craigs near Arthur's seat. As he proceeded along a lonely defile between the rocks which over-hang the ascent of the mountain, he was startled by the indistinct sight of a figure amongst the rolling vapours of the night, seated on a towering cliff directly in the way he was to go. The broad light of the moon breaking from behind the clouds shone full upon the spot, and discovered a majestic form in grey robes, leaning on a harp, while his face mournfully gazing upward, was rendered venerable by a long white beard that mingled with the floating mist. Wallace paused, and stopping at some distance from this extraordinary apparition, looked on it in silence. The strings of the harp were softly touched; but it was only the sighing of a passing breeze which had agitated them. The vibration ceased, and the next moment the hand of the master struck their chords with so full and melancholy a sound that Wallace was for a few minutes riveted to the ground; and then moving forward with a stilly step, that he might not disturb the nocturnal bard, he gently approached. At sight of him the harp seemed to fall from before the
venerable figure, and clasping his hands, in a voice of
mournful solemnity he exclaimed, "Art thou come,
doomed of heaven, to hear thy sad Coronach?" Wallace
started at this salutation. The bard with the same emo-
tion continued; "No choral hymns hallow thy bleeding
corae;—wolves howl thy requiem, and eagles scream
over thy desolate grave: fly, chieftain, fly!" "What,
venerable father of the harp," cried Wallace, interrupt-
ing the awful pause, "thus addresses one whom he
must mistake for some other chief?" "Can the spirit of
inspiration mistake its object?" demanded the bard.—
"Can he whose eyes have been opened by the touch of
fate, be blind to Sir William Wallace, or to the blood
which clogs his mounting footsteps?" "And who am I
to understand that you are?" replied Wallace. "Who
is the saint whose holy charity would anticipate the ob-
sequies of a man who yet may be destined to a long pil-
grimage?" "Who I am," resumed the bard, "will be
shewn to thee when thou hast past yon starry firma-
ment. But the galaxy streams with blood—the bugle
of death is alone heard, and thy lacerated breast heaves
in vain against the hoofs of opposing squadrons. They
charge—Scotland falls! Look not on me thus, champion
of thy country! Sold by thy enemies, betrayed by thy
friends! It was not the seer of St. Anton who gave thee
these wounds—that heart's blood was not drawn by me
—a woman's hand in mail—ten thousand armed warri-
ors strike deep the mortal steel—he sinks—he falls!
Red is the blood of Eske!—Thy vital stream hath dyed
it. Fly, bravest of the brave, or perish!" With a shriek
of horror, and throwing his aged arms extended towards
the heavens while his grey beard mingled in the rising
blast, he rushed from the sight of Wallace, and left him
in awful solitude.

For a few minutes he stood in profound silence. His
very soul seemed deprived of the power to answer so
terrible a denunciation with even a questioning thought.
He had heard the destruction of Scotland declared;
and himself sentenced to perish, if he did not escape
the general ruin by flying from her side! This terri-
ble decree of fate, so disasterously corroborated by the
extremity of Bruce and the divisions in the kingdom,
had been pronounced by one of those sages of his
country on whom the spirit of prophecy yet descended
with all the horrors of a woe-denouncing trumpet.
Could he then doubt its truth? He did not doubt; he
believed the midnight voice he had heard. But recovering
from the first shock of such a doom, and remembering
that it still left the choice to himself between dishon-
oured life and glorious death, he resolves to shew his
respect to the oracle, by manifesting a persevering
obedience to the eternal voice which gives all these his
agents utterance; and while he bows to the warning, he
starts forward to be the last who shall fall from the side
of his devoted country. "If devoted," cried he, "then
our fates shall be the same. My fall from thee shall be
into my grave. Scotland may have struck the breast
that has shielded her, yet, Father of Mercies, forgive
her blindness; and grant me still permission, a little
longer to oppose my heart between her and this fearful
doom!" (b)

CHAP. XXVII.

AWED, but not intimidated, by the prophecy of the
seer of the craigs, Wallace next day drew up his army
in order for the new battle, near a convent of Cistertian
monks on the narrow plain of Dalkeith. The two ri-
ers Eske flowed on each side of his little phalanx, and
formed a temporary barrier between it and the pressing
legions of De Warenne. The earl's troops seemed
countless. And the Southron lords who led them on,
being elated by the representations which the Countess
had given them of the disunited state of the Scottish
army, and of the consequent dismay which had seized
their hitherto all-conquering commander, bore down
upon the Scots with an impetuosity which threatened a
destruction without quarter, without even allowing the
enemy a moment for resistance. De Warenne, who,
deceived by the blandishing falsehoods of his bride,
had entirely changed his former high opinion of his
brave opponent; and by her sophistries had brought his
mind to adopt stratagems unworthy of his nobleness, (so contagious is baseness in too fond a contact with the unprincipled!) placed himself on an adjoining height; from that situation, intending to give his orders, and to behold his anticipated victory. "Soldiers!" cried he, as he gave the word of command, "the rebel's hour is come.—The sentence of heaven is gone forth against him. Charge resolutely, and he and his host are yours!"

But it was not decreed so: the prophet who had spoken was that of Baal, not of Jehovah. He had been the hireling of Lady Strathearn, to intimidate the invincible adversary of her husband, the determined victim of her revenge. Knowing his customs, and having a spy on his steps, she easily accomplished this device. Her emissary played his part well; he saw by the manner of the chieftain that he was believed: and when he rejoined Lady Strathearn, in a firmer tone of prescience he saluted her as the guardian angel of the Southeron army, and declared that her wisdom had already delivered the Scottish phalanx and its leader into the hands of her husband. As a victor, then, De Warenne mounted the hill; as a queen in triumph, the Countess took her station by his side.

The sky was obscured: an awful stillness reigned through the air, and the spirits of the mighty dead seemed leaning from their clouds, to witness this last struggle of their sons. Fate did indeed hover over the opposing armies: she descended on the head of Wallace, and dictated from amidst his waving plumes. She pointed his spear, she wielded his flaming sword, and charged with him in the dreadful shock of battle. De Warenne saw his foremost thousands fall. He heard the shout of the Scots, the cries of his men, and the plains of Stirling rose to his remembrance. He hastily ordered the knights around him to bear away his wife from the field; and descending the hill to lead forward himself, he was met and almost overwhelmed by his flying troops: horses without riders, men without shield or sword, but all in dismay, rushed past him. He called to them, he waved the royal standard, he urged, he reproached; he rallied, and led them back
again. The fight re-commenced.—Long and bloody was the conflict. De Warenne fought for conquest and to recover a lost reputation. Wallace contended for his country, and to shew himself always worthy of her latest sigh, before he should go hence, and be no more seen!

The issue declared for Scotland. But the ground was covered with the slain; and Wallace chased a wounded foe with troops which dropped as they pursued. At sight of the melancholy state of his victorious and faithful soldiers, he tried to check their ardour, but in vain. "It is for Wallace that we conquer!" cried they, "and we will die, or prove him the only captain in this ungrateful country."

Night compelled them to halt; and under her shades, while they yet only rested on their arms, Wallace, satisfied that he had destroyed the power of De Warenne, forbore to press too hard upon its remnant; and as he leaned on his sword, and stood with Edwin near the watch fire over which that youthful hero kept a guard, he contemplated the terrified Southerns as they fled precipitately, though cautiously, by the foot of the hill towards the Tweed. Wallace now told his friend the history of his adventure with the seer of the craigs; and finding within himself how much the brightness of true religion excludes the glooms of superstition, he added: "The proof of prophecy is its completion!—Hence let the false seer I met last night, warn you, my Edwin, by my example, how you give credit to any prediction that might slacken the sinews of duty. God can speak but one language. He is not a man, that he should repent; neither a mortal, that he should change his purpose!—This pretended prophet beguiled me of belief in his denunciation, but not to adopt the conduct his offered alternative would have persuaded me to pursue. I now see that he was a traitor in both, and henceforth shall read my fate in the oracles of God alone. Obeying them, my Edwin, we need not fear the curses of our enemy nor his lying sooth-sayers."

The splendour of this victory struck to the souls of the council at Stirling. Scotland being once again rescued from the vengeance of her implacable foe, the lords in
the citadel spurned at their preservation, and declared to the Regent that they would rather be under the yoke of the veriest tyrant in the world than be obliged to owe a moment of freedom to the man who (they affected to believe), had conspired against their lives. And they had a weighty reason for this decision.—Though De Warenne was beaten, his wife was a victor. She had made Edward triumphant in the venal hearts of her kinsmen: gold and her persuasions, with promises of future honours from the King of England, made them entirely his. All but the Regent were ready to commit every thing into the hands of Edward: he doubted.—The rising favour of other lords with the court of England induced him to recollect that he might rule as the unrivalled friend of Bruce, should that prince live; or, in case of his death, might he not have it in his power to assume the Scottish throne untrammelled? These thoughts made him fluctuate, and his country found him alike undetermined in treason as unstable in fidelity.

Immediately on the victory at Dalkeith, Kirkpatrick (eager to be the first communicator of such welcome news to Lennox, who had planted himself as a watch at Stirling,) withdrew secretly from Wallace's camp; and hoping to move the gratitude of the refractory lords, he entered at once into the midst of their council. He proclaimed the success of his commander, and his answer was accusations and insult. All that had been charged against the too fortunate Wallace, was re-urged with added acrimony. Treachery to the state, hypocrisy in morals, fanaticism in religion; no stigma was too extravagant or contradictory to affix to his unsullied name. They who had been hurt in the fray in the hall, pointed to their still smarting wounds, and called upon Lennox to say if they did not plead against so dangerous a man? "Dangerous to your crimes, and ruinous to your ambitions!" cried Kirkpatrick, "For, so help me God, as I believe that an honester man than William Wallace, lives not in Scotland! And that ye know:—and his virtues overtopping your littleness, ye would uproot the greatness which ye cannot equal!" This speech, which a burst
of indignation had wrested from him, brought down the wrath of the whole party upon himself. Lord Athol, yet stung with his old wound, furiously struck him:—Kirkpatrick drew his sword, and a fight commenced so fiercely between the combatants, that, gasping with almost the last breathings of life, neither could be torn from their desperate revenge, till many were cut in attempting to separate them; and then the two were carried off insensible, and covered with wounds.

When this sad news was transmitted by Lennox to Sir William Wallace, it found him on the banks of the Eske, just returned from the citadel of Berwick, where, once more master of that fortress, he had dictated the terms of a conqueror and a patriot. The wounded Southerns he put on board the ships which De Warenne, in his haste to be gone, had left in the harbour; and allowed them to seek their way to an English port, Wallace manned the citadel with Scots; and leaving Ramsay as its governor, he retraced his corse-tracked march, to commit the bodies of his valiant soldiers to the bosom of that earth they had so gallantly defended.

In the scene of his former victories, the romantic shades of Hawthorne's Dean, he pitched his camp; and from it made hourly excursions to complete his work. For foes as well as friends, he prepared the vast grave which was to unite the victims of ruthless war in everlasting peace. While employed in this pious task, his heart was wrung by the intelligence of the newly aroused storm in the citadel of Stirling; but as some antidote to these pangs, the chieftains of Mid-Lothian poured into him on every side, and acknowledging him their protector, he again found himself the idol of gratitude and the almost deified object of trust. At such a moment, when with one voice they were disclaiming all participation in the insurgent proceedings at Stirling, another messenger arrived from Lennox to conjure Wallace, if he would avoid either open violence or secret treachery, to march his victorious troops immediately to that city, and seize the assembled abhanes at once, as traitors to their country: "Resume the Regency," added he, "which you only know how to con-
duct; and crush a treason which increases hourly, and now walks openly in the day, threatening all that is virtuous or faithful to you!"

He did not hesitate to decide against this counsel; for, in following it, it would not be one adversary he must strike, but thousands. "I am only a brother to my countrymen," said he to himself, "and have no right to force them to their duty: but when their king appears, then these rebellious heads may be made to bow."—While he mused upon the letter which he held in his hand, Ruthven entered to him into the recess of his tent, whither he had retired to read it.—"I bring you better news of our friend at Hunting-tower;" cried the good lord; "here is a packet from Douglas, and another from my wife."—Wallace read them, and found that Bruce was relieved from his delirium, but he was left so weak that they had not hazarded a relapse by imparting to him any idea of the proceedings at Stirling: all he knew was, that Wallace was victorious in arms, and panted for his recovery, to render such success really beneficial to his country. Helen and Isabella, and the Sage of Ercildoun, were the prince's unwearied attendants; and though his life was yet in extreme peril, it was to be hoped that their attentions and his own constitution would finally cure the wound and conquer its attendant fever. Comforted with these tidings, Wallace declared his intentions of visiting his dear and suffering friend as soon as he could establish any principle in the minds of his followers to induce them to bear with the insodence of the abthanes for a little time: "I will then," said he, "watch by the side of our beloved Bruce, till his recovered health will allow him safely to proclaim himself king; and with that act, I trust that all these feuds will be for ever laid to sleep." Ruthven participated in these hopes, and the friends returned together into the council-tent. But all there was changed. Most of the Lothian chieftains had also received packets from their friends in Stirling. Allegations against Wallace; arguments to prove the policy of submitting themselves and their properties to the protection of a great king, though a foreigner, rather than to risk all by attaching themselves to the for-
tune of a private person, who made his successes and their services, the ladder of his ambition, were the contents of these packets; and they were sufficient to shake the easy faith to which they were addressed. The chieftains on the re-entrance of Wallace stole suspicious glances at each other, and without a word glided severally out of the tent.

Next morning, instead of coming as usual directly to their acknowledged protector, they were seen at different parts of the camp, closely conversing in groups; and when any of Wallace's officers approached, they separated or withdrew to a greater distance. This strange conduct Wallace attributed to its right source; and thought of Bruce with a sigh, when he contemplated the variable substance of these men's minds. Lord Sinclair alone kept unalterably firm to his faith in the victor of Roslyn. His venerable brother was not yet returned from Rome, to give power, by his councils, to the fidelity of Sinclair; and that chief was so confounded by the hatred which the majority of his peers manifested against Wallace and all his proceedings, that, though attached to his person, he could not but abandon the hope that the liberty he had given to Scotland would be accepted by those haughty lords. Wallace was himself so convinced that nothing but the proclamation of Bruce, and that prince's personal exertions, could preserve his country from falling again into the snare from which he had just snatched it, that he was preparing immediately to set out for Perthshire on his anxious mission, when Ker hastily entered his tent. He was followed by the Lord Soulis with Buchan and several other chieftains of equally hostile intentions. Soulis did not hesitate to declare his errand.

"We come, Sir William Wallace, by the command of the Regent and the assembled abthanes of Scotland, to take these brave troops which have performed such good service to their country, from the power of a man who, we have every reason to believe, means to turn their arms against the liberties of the state. Without any commission from the Regent; in contempt of the dignity of that court which, having found you guilty of high treason, had in mercy delayed to pronounce the
sentence due to your crime, you presumed to place yourself at the head of the national troops, and to take to yourself the merit of a victory won by their prowess alone. Your designs are known; and the authority you have despised, is now roused to punish. You are to accompany me this day to Stirling. I have brought a guard of four thousand men to compel your obedience."

Before the indignant spirit of Wallace could utter the answer his wrongs dictated, Bothwell, who at sight of the Regent's troops advancing along the hills had hastened to his general's tent, entered, followed by his chieftains, as the last sentence was pronounced by Soulis.—"Were it forty thousand instead of four," cried he, "they should not force our commander from us, they should not extinguish the glory of Scotland beneath the murderous devices of hell-engendered envy and cowardice!" Soulis turned on him with eyes of fire, and laid his hand on his sword. "Aye, cowardice!" reiterated Bothwell, "the midnight ravisher, the slanderer of virtue, the betrayer of his country, knows in his heart that he fears to draw aught but the assassin's steel. He dreads the sceptre of honour:—Wallace must fall, that vice and her votaries may reign without control in Scotland. A thousand brave Scots lie under these sods, and a thousand yet survive, who may share their graves, but they never will relinquish their invincible leader into the hands of traitors!"

The clamours of the citadel of Stirling now resounded through the tent of Wallace. Invectives, accusations, threatenings, reproaches and revilings, joined in one turbulent uproar. Again swords were drawn, and Wallace, in attempting to beat down the weapons of Soulis and Buchan which were both aimed at Bothwell, must have received the point of Soulis in his breast had he not at the moment grasped the blade, and wrenching it out of the chieftain's hand, broke it into shivers, and throwing them to the ground, "Such be the fate of every sword which Scot draws against Scot!" cried he, "Put up your weapons my friends.—The arm of Wallace is not shrunk, that he could not defend himself, did he think that violence were necessary. Hear my determination once and for ever!" added he, "I ac-
knowledge no authority in Scotland but the laws. The present Regent and his abthanes outrage them in every ordinance, and I should indeed be a traitor to my country, did I submit to such men’s behests. I shall not obey their summons to Stirling—neither will I permit a hostile arm to be raised in this camp against their delegates, unless the violence begins with them.—This is my answer.”—Uttering these words he motioned Bothwell to follow him, and left the tent.

Crossing a little bridge which lay over the Eske, to the quarters of Ruthven, he met that nobleman and Edwin accompanied by Lord Sinclair. He came to inform Wallace that ambassadors from Edward had just arrived at Roslyn, where they awaited his audience. “They come to offer peace to our distracted country,” cried Sinclair. “Then,” answered he, “I shall not a moment delay going where I may hear the terms,” Horses were brought, and during their short ride, to prevent the impassioned representations of the still raging Bothwell, Wallace communicated to his not less indignant friends the particulars of the scene he had left. “These contentions must be terminated,” added he, “and with God’s blessing, a few days, perhaps hours, and they shall be so!” “Heaven grant it!” returned Sinclair, thinking he referred to the proposed negotiation: “If Edward’s offers be at all reasonable, I would urge you to accept them; otherwise, invasion from without, and civil commotion within, will probably make a desert of poor Scotland.” Ruthven interrupted him, “Despair not, my lord! Whatever be the fate of this embassy, let us remember that it is the wisdom of our steadiest friend that decides, and that his arm is still with us to repel invasion, and to chastise treason!” Edwin’s eyes turned with a direful expression upon Wallace, and he lowly murmured, “Treason! hydra treason!” Wallace understood him, and answered, “Grewious are the alternatives, my friends, which our love for me would persuade you even to welcome. But that which I shall choose will, I trust, indeed lay the land at peace, or point its hostilities to the only aim against which a true Scot ought to direct its fires!”
Being arrived at the gate of Roslyn, Wallace, regardless of those ceremonial things which often impede the business they pretend to dignify, entered at once into the hall where the embassadors sat. Baron Hilton was one, and Le de Spencer (father to the young and violent envoy of that name) was the other. At sight of the Scottish chief they rose, and Wallace having graciously recognised Hilton, the good Baron, believing he came on a propitious errand, smiling, said, "Sir William Wallace, it is your private ear I am commanded to seek." As he spoke he looked round on Sinclair and the other lords. "These chieftains are as myself," replied Wallace, "but I will not impede your embassy by crossing the wishes of your master in a trifle." He then turned to his friends, "Indulge the monarch of England in making me first acquainted with what can only be a message to the whole nation."

The chiefs withdrew, and Hilton, without further parley, opened his mission.—He said, that King Edward, more than ever impressed with the wondrous military talents of Sir William Wallace, and solicitous to make a friend of so heroic an enemy, had sent him an offer of grace which, if he contemned, should be the last. He offered him a theatre whereon he could display his peerless endowments to the admiration of the world—the kingdom of Ireland, with its yet unreaped fields of glory, and all the ample riches of its abundant provinces, should be his! Edward only required in return for this royal gift, that he should abandon the cause of Scotland, swear fealty to him for Ireland, and resign into his hands one whom he had proscribed as the most ungrateful of traitors. In acknowledgment for the latter sacrifice, he need only furnish his majesty with a list of those Scottish lords against whom Wallace bore any resentment, and their fates should be ordered according to his dictates. Edward concluded his offers by inviting him immediately to London to be invested with his new sovereignty; and he ended by shewing him the madness of abiding longer in a country where almost every chieftain secretly or openly carried a dagger against his life; and therefore he exhorted him no longer to contend for a country so un-
worthy of freedom, that it bore with impatience the only man who had had the courage to maintain it by virtue alone.

Wallace replied calmly and without hesitation: "To this offer an honest man can make but one reply. As well might your sovereign exact of me to dethrone the angels of heaven, as to require me to subscribe to his proposals!—They do but mock me; and aware of my rejection, they are thus delivered; to throw the whole blame of this cruelly-persecuting war upon me. Edward knows that as a knight, a true Scot, and a man, I should dishonour myself to accept even life, aye, or the lives of all my kindred, upon these terms."

Hilton interrupted him by declaring the sincerity of Edward; and contrasting it with the ingratitude of the people whom he had served, he conjured him with every persuasive of rhetoric, every entreaty dictated by a mind that revered the very firmness he strove to shake, to relinquish his faithless country and become the friend of a king ready to receive him with open arms. Wallace shook his head; and with an incredulous smile which spoke his thoughts of Edward, while his eyes beamed kindness upon Hilton, he answered—"Can the man who would bribe me to betray a friend, be faithful in his friendship?—But that is not the weight with me:—I was not brought up in those schools, my good baron, which teach that sound policy or true self-interest can be separated from virtue. When I was a boy my father often repeated to me this proverb,

Dic tibi *erum, libertas optima rerum
Nunquam servilis sub nexo vivitur fili. (i)

I learnt it then; I have since made it the standard of my actions: and therefore I answer your monarch in a word. Were all others of my countrymen to resign their claims to the liberty which is their right, I alone would declare the independence of my country, and by God's assistance, while I live, acknowledge no other master than the laws of St. David and the legitimate heir of his blood—!" The glow of resolute patriotism which overspread his countenance while he spoke, was reflected by a fluctuating colour on that of
Hilton:—"Noble chieftain!" cried he, "I admire while I regret; I revere the virtue which I am even now constrained to denounce. These principles, bravest of men, might have suited the simple ages of Greece and Rome, a Phocion or a Fabricius might have uttered the like, and compelled the homage of their enemies; but in these days such magnanimity is considered frenzy, and ruin is its consequence."—"And shall a christian," cried Wallace, reddening with the flush of honest shame, "deem that virtue, which even heathens practised with veneration, of too pure a nature to be exercised by men taught by Christ himself?—There is blasphemy in the idea, and I can hear no more.”

Hilton, in some confusion, excused his argument, by declaring that it proceeded from his observations on the conduct of men. "And shall we," replied Wallace, "follow a multitude to do evil? I act to one being alone. Edward must acknowledge his supremacy, and by that know that my soul is above all price!" "Am I answered?" said Hilton, and then hastily interrupting himself, he added in a voice even of supplication, "Your fate rests on your reply! O! noblest of Warriors, consider only for a day!"—"Not for a moment," said Wallace.—"I am sensible to your kindness, but my answer to Edward has been pronounced."

Baron Hilton turned sorrowfully away, and Le de Spencer rose, "Sir William Wallace, my part of the embassy must be delivered to you in the assembly of your chieftains!"—"In the congregation of my camp," returned he, and opening the door of the anti-room in which his friends stood, he sent Edwin to summon his chieftains to the platform before the council-tent, and leaving the embassadors to follow with Sinclair, he withdrew between Bothwell and Ruthven, and in his way back to the camp narrated the particulars of Edward’s insidious message.
WHEN Wallace entered before his tent he found not only the captains of his own army, but the followers of Soulis, and the chieftains of Lothian. He looked on this range of his enemies with a fearless eye, and passing through the crowd, took his station beside the ambassadors on the platform of the tent.—The venerable Hilton turned away in tears as he advanced, and Le de Spencer came forward to speak. Wallace perceiving his intention, with a dignified action requested his leave for a few minutes, and then addressing the congregated warriors, in brief he unfolded to them the offer of Edward to him, and what was his reply. "And now," added he, "the ambassador of England, is at liberty to declare his master's alternative."

Le de Spencer again stepped forward and attempted to speak, but the acclamations with which the followers of Wallace acknowledged the nobleness of his answer, excited such an opposite clamour on the side of the Soulis party, that Le de Spencer was obliged to mount a war-carriage which stood near, and vociferate long and loudly for silence, before he could be heard. But the first words which caught the ears of his audience acted like a spell, and seemed to hold them in breathless attention.

"Since Sir William Wallace rejects the grace of his liege lord Edward King of England, offered to him this once, and never to be more repeated, thus saith the king in his mercy to the earls, barons, knights, and commonalty of Scotland!—To every one of them, chief and vassal, excepting the aforesaid incorrigible rebel, he, the royal Edward, grants an amnesty of all their past treasons and rebellions against his sacred person and rule, provided that within twenty-four hours after they hear the words of this proclamation, they acknowledge their disloyalty with repentance, and laying down their arms, swear eternal fealty to their only lawful ruler the Lord Edward of England and Scotland!"—Le de Spencer then proclaimed Edward to be now on the borders with an army of a hundred thousand men, ready
to march with fire and sword into the heart of the kingdom, and to put to the rack all of every sex, age, and condition, who shall venture to dispute his rights.—

"Yield now," added he, "while yet you may not only grasp the clemency that is extended to you, but the rewards and honours he is ready to bestow. Adhere to that unhappy man, and by to-morrow's sun-set your offended king will be on these hills, and then mercy shall be no more! Death is the doom of Sir William Wallace, and a similar fate to any Scot, who will dare after this hour to give him food, shelter, or succour. He is the prisoner of King Edward, and thus I demand him at your hands!"

Wallace spoke not, but with an unmoved countenance looked round upon the assembly. "I, I will be faithful to you to the last!" exclaimed Edwin, precipitating himself into his friend's arms.—Bothwell's full soul now forced utterance from his swelling breast:

"Tell your sovereign," cried he, "that he mistakes.—We are the conquerors who ought to dictate terms of peace!—Wallace is our invincible leader, our redeemer from slavery, the earthly hope in whom we trust, and it is not in the power of men nor devils to bribe us to betray our benefactor. Away to your king, and tell him that Andrew Murray, and every honest Scot, is ready to live or die by the side of Sir William Wallace."—"And by this good sword, I swear the same!" cried Ruthven. "And so do I!" rejoined Scrymgeour, "or may the standard of Scotland be my winding sheet!"

Not another chieftain spoke for Wallace. Sinclair was intimidated, and like others who wished him well, feared to utter his sentiments. But most, Oh! shame to Scotland and to man, cast up their bonnets, and cried aloud—"Long live King Edward, the only legitimate lord of Scotland!"—At this outcry, which was echoed even by some whom he had confided in, by the chieftains of Perthshire, and pealed around him like a burst of thunder, Wallace threw out his arms as if he would yet protect Scotland from herself.—"O! desolate people," exclaimed he, in a voice of piercing woe, "too credulous of fair speeches, and not aware of the calamities which are coming upon you! Call to re-
membrance the miseries you have suffered, and then, before it be too late, start from this snare of your oppressor!—Have I yet to tell ye that his embrace is death?" 

"Seize that rebellious man," cried Soulis to his marshals, "in the name of the King of England I command you."—"And in the name of the King of Kings, I denounce death on him who attempts it!" exclaimed Bothwell, throwing himself between Wallace and the men; "put forth a hostile hand towards him, and this bugle shall call a thousand resolute swords to lay this platform deep in blood!"

Soulis, followed by his knights, pressed forward to execute his commands himself. Scrymgeour, Ruthven, and Ker, rushed before their friend. Edwin, starting forward, drew his sword, and the clash of steel was heard. Bothwell and Soulis grappled together, the falchion of Ruthven gleamed amidst a hundred swords, and blood flowed around. The voice, the arm of Wallace, in vain sought to enforce peace; he was not heard, he was not felt in the dreadful warfare. Ker fell with a gasp at his feet, and breathed no more. At such a sight the soul-struck chief wrung his hands, and exclaimed, in bitter anguish, "Oh, my country! was it for these horrors that my Marion died? that I became a homeless wretch, and passed my days and nights in fields of carnage? Venerable Mar, dear and valiant Graham! was this the consummation for which you fell?"—At that moment, Bothwell having disabled Soulis by a wound in the arm, would have blown his bugle to have called up his men to a general conflict, but Wallace snatched the horn from his hand, and springing upon the very war-carriage from which Le de Spencer had proclaimed Edward's embassy, he drew forth his sword, and stretching the mighty arm that held it over the throng, with more than mortal energy he exclaimed, "Peace! men of Scotland, and for the last time hear the voice of William Wallace." A dead silence immediately ensued, and he proceeded: "If you have aught of nobleness within ye; if a delusion more fell than witchcraft have not blinded your senses, look beyond this field of horror, and behold your country free. Ed-
ward in these apparent demands, sues for peace:—Did we not drive his armies into the sea?—And were we resolved, he never could cross our borders more. What is it then that you do, when you again put your necks under his yoke?—Did we not drive his armies into the sea?—And yet, when I refuse to purchase life and the world’s rewards by such baseness, you— you forget that you are free-born Scots, that you are the victors and he the vanquished, and you give, not sell, your birth-right, to the demands of a tyrant! You yield yourselves to his extortions, his oppressions, his revenge!—Think not he will spare the people he would have sold to purchase his bitterest enemy; or allow them to live unmanacled, who possess the power of resistance. On the day in which you are in his hands, you will feel that you have exchanged honour for disgrace, liberty for bondage, life for death!—Me you abhor, and may God in your extremest hour forget that injustice, and pardon the faithful blood that has been shed this day! I draw this sword for you no more. But there yet lives a prince, a descendant of the royal heroes of Scotland, whom Providence may conduct to be your preserver. Reject the proposals of Edward, dare to defend the freedom you now possess, and that prince will soon appear to crown your patriotism with glory and happiness!"

"We acknowledge no prince but King Edward of England!" cried Buchan.—"His countenance is our glory, his presence our happiness!"—The exclamation was reiterated by almost all on the ground. Wallace was transfixed.—"Then," cried Le de Spencer, in the first pause of the tumult, "to every man, woman, and child, throughout the realm of Scotland, excepting Sir William Wallace, I proclaim in the name of King Edward, pardon and peace."

At these words, a thousand Scottish chieftains dropped on their knees before Le de Spencer and murmured their vows of fealty. Indignant, grieved, Wallace took his helmet from his head, and throwing his sword into the hands of Bothwell, "That weapon," cried he, "which I wrested from this very King Edward, and with which I twice drove him from our borders, I give to
you. In your hands it may again serve Scotland. I relinquish a soldier's name on the spot where I humbled England three times in one day, where I now see my victorious country deliver herself bound into the hand of the vanquished! I go without sword or buckler from this dishonoured field; and what Scot, my public or private enemy, will dare to strike the unguarded head of William Wallace?—As he spoke he threw his shield and helmet to the ground, and leaping from the war-carriage, took his course with a fearless and dignified step through the parting ranks of his enemies, who, awe-struck, or kept in check by a suspicion that others might not second the attack they would have made on him, durst not lift an arm or breathe a word as he passed.

Wallace had adopted this manner of leaving the ground, in hopes if it were possible to awaken the least spark of honour in the breasts of his persecutors, to prevent the bloodshed which must ensue between his friends and them, should they attempt to seize him. Edwin and Bothwell immediately followed him; but Ruthven and Scrymgeour remained, to take charge of the remains of the faithful Ker, (t) and to quiet the tumult which began to murmur amongst the lower orders of the by-standers.

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CHAP. XXX.

A VAGUE suspicion of the Regent and his council, and a pannic-struck pusillanimity which shrunk from supporting that Wallace whom the abthanes chose to abandon, carried the spirit of slavery from the platform before the council-tent, to the chieftains who thronged the ranks of Ruthven, even to the perversion of some few who had followed the golden-haired standard of Bothwell. The brave troops of Lanark (which the desperate battle of Dalkeith had reduced to not more than sixty men,) alone remained unmoved.

In the moment when the indignant Ruthven saw his Perthshire legions rolling off towards the trumpet of
Le de Spencer, Scrymgeour placed himself at the head of the Lanarkers and with the unfurled banner of Scotland marched with a steady step to the tent of Bothwell, whither he did not doubt that Wallace had retired. He found him assuaging the impassioned grief of Edwin for what had passed, and striving to moderate the vehement wrath of the faithful Murray. "Pour not out the energy of your spirit upon these worthless men!" said he, "leave them to the fates they seek; the fates they have incurred by the innocent blood they have shed this day! The few brave hearts who yet remain loyal to their country, are insufficient to here stem the torrent of corruption. Retire beyond the Forth, my friend. Rally all true Scots around Hunting-tower.—Let the valiant inmate proclaim himself; and at the foot of the Grampians lock the gates of the Highlands upon our enemies. From those bulwarks he will soon issue, and Scotland may again be free!"

"Free, but never more honoured!" cried Edwin, "never more beloved by me! Ungrateful, treacherous, base land," added he, starting on his feet and raising his clasped hands with the vehement adjuration of an indignant spirit; "Oh, that the salt sea would engulf thee at once, that thy name and thy ingratitude could be no more remembered! I will never wear a sword for her again." "Edwin!" ejaculated Wallace, in a reproachful, yet tender tone. "Exhort me not to forgive my country!" returned he, "tell me to take my deadliest foe to my breast; to pardon the assassin who strikes his steel into my heart, and I will obey you; but to pardon Scotland for the injury that she has done to you; for the disgrace with which her self-debasement stains this cheek; I never, never can!—I abhor these sons of Lucifer? Think not, noblest of masters, dearest of friends," cried he, throwing himself at Wallace's feet, "that I will ever shine in the light of those envious stars which have displaced the sun! No, tibi soli shall henceforth be the impression on my shield: to thee alone will I ever turn; and till your beams restore your country and revive me, the springing laurels of Edwin Ruthven shall wither where they grew!" Wallace folded him to his heart; a tear stood
in his eye while his cheek touched that of Edwin, and
he said in a low voice, "If thou art mine, thou art Scot-
land's. Me, she rejects.—Mysterious heaven wills
that I should quit my post; but for thee, Edwin, as a re-
lic of the fond love I yet bear this wretched country, abide
by her, bear with her, cherish her, defend her for my
sake; and if Bruce lives, he will be to thee a second
Wallace, a friend, a brother!" Edwin listened, wept,
and sobbed, but his heart was fixed; unable to
speak, he broke from his friend's arms and hurried into
an interior apartment to subdue his emotions.

Ruthven now joined his determined opinion with
that of Bothwell, that if ever a civil war could be sanc-
tified, this was the time; and in spite of all that Wal-
lace could urge against the madness of contending for
his supremacy over a nation which would not yield him
obedience, still they remained firm in their resolution.
Bruce they hardly dared hope would recover; and to
relinquish the guiding hand of their best approved lea-
der at this crisis, was a sacrifice no earthly power should
compel them to make. "So far from it," cried Lord
Bothwell, dropping on his knee and grasping the cross
hilt of his sword in both hands, "I swear by the blood
of the crucified Lord of an ungrateful world, that
should Bruce die, I will obey no other king of Scot-
land than William Wallace!" Wallace turned ashy
pale as he listened to his vow. At that moment Scrym-
geour entered followed by the Lanarkers; and all
kneeling at his feet, repeated the oath of Bothwell, and
called on him, by the unburied corse of his murdered
Ker, to lead them forth, and avenge them of his ene-
 mies.

As soon as the agitation of his soul would allow him
to speak to this faithful group, he stretched his hands
over them; and tears, such as a father would shed who
looks on the children he is to behold no more, gliding
over his cheeks; he said in a subdued and faltering
voice, "God will avenge our friend: my sword is
sheathed for ever. May that holy Being who is the true
and best king of the virtuous, always be present with
you! I feel your love, and I appreciate it. But, Both-
well, Ruthven, Scrymgeour, my faithful Lanarkers,
leave me awhile to compose my scattered thoughts. Let me pass this night alone; and to-morrow you shall know the resolution of your grateful Wallace!"

The shades of evening were closing in, and the Lanarkers, first obtaining permission to keep guard before the wood which skirted the tent, respectfully kissing his hand withdrew. Ruthven called Edwin from the recess whither he had retired to unburthen his grief; but as soon as he heard that it was the resolution of his friends to preserve the authority of Wallace, or to perish in the contest, the gloom passed from his fair brow, a smile of triumph parted his lips, and he exclaimed, "All will be well again! We shall force this deluded nation to recognise her safety and her happiness!"

While the determined chiefs held discourse congenial with the wishes of the youthful knight, Wallace sat almost silent. He seemed revolving some momentous idea; he frequently turned his eyes on the speakers with a fixed regard, which appeared rather full of a grave sorrow, than demonstrative of any sympathy in the subjects of their discussion. On Edwin he at times looked with penetrating tenderness; and when the bell from the neighbouring convent sounded the hour of rest, he stretched out his hand to him with a smile which he wished should speak of comfort as well as of affection; but the soul spoke more eloquently than he had intended: his smile was mournful, and the attempt to render it otherwise, like a transient light over a dark sepulchre, only the more distinctly shewed the gloom and horrors within. "And am I too to leave you?" said Edwin. "Yes, my brother," replied Wallace, "I have much to do with heaven and my own thoughts this night. We separate now to meet more gladly hereafter. I must have solitude to arrange my plans. To-morrow you shall know them. Meanwhile farewell!" as he spoke he pressed the affectionate youth to his breast, and warmly grasping the hands of his three other friends, bade them an earnest adieu.

Bothwell lingered a moment at the tent door, and looking back; "Let your first plan be, that to-morrow you lead us to Lord Soulis's quarters, to teach the traitor what it is to be a Scot and a man!" "My plans
shall be deserving of my brave colleagues," replied Wal-
lace; "and whether they be executed on this or the
other side of the Forth, you shall find, my long-tried
Bothwell, that Scotland's peace and the honour of her
best sons are the dearest considerations of your friend."

When the door closed and Wallace was left alone,
he stood for awhile in the middle of the tent listening
to the departing steps of his friends. When the last
sound died on his ear; "I shall hear them no more!"
cried he; and throwing himself into a seat, he remain-
ed for an hour lost in a trance of grievous thoughts.
Melancholy remembrances, and prospects dire for
Scotland, pressed upon his surcharged heart. "It is
to God alone I must confide my country!" cried he,
his mercy will pity its madness, and forgive its deep
transgressions. My duty is to remove the object of
ruin far from the power of any longer exciting jealou-
sy, or awakening zeal." With these words, he took a
pen in his hand to write to Bruce.

He briefly narrated the events which compelled him,
if he would avoid the grief of having occasioned a civil
war, to quit his country for ever. The general hostility
of the nobles; the unresisting acquiescence of the peo-
ple in measures which menaced his life and sacrificed
the freedom for which he had so long fought, convinced
him, he said, that his warrior-like commission was now
closed. He was summoned by heaven to exchange the
field for the cloister: and to the monastery at Chartres
he was now hastening to dedicate the remainder of his
days to the peace of a future world. He then exhortcd
Bruce to confide in the lords Ruthven and Bothwell as
his soul would commune with his spirit, for that he
would find them true unto death. He counselled him,
as the leading measure, to circumvent the treason of
Scotland's enemies, to go immediately to Kilchurn
Castle. Loch-awe had retired thither on the last ap-
proach of De Warenne, meaning to call out his vassals
for the emergency. But the battle of Dalkeith was
fought and gained before they could leave their heights,
and the victor did not need them afterwards. To use
them for his establishment on the throne of his king-
dom, Wallace advised Bruce. Amidst the natural for-
tresses of the Highlands he might recover his health and collect his friends, and openly proclaim himself. “Then,” added he, “when Scotland is your own, let its bulwarks be its mountains and its people’s arms. Dismantle and raze to the ground the castles of those chieftains who have only embattled them to betray and enslave their country.” Though intent on these politi-
cal suggestions, he ceased not to remember his own brave engines of war; and he earnestly conjured his prince, that he would wear the valiant Kirkpatrick as a buckler on his heart; that he would place the faithful Scrymgeour and his Lanarkers, with Grimsby, next him as his body guard; and, that he would love and cherish the brave and tender Edwin, for his sake. “When my prince and friend receives this,” added he, “Wallace shall have bidden an eternal farewell to Scotland: but his heart will be amidst its hills. My king, the friends most dear to me, will still be there! The earthly part of my beloved wife rests within its bosom. But I go to rejoin her soul: to meet it in the nightly vigils of days consecrated wholly to the blessed Being in whose presence she rejoices for ever. This is no sad destiny, my dear Bruce. Our Almighty Captain recalls me from dividing with you the glory of maintaining the liberty of Scotland; but he brings me closer to himself: I leave the plains of Gilgal, to ascend with his angel into the Empyrean! Mourn not then my absence; for my prayers will be with you till we are again united in the only place where you can fully know me as I am, thine and Scotland’s never-dying friend! Start not at the bold epithet. My body may sink into the grave; but the affections of my immortal spirit are eternal as its essence; and in earth or heaven I am ever yours.

“Should the endearing Helen be near your couch when you read this, tell her that Wallace now in idea presses her virgin cheek with a brother’s chaste fare-
well, and from his inmost soul he blesses her.”

Messages of respectful adieu he sent to Isabella, Lady Ruthven, and the Sage of Ercildoun: and then kneeling down, in that posture he wrote his last invo-
cations for the prosperity and happiness of Bruce.
This letter finished, with a more tranquil mind he addressed Lord Ruthven; detailing to him his reasons for leaving such faithful friends so clandestinely; and after mentioning his purpose of going immediately to France, he ended with those expressions of gratitude which the worthy chief so well deserved; and exhorting him to transfer his public zeal for him, to the magnanimous and royal Bruce, closed the letter, with begging him, for the sake of his friend, his king, and his country, to return immediately with all his followers to Hunting-tower, and to deliver to their prince the enclosed. His letter to Scrymgeour spoke nearly the same language. But when he began to write to Bothwell, to bid him that farewell which his heart foreboded would be for ever in this world; to part from this his steady companion in arms, his dauntless champion! he lost some of his composure, and his hand-writing testified the emotion of his mind. How then was he shaken when he addressed the young and devoted Edwin, the brother of his soul! He dropped the pen from his hand. At that moment he felt all he was going to relinquish, and he exclaimed, "Oh, Scotland! my ungrateful country! what is it you do? Is it thus that you repay your most faithful servants? It is not enough that the wife of my bosom, the companion of my youth, should be torn from me by your enemies; but your hand must wrest from my bereaved heart its every other solace. You snatch from me my friends; you would deprive me of my life! To preserve you from that crime, I imbitter the cup of death; I go far from the tombs of my fathers; from the grave of my Marion, where I had fondly hoped to rest!" His head sank on his arm; his heart gave way under the pressure of accumulated regrets, and floods of tears poured from his eyes. Deep and frequent were his sighs, but none answered him. Friendship was far distant; and where was that gentle being who would have soothed his sorrow on her bosom? She it was he lamented. "Dreary, dreary solitude!" cried he, looking around him with an aghast-perception of all that he had lost: "how have I been mocked for these three long years! What is renown, what the loud acclaim of admiring throngs, what
the bended knees of worshipping gratefulness, but breath and vapour!" It seems to shelter the mountain's top: the blast comes; it rolls from its sides; and the lonely hill is left to all the storm! So stand I, my Marion, when bereft of thee. In weal or woe, thy smiles, thy warm embrace, were mine: my head reclined on that faithful breast, and still I found my home, my heaven. But now, desolate and alone, ruin is around me. Destructions wait on all who would steal one pang from the racked heart of William Wallace! even pity is no more for me!—Take me then, O! Power of Mercy!" cried he, stretching forth his hands, "take me to thyself!"

A peal of thunder at these words burst on his ear, and seemed to roll over his tent, till passing off towards the west it died away in a long and solemn sound. Wallace rose from his knee, on which he had sunk at this awful response to his heaven-directed adjuration: "Thou callest me, my father!" cried he, with a holy confidence dilating his soul; "I go from the world to thee!—I come and before thy altars shall know no human weakness."

In a paroxysm of sacred enthusiasm he rushed from the tent, and reckless whither he went, struck into the depths of Roslyn woods. With the steps of the wind he pierced their remotest thickets, till he reached the most distant of the Esk's tributary streams: but that did not stop his course, he bounded over it, and ascending its moon-light bank, was startled by the sound of his name. Grimsby, attended by a youth, stood before him. The veteran expressed amazement at meeting his master alone at this hour unhelmeted and unarmed, in so dangerous a direction. "The road," said he, "between this and Stirling, is beset with your enemies." Wallace instead of noticing this information, inquired of the soldier what news he brought from Hunting-tower. "The worst," said he. —"By this time the royal Bruce is no more!" Wallace gasped convulsively, and fell against a tree. Grimsby paused. In a few minutes the heart-struck chief was able to speak; "Listen not to my groans
for unhappy Scotland!" cried he, "shew me all that is in this last phial of wrath."

Grimsby, with as much caution as he could, informed him that Bruce was so far recovered as to have left his couch yesterday, when at noon a letter was brought to Lady Helen, who was sitting with him. She opened it; and having read only a few lines fell senseless into the arms of her sister. Bruce, alarmed for Ruthven, instantly snatched up the vellum; but not a word did he speak till he had perused it to the end. It was from the Countess of Strathern, cruelly exulting in what she termed the demonstration of Wallace's guilt; and congratulating herself on having been the primary means of discovering it, ended with a boast that his once adoring Scotland now held him in such detestation as to have doomed him to die. It was this denunciation which had struck to the soul of Helen; and while the anxious Lady Ruthven removed her inanimate form into another room, he read the barbarous triumphs of this disappointed woman. "No power on earth can save him now," continued she; "your dotting heart must yield him, Helen, to another rest than your bridal chamber. His iron breast shall meet with others as adamantine as his own. A hypocrite! he felt not pity, he knows no beat of human sympathies, and, like a rock he will fall, unpitied, undeplored.—Undeplored by all but you, silly, self-deluded girl! My noble lord, the princely De Warenne, informs me that your Wallace is outlawed by his own country, and a price set upon his head by ours: hence, there is safety for him no where. Those he has outraged shall be avenged:—and his cries for mercy! who will answer them? No voice on earth. For none will dare support the man whom both friends and enemies abandon to destruction."

"Yes," cried Bruce, starting from his seat, "I will support him, thou damned traitress! Bruce will declare himself!—Bruce will throw himself before his friend, and in his breast receive every arrow meant for that godlike heart! Yes," he, glancing on the terrified looks of Isabella, who believed that his delirium was returned, "I would snatch him in these arms from the
flames, did all the fiends of hell guard the infernal fire!" Not a word more did he utter, but darting into his apartment, in a few minutes he was seen before the Barbican gate armed from head to foot and calling on Grimsby to bring him a horse. Grimsby obeyed; and at that moment Lady Helen appeared from the window, wringing her hands and exclaiming. "Save him, for the love of heaven, save him!" "Yes," cried Bruce, "or you see me no more." And striking his rowels into his horse, he was out of sight in an instant.

Grimsby followed, and came in view of him just as he was attempting to cross a wide fissure in the rocky path: the horse struck his heel against a loose stone as he made the leap, and it giving way, he lost his spring and fell immediately into the deep ravine. At the moment of his disappearance, Grimsby, with a cry of horror rushed towards the spot and saw the horse struggling in the last agonies of death at the bottom.—Bruce lay insensible amongst some bushes which grew nearer the top. With difficulty the honest Englishman got him dragged to the surface of the hill; and finding all attempts to recover him ineffectual, he laid him on his own breast, and so carried him slowly back to the castle. The Sage of Ercildoun restored him to life but not to recollection, by letting him blood. The fever returned on him, with a delirium so hopeless of recovery," continued Grimsby, "that Lord Douglas being not yet returned from Scone (where he was stationed to keep all in order during our prince's illness,) the Lady Helen, in an agony of grief, sent me with this youth to implore you to go to Hunting-tower. All the ladies say they will conceal you till Bruce is recovered; and then, most noble Wallace, he will proclaim himself and again move with you, his right hand, to achieve his crown. But should he be torn from us, Loch-awe is in arms, and the kingdom may be yours."

"Send me," cried Walter Hay falling at his feet, "send me back to Lady Helen, and let me tell her that our benefactor, the best guardian of our country, will not abandon us! Should you depart, Scotland's genius will go with you; again she must sink, again
she will be in ruins. De Valence will regain possession of my dear lady, and you will not be near to save her."

"Grimsby, Walter, my faithful friends!" cried Wallace in an agitated voice! "I do not abandon Scotland she drives me from her. Would she have allowed me, I would have borne her in my arms until my latest gasp; but it must not be so. I resign her into the Almighty's hands to which I commit myself: they will also preserve the Lady Helen from violence. Bruce is with her.—If he lives he will protect her for my sake; and should he die, Bothwell and Ruthven will cherish her for their own." "But you will go to her," said Grimsby. "Disguised in these peasant's garments, which we have brought for the purpose, you may pass through the legions of the Regent with perfect security." "Let me implore you, if not for your own sake, for ours!—Pity our desolation, and save yourself for them who can know no safety when you are gone!" Walter clung by his arm as he uttered this supplication. Wallace looked tenderly upon him: —"I would save myself; and I will, please God," said he, "but by no means unworthy of myself. I go, but not under any disguise.—Openly have I defended Scotland, and openly will I pass through her lands. None, who would not be more doubly accurst than the murderer Cain, will venture to impede my steps. The chalice of heaven consecrated me the champion of my country, and no Scot dare lift a hostile hand against this anointed head."

"Whither do you go?" cried Grimsby. "Let me follow you, in joy or sorrow!" "And me too, my benefactor!" rejoined Walter; "and when you look on me, think not that Scotland is altogether ungrateful!"

"My faithful friends," returned he, "whither I go, I must go alone. And, as a proof of your love, grant me your obedience this once. Rest amongst these thickets till morning.—I would not have my good Lanarkers disturbed sooner than is needful by the evil news you bring. At sun-rise you may join their camp: then you will know my destination. But till Bruce proclaims himself at the head of his country's armies,
for my sake never reveal to mortal man that he who lies debilitated by sickness at Hunting-tower, is other than Sir Thomas de Longueville." "Rest we cannot," replied Grimsby, "but still we will obey our master. You tell me to adhere to Bruce and to serve him till the hour of his death: I will—but should he die, then I may seek you out and again be your faithful servant?"

"You will find me before the cross of Christ," returned Wallace, "with saints my fellow soldiers, and God my only king! Till then Grimsby, farewell. Walter, carry my fidelity to your mistress. She will share my thoughts with the Blessed Virgin of Heaven; for in all my prayers shall her name be remembered."

Grimsby and Walter, struck by the holy solemnity of his manner, fell on their knees before him. Wallace raised his hands: "Bless, Oh, Father of Light," cried he, "bless this unhappy land when Wallace is no more: and let his memory be lost in the virtues and prosperity of Robert Bruce!"

Grimsby sunk on the earth, and gave way to a burst of manly sorrow. Walter hid his weeping face in the folds of his master's mantle, and while he firmly grasped it, firmly vowed that no force should separate him from his benefactor and lord: but in the midst of his grief he felt the stuff he held loose in his hand, and looking up, saw that the plaid to which he clung was all that remained of Wallace:—he had disappeared.63

CHAP. XXX.

Wallace having turned abruptly away from his lamenting servants, struck into the deep defiles of the Pentland hills: and deeming it probable that the determined affection of some of his friends might urge them to dare the perils attendant on his fellowship, he hesitated a moment which path to take. Certainly not towards Hunting-tower, to bring immediate destruction on its royal inhabitant. Neither to any chieftain of the Highlands, to give rise to a spirit of civil warfare which might not afterwards be sanctioned by its only
just excuse, the appearance and establishment of the lawful prince. Neither would he pursue the eastern track; for in that direction, as pointing to France, his friends would seek him.—He therefore turned his steps towards the ports of Ayr: the road was circuitous, but it would soon enough take him from the land of his fathers, from the country he must never see again.

As morning dispelled the shades of night, it discovered still more dreary glooms. A heavy mist hung over the hills and rolled before him along the valley. Still he pursued his way, although as day advanced the vapours collected into thicker blackness, and floating down the heights in portentous volumes, at last burst in a torrent of overwhelming rain. All was darkened around by the descending water; and the accumulating floods dashing from the projecting craigs above, swelled the burn in his path to a roaring river. Wallace stood in the midst of it, with its wild waves breaking against his sides. The rain fell on his uncovered head, and the chilling blast sighed in his streaming hair.—Looking around him, he paused a moment amid this tumult of nature: "Must there be strife even amongst the elements, to show that this is no longer a land for me?—Spirits of these hills," cried he, "pour not thus your rage on a banished man!—A man without a friend, without a home?" He started, and smiled at his own adjuration. "The spirits of my ancestors ride not in these blasts: the delegated powers of heaven launch not this tempest on a defenceless head; 'tis chance: but affliction shapes all things to its own likeness. Thou, Oh! my Father, would not suffer any demon of the air to bend thy broken reed! Therefore, rain on ye torrents; ye are welcome to William Wallace. He can well breast the mountain storm, who has stemmed the ingratitude of his country."

Hills, rivers, and vales, were measured by his solitary steps, till entering on the heights of Clydesdale the broad river of his native glen spread its endeared waters before him. Not a wave passed along that had not kissed the feet of some scene consecrated to his memory. Before him, over the western hills, lay the lands of his forefathers. There he had first drawn his
breath: there he imbibed from the lips of his revered grandfather, now no more, those lessons of virtue by which he had lived, and for which he was now ready to die. Far to the left stretched the wide domains of Lamington: there his youthful heart first knew the pulse of love; there all nature smiled upon him, for Marion was near, and hope hailed him from every sunlit mountain's brow. Onward, in the depths of the cliffs, lay Ellerslie, where he had tasted the joys of paradise; but all there, like that once blessed place, now lay in one wide ruin!

"Shall I visit thee again?" said he, as he hurried along the beetling craigs; "Ellerslie! Ellerslie!" cried he, "'tis no hero, no triumphant warrior, that approaches! Receive,—shelter, thy deserted, widowed master! I come, my Marion, to mourn thee in thine own domains!" He flew forward; he ascended the cliffs; he rushed down the hazle-crowned path-way, but it was no longer smooth; thistles and thickly-interwoven underwood, obstructed his steps. Breaking through them all, he turned the angle of the rock, the last screen to the view of his once beloved home. On this spot he used to stand on moon-light evenings, watching the graceful form of his Marion as she passed to and fro by her window, preparing for her nightly rest. His eye now turned instinctively to the same point; but it gazed on vacancy. His home had disappeared: one solitary tower alone remained, standing like "a hermit the last of his race," to mourn over the desolation of all with which it had once been surrounded. Not a human being now moved on the spot which three years before was thronged with his grateful vassals. Not a voice was now heard, where then sounded the harp of Halbert; where breathed the soul entrancing song of his beloved Marion! "Death!" cried he, striking his breast, "how many ways hast thou to bereave poor mortality! All, all gone!—My Marion sleeps in Bothwell: the faithful Halbert at her feet. And my peasantry of Lanark, how many of you have found untimely graves in the bosom of your vainly-rescued country!"

He sprang on the mouldering fragments heaped
over the pavement of what had been the hall. "My wife's blood marks these stones!" cried he. He flung himself along them, and a groan burst from his heart. It echoed mournfully from the opposite rock.—He started, and gazed around. "Solitude! solitude!" cried he, with a faint smile; "nought is here but Wallace and his sorrow. Marion! I call, and even thou dost not answer me; thou who ever flew at the sound of my voice! Look on me, love," exclaimed he, with a faint smile; "nought is here but Wallace and his sorrow. Marion! I call, and even thou dost not answer me; thou who ever flew at the sound of my voice! Look on me, love," exclaimed he, stretching his arms towards the sky; "look on me: and for once, for ever, cheer thy lonely, heart-stricken Wallace!" Tears choked his further utterance; and once more laying his head upon the stones, he wept in soul-dissolving sorrow till exhausted nature found repose in sleep.

The sun was gilding the grey summits of the ruined tower under whose shadow he lay, when Wallace slowly opened his eyes; and looking around him, he smote his breast, and with a heavy groan sunk back upon the stones. In the silence which succeeded this burst of memory he thought he heard a rustling near him, and a half-suppressed sigh. He listened breathlessly. The sigh was repeated.—He gently raised himself on his hand, and with an expectation he dared hardly whisper to himself, he turned towards the spot whence the sound proceeded. The branches of a rose-tree, once a favourite of his Marion, shook violently and scattered the leaves of their ungathered flowers upon the brambles which grew beneath. Wallace rose in agitation; and perceived the skirts of a human figure which had retreated behind the ruins. He advanced towards it, and beheld Edwin Ruthven. The moment their eyes met, Edwin precipitated himself at his feet and clinging to him, exclaimed, "Pardon me this pursuit? But we meet to part no more!" Wallace raised him and strained him to his breast in silence. Edwin, in hardly articulate accents continued; "Some kind power checked your hand when writing to your Edwin. You could not command him not to follow you! you left the letter unfinished; and thus I come to bless you for not condemning me to die of a broken heart!"—"I did not write farewell to thee," cried Wallace, looking mourn-
fully on him; "but I meant it: for I must part from all I love in Scotland. It is my doom. This country needs me not; and I have need of heaven. I go into its outcourts at Chartres. Follow me there, dear boy, when thou hast accomplished thy noble career on the earth, and then our grey hairs shall mingle together over the altar of the God of Peace: but now, receive the farewell of thy friend.—Return to Bruce, and be to him the dearest representative of William Wallace."—

"Never, never!" cried Edwin, "Thou alone art my prince, my friend, my brother, my all in this world!—My parents, dear as they are, would have buried my youth in a cloister; but your name called me to honour; and to you, in life or death, I dedicate my being."

"Then," returned Wallace, "that honour summons you to the side of the dying Bruce. He is now in the midst of his foes."—"And where art thou?" interrupted Edwin; "Who drove thee hence, but enemies? who line these roads, but wretches sent to betray their benefactor? No, my friend, thy fate shall be my fate, thy woe my woe! We live or die together: the field, the cloister, or the tomb; all shall be welcomed by Edwin Ruthven, if they separate him not from thee!"

Seeing that Wallace was going to speak, and fearful that it was to repeat his commands to be left alone, he suddenly exclaims with vehemence, "Father of men and angels! grant me thy favour, only as I am true to the vow I have sworn, never more to leave the side of Sir William Wallace!"

To urge the dangers to which such a resolution would expose this too faithful friend, Wallace knew would be in vain: he read an invincible determination in the eye and gesture of Edwin; and, therefore, yielding to the demands of friendship, he threw himself on his neck. "For thy sake, Edwin, I will yet bear with mankind at large! Thy bloom of honour shall not be cropt by my hand. We will go together to France, and while I rest under the lilies of its good king, thou shalt bear the standard of Scotland in the land of our ally, against the proud enemies of Bruce."—"Make of me what you will," returned Edwin, pressing his hand to his lips; "only do not divide me from yourself!"
Wallace now told his friend that it was his design to cross the hills into Ayrshire, in some of the ports of which he did not doubt he should find some vessel bound for France. This design, Edwin overthrown by telling him, that in the moment the abthanes re-pledged their secret faith to Edward, they sent a strong guard to Ayrshire, to watch the movements of his powerful relations, and to prevent their either hearing of, or marching to the assistance of their wronged kinsman. Since then, no sooner was it discovered by the insurgent lords at Roslyn that Wallace had disappeared from the camp, than supposing he meant to appeal to Philip, they dispatched expresses all along the western and eastern coasts, from the Friths of Forth and Clyde to those of Solway and Berwick upon Tweed, to intercept him. Wallace, on finding that all avenues from the southern part of his country were closed upon him, determined to try the north: Some bay in the western Highlands might open its yet not ungrateful arms, to set its benefactor free. "And if not a by ship," returned Edwin, "a fisher's boat shall launch us from a country which is no longer worthy of you;—and, by the power of Him who hushed the raging waves of Galilee, my master will yet find a haven and a friend!"

Their course was then taken along the Cartlane craigs at a distance from those villages and mountain cots which, leaning from their verdant heights, seemed to invite the traveller to refreshment and repose. Though the sword of Wallace had won them this quiet; though his wisdom, like the cornucopia of Ceres, had spread the lately barren hills with beauteous harvests, yet, had an ear of corn been asked in his name, it would have been denied. A price was set upon his head; and the lives of all who should succour him would be forfeited!—He who had given bread and homes to thousands, was left to perish,—had not where to lay his head. Edwin looked anxiously on him as at times they sped silently along: "Ah!" thought he, "this heroic endurance of evil is the true cross of our celestial captain! Let who will carry its painted insignia to the Holy Land, here is the man that bears the real substance,
and walks undismayed in the path of his sacrificed lord!"

The black plumage of a common Highland bonnet, which Edwin purchased at one of the cottages whither he had gone alone to buy a few oaten cakes, hung over the face of his friend. That face no longer blazed with the fire of generous valour; it was pale and sad—but whenever he turned his eye on Edwin, the shades which seemed to envelope it disappeared; a bright smile spoke the peaceful consciousness within; and a look of grateful affection expressed his comfort at having found that in defiance of every danger he was not yet forsaken. Edwin's happy spirit rejoiced in every glad beam which shone on the face of him he loved. It awoke felicity in his heart: for merely to be on occasions near Wallace and to share his confidence with others, had always filled him with joy; but now to be the only one on whom his noble heart leaned for consolation, was bliss unutterable. He trod in air, and even chid his beating heart for the throbs of delight which seemed to exult when his friend suffered:—"But not so," ejaculated he internally; "it is delight to live and die with thee. And if it be such pleasure even to share thy calamity; what will be my felicity when I dwell with thee in security and princely honours! For such, dearest of friends, will be the welcome of Philip to his Lord of Gascony!" These thoughts comforted Edwin; but he did not allow them to escape his bosom.

As they arrived within sight of the high towers of Bothwell Castle, Wallace stopped. "We must not go thither," said Edwin, replying to the sentiment which spoke from the eyes of his friend; the servants of my cousin Andrew may not be as faithful as their lord!"—"I will not try them;" returned Wallace with a resigned smile, "my presence in Bothwell chapel shall not pluck danger on the head of my dauntless Murray. She wakes in heaven for me, whose body sleeps there: and knowing where to find the jewel, my friend! shall I linger over the casket?"

While he yet spoke, a chieftain on horse-back suddenly emerged from the trees which led to the castle, and drew to their side. Edwin was wrapped in his
plaid; and cautiously concealing his face that no chance of his being recognised might betray his companion, walked on without once looking at the stranger, the first glance at whose knightly caparisoned horse had declared his quality. But Wallace being without any shade over the noble contour of a form which, for majesty and grace was unequalled in Scotland, was not to be mistaken. He moved swiftly forward. The horseman spurred after him. Wallace perceiving himself pursued and therefore known, and aware that he must be overtaken, suddenly stopped. Edwin in a moment drew his sword and would have given it into the hand of his friend, but Wallace putting it back, rapidly answered; "Leave my defence to this unweaponed arm. I would not use steel against my countrymen, but none shall take me while I have a sinew to resist."

The chieftain now checked his horse in front of Wallace, and respectfully raising his visor, discovered Sir John Menteith. At sight of him, Edwin dropped the point of his yet uplifted sword; and Wallace stepping back, "Menteith," said he, "I am sorry for this rencontre. If you would be safe from the destiny which pursues me, you must retire immediately, and forget that we have met."—"Never!" cried Menteith, "I know the ingratitude of an envious country drives the bravest of her champions from its borders; but I also know what belongs to myself! To serve you at all hazards; and in my castle of Newark on the Frith of Clyde to demonstrate my sense of the dangers you once incurred for me. I therefore thank my fortune for this rencontre.

In vain Wallace urged his determination not to bring peril on even the obscurest of his countrymen, by sojourning under any roof till he were far from Scotland. In vain he pointed to Menteith the outlawry which would await him should the infuriate abthanes discover that he had given their self-created enemy a shelter. Menteith, after as unsuccessful persuasions on his side, at last declared that he knew a vessel was now laying at Newark in which Wallace might embark without entering any house. He ended with imploring that his friend would allow him to be his guide to its anchorage. "To
enforce this supplication he threw himself off his horse; and leaving it to stray whither it would, with protestations of fidelity that trampled on all dangers he entreated, even with tears and the most vehement gestures of despair, not to be refused the last comfort which he foresaw he should ever know in his now degraded country. "Once I saw Scotland's steady champion, the brave Douglas, rifled from her shores! Do not then doom me to a second grief, bitterer than the first; do not you yourself drive me from the side of her last hero!—Ah! let me behold you, companion of my school-days, Friend, Leader, Benefactor! till the sea wrests you for ever from my eyes!"—Exhausted and affected, Wallace gave his hand to Menteith: the tear of gratitude stood in his eye. He looked affectionately from Menteith to Edwin, from Edwin to Menteith; "Wallace shall yet live in the memory of the virtuous of this land: you, my friends, prove it. I go richly forth, for the hearts of good men are my companions."

As they journeyed along the devious windings of the Clyde, and passing at a distance the aspiring turrets of Rutherglen, Edwin pointed to them and said, "From that church, a few months ago, did you dictate a conqueror's terms to England!"—"And now that very England makes me a fugitive!" returned Wallace. "Oh! not England!" interrupted Edwin, "you bow not to her. It is blind, mad Scotland, who thus thrusts her benefactor from her!"—"Ah! then, my Edwin," rejoined he, "read in the history of thousands! So various is the fate of a people's idol: to-day he is worshipped as a God, to-morrow thrown into the fire!"

Menteith turned pale at this conversation, and quickening his steps, in silence hurried past the opening of the valley which presented the view of Rutherglen. Night overtook the travellers at the little village of Lumloch, about two hours journey from Glasgow. Here, as a severe storm came on, Menteith advised his friends to take shelter and rest. "As you object to lodge with man," said he, "you may sleep secure in an old ruined barn which at present has no ostensible owner. I saw it as I passed this way from Newark. But I rather wish you would forget this too chary regard
for others, and lodge with me in the neighbouring cot-
tage."—Wallace was insensible to the pelting of the ele-
ments; his unsubdued spirit neither wanted rest for
mind nor body: but the languid voice and lingering
step of the young Edwin who had been unused to such
fatigue on foot, penetrated his heart; and notwithstanding
that the resolute boy, on the first proposal of Men-
teith, suddenly rallied himself and declared he was
neither weary nor faint, Wallace saw that he was both,
and yielded his consent to be conducted from the
storm. "But not," said he, "into the house. We will
go into the barn; and there, on the dry earth, my Ed-
win and I will sleep."

Menteith did not oppose him farther, and pushing
open the door, Wallace and Edwin entered. Their
friend soon after followed with a light, which he brought
from the cottage, and pulling down some upheaped
straw, strewed it on the ground for a bed. "Here I
shall sleep like a prince!" cried Edwin, throwing him-
self along the scattered truss. "But not," returned
Menteith, "till I have disengaged you from your wet
garments; and, for the sake of future scenes of prow-
ess preserved your arms and brigandine from the rust
of this night." Edwin, sunk in weariness, said little
in opposition; and having suffered Menteith to take
away his sword, and dagger, and to unbrace his plated
vest, dropped at once on the straw in a profound sleep.

Wallace, that he might not disturb his friend by the
murmur of debate, also yielded to the request of Men-
teith, and unbuckling his cuirass, gave it to him, and lay-
ing himself down by Edwin, waved their conductor a
good night. Menteith nodded the same, and closed the
door upon his victims.

Well known to the generals in King Edward's army,
as one whose soul was a mere counter in traffic, Aymer
de Valence (on being appointed Lord Warden of Scot-
land in the room of De Warenne, who was incapac-
itated by the wound he had received in the last battle
near Dalkeith,) told his king, that if he would autho-
rize him to offer an earldom with adequate estates to
Sir John Menteith the old friend of Wallace, he was
sure so rapacious a chieftain would traverse sea and
land to put that formidable Scot into the hands of England. To incline Edward to the proffer of so large a bribe, De Valence instanced Menteith’s having volunteered, while he commanded with Sir Eustace Maxwell on the Borders, to betray the forces under him to the English general. The treachery was accepted; and for its execution he received a casket of uncounted gold. Some other proofs of his devotion to England were mentioned by De Valence. “You mean his devotion to money!” replied the king; “and if that will make him ours at this crisis, give him overflowing coffers, but no earldom!—Though I must have the head of Wallace, I would not have one of my peers shew a title written in his blood. Ill deeds must sometimes be done, but we do not emblazon their perpetrators!”

De Valence having received his credentials, sent Haliburton (a Scottish prisoner, who bought his liberty too dear by such an embassage,) to impart to Sir John Menteith the King of England’s proposal. Menteith was then castellan of Newark, where he had kept close for many months under a pretence of the re-opening of old wounds; but the fact was, his treasons were connected with so many accomplices that he feared some disgraceful disclosure, and therefore kept out of the way of exciting any public attention. Avarice was his master passion; and his suspicions that there was treasure in the iron box which he had, unwitting of such a circumstance consigned to Wallace, first shewed to him his idolatry of gold. His murmurs for having allowed the box to leave his possession, gave the alarm which caused the disasters at Ellerslie and his own immediate imprisonment. The lieutenant at Lanark, after the death of Heselrigge, sent Menteith then his prisoner, towards Stirling, for Cressingham to punish according to his pleasure. Sir John made his escape from the party that conveyed him, but in flying through a wood fell into Soulis’s hands. That inhuman chief threatened to return him immediately to his dungeons; and to avoid such a misfortune, Menteith engaged in the conspiracy to bring Lady Helen from the priory to the arms of this monster. On her escape, the infuriate Soulis would have wreaked his vengeance
on his vile coadjutor by surrendering him to his ene-
mies, but Menteith, aware of his design, fled, and fled
even into the danger he would have avoided. He fell
in with a roaming party of Southrons, who conveyed
him to Ayr. His short sojourn with Soulis had plunged
his soul deep in guilt. He had once immolated
his honour, and he now kept no terms with conscience.
Arnulf soon understood what manner of man was in
his custody; and by sharing with him the pleasures of
his table, and giving him certain divisions of the
plunder that was daily brought in, he learnt from him
all the information respecting the strength and riches
of the country that was in his power to communicate.
His after history was a series of treacheries to Scot-
land, never discovered; and in return for them, an ac-
cumulation of wealth from England, the contemplation
of which seemed to be his sole enjoyment. This new
offer of De Valence's was therefore greedily embraced.
He happened to be at Rutherglen when Haliburton
brought the proposal; and in the cloisters of its (o)
church was its fell agreement signed. He transmitted
back his oath to De Valence, that he would die or win
his hire:—and having dispatched spies to the camp at
Roslyn, as soon as he was informed of Wallace's disap-
pearance he judged from his knowledge of that chief's
retentive affections, that whithersoever he intended
finally to go, he would first visit Ellerslie and the tomb
of his wife. According to this opinion, he planted his
emissaries in favourable situations on the road, and
then proceeded to intercept his victim at the probable
places.

Not finding him at Bothwell, he was just issuing
forth to take the way to Ellerslie, when the object of
his search presented himself at the opening of the wood.

Triumphant in his deceit, this master of hypocrisy
left the barn in which he had seen Wallace and his
young friend lie down on that ground from which he
had determined they should never more arise. Aware
that the unconquerable soul of Wallace would never
allow himself to be taken alive, he had stipulated with
De Valence that the delivery of his head should entitle
him to a full reward. From Rutherglen to Lumloch,
no place had presented itself in which he thought he could judiciously plant an ambuscade to surprise the unsuspecting Wallace. But in this village he had stationed so large a force of ruthless savages brought for this purpose, by Haliburton, from the Irish Island of Rathlin that their employer had hardly a doubt of this night being the last of his too-trusting friend's existence. These Rathliners neither knew of Wallace nor his exploits; but the lower order of Scots, however they might fear to succour his distress, loved his person, and felt so bound to him by his actions, that Menteith durst not apply to any one of them to second his villany.

The hour of midnight had passed, and yet he could not summon courage to lead his men to their nefarious attack. Twice they urged him, before he arose from his affected sleep: but guilt had murdered sleep! and he lay awake, restless, and longing for the dawn:—and yet ere that dawn, the deed was to be accomplished which was to entitle him to half the treasury of King Edward! A cock crew from a neighbouring farm. "That is the sign of morning, and we have yet done nothing!" exclaimed a surly ruffian, who leaned on his battle-axe in an opposite corner of the apartment. "No, it is the signal of our enemy's captivity!" cried Menteith,—"Follow me, but gently. If ye speak a word, or a single target rattles before ye all fall upon him, we are lost!—It is a being of supernatural might, and not a mere man whom you go to encounter.—He that first disables him shall have a double reward."

"Depend upon us," returned they; and stealing cautiously out of the cottage after their leader, they advanced with a noiseless step towards the barn. Menteith paused at the door, making a sign to his men to halt while he listened.—He put his ear to a crevice: not a murmur was heard within. He gently raised the latch, and setting the door wide open, with his finger on his lip, beckoned his followers. They breathlessly approached the threshold. The meridian moon shone full into the hovel, and shed a broad light upon their victims. The innocent face of Edwin rested on the bosom of his friend, and the arm of Wallace lay on the
straw with which he had covered the tender body of his companion. So fair a picture of mortal friendship was never before beheld. But the hearts were blind which looked on it, and Menteith giving the signal, he retreated out of the door while his men rushed forward to bind Wallace as he lay; but the first, in his eagerness, striking his head against a joist in the roof uttered a fierce oath. The noise roused Wallace, whose wakeful senses had rather slumbered than slept, and opening his eyes he sprang on his feet. A moment told him enemies were around.—Seeing him rise, they precipitated themselves forward with imprecations. His eyes blazed like two terrible meteors, and with a sudden motion of his arm he seemed to hold them at a distance, while his god-like figure stood a tower in collected might. Awe-struck, the men paused, but it was only for an instant. The sight of Edwin now starting from his sleep, his aghast countenance as he felt for his weapons, his cry when he recollected they were gone, inspired the assassins with fresh courage. Battle-axes, swords, and rattling chains, now flashed before the eyes of Wallace. The pointed steel in a hundred places entered his body, while with part of a broken bench which chanced to lie near him, he defended himself and Edwin from this merciless host. Edwin, seeing nought but the death of his friend flitting before his sight, regardless of himself made a spring from his side and snatched a dagger from the belt of one of the murderers. The ruffian next him instantly caught the intrepid boy by the throat, and in that horrible clutch would in a moment have deprived him of life had not the lion grasp of Wallace seized the man in his arms, and with a pressure that made his mouth burst out with blood, compelled him to forego his hold. Edwin released, Wallace dropped his assailant who staggering a few paces, fell senseless to the ground and the instant after expired.

The conflict now became doubly desperate.—Edwin's dagger twice defended the breast of his friend. Two of the assassins he had stabbed to the heart.—"Murder that urchin!" cried Menteith, who observing from without all that passed, and seeing the carnage of his
men, feared that Wallace might yet make his escape. "Hah!" cried Wallace at the sound of Menteith's voice giving such an order;—"Then we are betrayed—but not by heaven.—Strike one of you that angel youth," cried he, "and you will incur damnation!"—He spoke to the winds. They poured towards Edwin. Wallace, with a giant's strength, dispersed them as they advanced: the beam of wood fell on the heads and struck the breasts of his assailants. Himself, bleeding at every pore, felt not a smart while yet he defended Edwin. But a shout was heard from the door: a faint cry was heard at his side.—He looked around.—Edwin lay extended on the ground with an arrow quivering in his heart: his closing eyes still looked upwards to his friend. The beam fell from the hands of Wallace. He threw himself on his knees beside him. The dying boy pressed his hand to his heart, and dropped his head upon his bosom.—Wallace moved not, spoke not. His hand was bathed in the blood of his friend, but not a pulse beat beneath it; no breath warmed the paralyzed chill of his face as it hung over the motionless head of Edwin.

The men, more terrified at this unresisting stillness, than even at the invincible prowess of his arm, stood gazing on him in mute wonder. But Menteith, in whom the fell appetite of avarice had destroyed every perception of humanity, sent in other ruffians with new thongs to bind Wallace.—They approached him with terror: two of the strongest, stealing behind him, and taking advantage of his face being bent upon that of his murdered Edwin, each in the same moment seized his hands. As they gripped them fast between both theirs, and others advanced eagerly to fasten the bands, he looked calmly up; but it was a dreadful calm, it spoke of despair, of the full completion of all woe.—"Bring chains," cried one of the men, "he will burst these thongs."

"You may bind me with a hair," said he, "I contend no more." The bonds were fastened on his wrists, and then turning towards the lifeless body of Edwin, he raised it gently in his arms. The rosy red of youth yet tinged his cold cheek: his parted lips still beamed with a smile, but the breath that had so sweetly inform-
ed them was flown.—"O! my best brother that ever I had in the world!" cried he, in a sudden transport, and kiss-
ing his pale forehead; "My sincere friend in my greatest need! In thee was truth, manhood, and noble-
ness; in thee was all man's fidelity, with woman's ten-
derness. My friend, my brother, Oh! would to God I had died for thee!"(w)

CHAP. XXXI.

LORD Ruthven had hardly recovered from the shock which the perusal of Wallace's solemn adieu, and the confirmation which the recitals of Grimsby and Hay brought of his determined exile had given to his worth-devoted heart, when he was struck with a new conser-
nation by the flight of his son.—A billet, which Edwin had left with Scrymgeour who guessed not its contents, told his father, that he was gone to seek their friend and to unite himself for ever with his fortunes.

Bothwell, not less eager to preserve Wallace to the world, with an intent to persuade him to at least aban-
don his monastic project, lost not an hour, but set off from the nearest port direct for France, hoping to ar-
rive before his friend, and to engage the French mon-
arch to assist in preventing so grievous a sacrifice. Ruthven, meanwhile, fearful that the unarmed Wallace and the self-regardless Edwin, might fall into the hands of the venal wretches widely dispersed to seize the chief and his adherents, sent out the Lanarkers (eager to embrace the service) in different parties and in di-
vers disguises to pursue the roads it was probable he might take, and finding him, guard him safely to the coast. Till Ruthven should receive accounts of their success, he forbore to forward the letter which Wallace had left for Bruce, or to increase the solicitude of the already anxious inhabitants of Hunting-tower, with any intimation of what had happened. But on the fourth day, Scrymgeour and his party returned with the horrible narrative of Lumloch.

Wallace, after the murder of his youthful friend, had
been loaded with irons, and was conveyed, so unresistingly that he seemed in a stupor, on board a vessel, to be carried immediately to the tower of London, to receive sentence of death.—Sir John Menteith, though he never ventured into his sight, attended as his gaoler and as the false witness who was to put a vizard upon cruelty, and swear away his life. The horror and grief of Ruthven at these tidings were unutterable: and Scrymgeour, to turn the tide of the bereaved father’s thoughts to the inspiring recollection of the early glory of his son, proceeded to narrate, that he found the beauteous remains lying in the hovel bedecked with flowers by the village girls, who were weeping over it and lamenting the pityless heart which could slay such youth and loveliness. To bury him in so obscure a spot, Scrymgeour would not allow, and he had sent Stephen Ireland with the sacred corse to Dumbarton, with orders to see him entombed in the chapel of that fortress.—“It is done,” continued the worthy knight, “and those towers he so bravely scaled, will stand for ever the monument of Edwin Ruthven!” This wound had struck deep into the heart of the father.—He felt it in his soul, but he did not complain. “Scrymgeour,” said he “the shafts fall thick upon us, but we must fulfil our duty.” Cautious of inflicting too heavy a blow on the fortitude of his wife and Helen, he commanded Grimsby and Hay to withhold from every body at Hunting-tower the tidings of its young lord’s fate; and then he dispatched them with the letter of Wallace to Bruce, and the dreadful information of Menteith’s treachery. Ruthven ended his short epistle to his wife, by saying he should quickly follow his messenger, but that at present he had some necessary arrangements to make before he could entirely abandon the Lowlands to the temporary empire of the seditious chiefs.

On Grimsby’s arrival at Hunting-tower he was conducted immediately to Bruce. The delirium had only left him that morning; and though weak and lying on his couch he was contending with Ercildoun that he should be able to set out for Wallace’s camp on the following day, when Grimsby entered the room. The countenance of the honest Southron was the harbinger
of his news. Lady Helen started from her seat, and Bruce, stretching out his arm, eagerly caught the packets which Grimsby presented. Isabella, reading her sister’s anxiety in her looks, inquired if all were well with Sir William Wallace? But ere he could make any answer, Lady Ruthven ran breathlessly into the room with a letter open in her hand which Hay had previously delivered to her.—Bruce had just read the first line which announced the captivity of Wallace, and with a cry which pierced through the souls of every one present, he made an attempt to spring from the couch, but in the act he reeled, and fell back insensible. The apprehensive heart of Helen guessed some direful explanation: she looked with speechless inquiry upon her aunt and Grimsby. Isabella and Ercildoun hastened to Bruce, and Lady Ruthven being too much alarmed in her own feelings to remark the aghast countenance of Helen, made her seat herself, and then read to her from Lord Ruthven’s letter the brief but decisive account of Wallace’s dangerous situation. Helen listened without a word: her heart seemed locked within her, that it should utter no sound; her brain was on fire; and gazing fixedly on the floor, all that was transacted around her passed unnoticed.

Insensibility did not long shackle the determined Bruce. The energy of his spirit, struggling to gain the side of his most dear brother in this his extremest need (for he well knew Edward’s implicable soul) roused him from his swoon.—With his extended arms dashing away the restoratives with which both Isabella and Ercildoun hung over him, he would have sprung on the floor had not the latter held him down. “Withhold me not!” cried he, with a fierce countenance, “this is not the time for sickness and indulgence. My friend is in the fangs of the tyrant, and shall I lie here?—No, not for all the empires in the globe will I be detained another hour.”

Isabella, affrighted at the furies which raged in his eyes, but yet more terrified at the perils attendant on his desperate resolution, threw herself at his feet and implored him to stay for her sake. “No,” cried Bruce, forgetful of every selfish wish in the sovereign pas-
sion of his soul-devoted gratitude to William Wallace, "not for thy life, Isabella, which is dearer to me than my own! Not to save this ungrateful country from the doom it merits! would I linger one moment from the side of him who has fought, bled, and suffered for me and mine—who is now treated with ignominy, and sentenced to die for my delinquency!—Had I consented to proclaim myself on my landing, secure with Bruce the king, envy would have feared to strike:—but I must first win a fame like his!—And while I lay here, they tore him from the vain and impotent Bruce! But, Almighty pardoner of my sins!" cried he with vehemence, "grant me strength to wrest him from their "gripe, and I will go bare-foot to Palestine to utter all my gratitude!"

These thoughts created such a tempest in the breast of the prince, that Isabella sunk weeping into the arms of her aunt, and the venerable Ercildoun, wishing to curb an impetuosity which might only involve its generous agent in a ruin deeper than that it sought to revenge, with more zeal than judgment urged to the prince the danger into which such boundless resentment would precipitate his own person. At this intimation the impassioned Bruce, stung to the soul that such an argument could be expected to have any weight with him, solemnly bent his knee and clasping his sword, vowed before heaven "either to release Wallace or——" to share his fate! he would have added; but Isabella, watchful of his words, here suddenly interrupted him by throwing herself wildly on his neck and exclaiming—"Oh! say not that! Rather swear to pluck the tyrant from his throne, that the sceptre of my Bruce may bless England as it will yet do this unhappy land!" "She says right!" ejaculated Ercildoun in a prophetic transport, "and the sceptre of Bruce, in the hands of his offspring, shall bless the united countries to the latest generations! The walls of separation shall then be thrown down, and England and Scotland be one people."(9)

Bruce looked stedfastly on the sage: "Then, if thy voice utter wholly verity, it will not again deny my call to wield the power what heaven bestows! I follow
my fate! To-morrow’s dawn sees me in the path to snatch my best treasure, my counsellor, my guide, from the judgment of his enemies:—or, woe to England, and to all of Scotland born who have breathed one hostile word against his sacred life!—Helen, dost thou hear me?” cried he; “Wilt thou not assist me to persuade thy too timid sister that her Bruce’s honour, his happiness, lives in the preservation of his friend? Speak to her, counsel her, sweet Helen; and please the Almighty arm of heaven, I will reward thy tenderness with the return of Wallace!”

Helen gazed intently at him as he spoke. She smiled when he ended, but she did not answer, and there was a wild vacancy in the smile that seemed to say she knew not what had been spoken and that her thoughts were far away. Without further regarding him or any who were present, she arose and left the room. At this moment of fearful abstraction, her whole soul was bent, with an intensity that touched on madness, on the execution of a project which had rushed into her mind in the moment she heard of Wallace’s deathful captivity.

The approach of night favoured her design. Hurrying to her chamber; she dismissed her maids with the prompt excuse that she was ill and desired not to be disturbed till morning; then bolting her door, she quickly habited herself in the page’s clothes which she had so carefully preserved as the dear memorial of her happy days in France, and dropping from her window into the park beneath, ran swiftly through its woody precincts towards Dundee.

Before she arrived at the suburbs of Perth, her tender feet became so blistered that she found the necessity of stopping at the first cottage. Her perturbed spirits rendered it impossible for her to take rest, and she answered the hospitable offer of its humble owner with a request that he would go into the town and immediately purchase a horse to carry her that night to Dundee. She put her purse into the man’s hand as she spoke, and he being willing to serve the young traveller in whatever way he pleased, without further discussion obeyed. When the animal was brought, and the honest
Scot returned her the purse with its remaining contents, she divided them with him, and turning from his thanks in silence, mounted her horse and rode away.

About an hour before dawn she arrived within view of the ships lying in the harbour at Dundee. At this sight she threw herself off the panting animal which she had urged to its utmost speed, and leaving it to rest and liberty, hastened to the beach. A gentle breeze blew freshly from the north-west, and several vessels at that moment were heaving their anchors to get under weigh. "Are any," demanded she, "bound for the Tower of London?"—"None," was the reply. Despair was now in her heart and gesture. But suddenly recollecting that in dressing herself for her flight she had not taken off the jewels which she usually wore, she exclaimed with renovated hope, "Will not gold tempt you to carry me thither?" A rough Norwegian sailor jumped from the side of the nearest vessel, and readily answered in the affirmative. "My life," rejoined she, "or a necklace of pearls shall be yours in the moment that you land me at the Tower of London." The man, seeing the youth and agitation of the seeming boy who accosted him, doubted his power to perform so magnificent a promise, and was half inclined to retract his assent; but Helen pointing to a jewel on her finger as a proof that she did not speak of things beyond her reach, he no longer hesitated, and pledging his word that, wind and tide in his favour, he would land her at the Tower stairs, she, as if all happiness must meet her at that point, sprung into his vessel. The sails were unfurled; the voices of the men chanted forth their cheering responses on clearing the harbour; and Helen throwing herself along the floor of her little cabin, silently breathed her thanks to God in that prostration of body and soul, for being indeed launched on the ocean whose waves, she trusted, would soon convey her to Wallace.
After a tedious procrastination occasioned by several calms, on the evening of the tenth day from the one in which Helen had embarked on board the little ship of Dundee, it entered on the broad bosom of the Nore. While she sat on the deck watching the progress of the vessel with an eager spirit which would gladly have taken wings to have flown to the object of her voyage, she first saw the majestic waters of the Thames. But it was a tyrannous flood to her, and she marked not the diverging shores crowned with palaces, for her eyes looked over every marbled dome to seek the black summits of the Tower. At a certain point the captain of the vessel spoke through his trumpet to summon a pilot from the land.—In a few minutes he was obeyed: and the Englishman taking the helm, Helen reclined on a coil of ropes near him, and listened in wordless attention to a recital which bound up her every sense in that of hearing. The captain, who declared himself a Norwegian by birth, and in consequence of his seafaring life a Scot by appellation only, jested on the present troubles of his adoptive country, and added that he thought any ruler the right who gave him a free course for traffic.—In answer to this remark the Englishman, with an observation not very flattering to the Norwegian's estimation of right and wrong, mentioned the capture of the once renowned champion of Scotland, and narrated its consequence. Even the enemy, who recounted the particulars, shewed a truth in the recital which shamed the man who had benefited by the patriotism he affected to despise, and for which Sir William Wallace was imprisoned and now likely to shed his blood.

"I was present," continued the pilot, "when the brave Scot was put on the raft which carried him through the traitor's gate into the Tower. His hands and feet were bound with iron, but his head, owing to faintness from the wounds he had received at Lumloch, was so bent down on his breast as he reclined on the float, that I could not then see his face.—There was a
great pause: for none of us when he did appear in sight, could shout over the downfall of so merciful a conqueror. Many were spectators of this scene, whose lives he had spared on the fields of Scotland, and my brother was amongst them. However, that I might have a distinct view of the man who had so long held our warlike monarch in dread, I went to Westminster-hall on the day that he was to be tried. The great judges of the land, and almost all the lords besides were there; and a very grand spectacle they made. But when the hall door was opened, and the dauntless prisoner appeared, then it was that I saw true majesty, King Edward on his throne never looked with such a royal air. His very chains seemed given to be graced by him, as he moved through the parting crowd with the step of one who had been used to have all his accusers at his feet. His head was now erect, and he looked with undisturbed dignity on all around. The Earl of Gloucester, whose life and liberty he had granted at Berwick, sat on the right of the lord chancellor. Bishop Beck, the Lords de Valence and Soulis, with one Menteith, who it seems was the man that betrayed him into our hands, charged him with high treason against the life of King Edward and the peace of his majesty's realms of England and Scotland. grievous were the accusations brought against him, and bitter the revilings with which he was denounced as a traitor too mischievous to deserve any show of mercy. The Earl of Gloucester, who had several times attempted to stem the headlong fury of their several depositions, at last rose indignantly, and in energetic and respectful terms implored Sir William Wallace, by the reverence in which he held the tribunal of future ages, to answer for himself.

On this adjuration, brave earl!" replied he, "I will." —O! men of Scotland, what a voice was that! In it was all honesty and nobleness; and a murmur arose amongst those who seemed to fear its power, which Gloucester was obliged to check by exclaiming aloud with a stern countenance,—"Silence while Sir William Wallace speaks, or he who disobeys shall be dismissed
the court." A pause succeeded, and the chieftain, with the godlike majesty of truth, denied the possibility of his being a traitor to Edward, to whom he never owed any allegiance; and then, with the same fearlessness, he avowed the facts alleged against him in the accusations of the havoc he had made of the English on the Scottish plains and of the devastations he had afterwards wrought in the lands of England. "It was a son," cried he, "defending the orphans of his father from a treacherous friend! It was the sword of restitution, gathering on his fields the harvests he had stolen from theirs!" He spoke more and nobly; too nobly for them who heard him. They rose to a man to silence what they could not confute; and the sentence of death was pronounced on him; the cruel death of a traitor! The Earl of Gloucester turned pale on his seat, but the countenance of Wallace was unmoved. As he was led forth I followed, and saw the young Le de Spencer and several other reprobate gallants of our court, ready to receive him. With shameful mockery they threw laurels on his head, and with torrents of derision, told him that it was meet they should so salute the champion of Scotland! Wallace glanced on them a look which spoke rather pity than contempt, and with a serene countenance he followed the warden towards the Tower. The hirelings of his accusers loaded him with invectives as he passed along; but the people who beheld his noble mien, and who had heard of, and many felt his generous virtues, deplored and wept his hard sentence. To-morrow, at sun-rise, he dies.

Helen's face being over-shadowed by the feathers of her hat, the agony of her mind could not have been read in her countenance, had the good Southron been sufficiently uninterested in his story to regard the sympathy of others; but as soon as the dreadful words "to-morrow, at sun-rise, he dies," fell on her ear, she started from her seat; her horror-struck senses apprehended nothing further; and turning to the Norwegian, "Captain," cried she, "I must reach the Tower this night!" "Impossible," was the reply; "the tide will not take us up till to-morrow at noon." "Then the
waves must!” cried she, and frantically rushing towards the ship’s side, she would have thrown herself into the water had not the pilot caught her arm. “Boy!” said he, “are you mad? your action, your looks—” “No;” interrupted she, wringing her hands, “but in the Tower I must be this night, or—Oh! God of mercy, end my misery!” The unutterable anguish of her voice, countenance, and gesture, excited a suspicion in the Englishman that this youth was connected with the Scottish chief; and not choosing to even hint his surmise to the unfeeling Norwegian, in a different tone he exhorted Helen to composure, and offered her his own boat which was then towed at the side of the vessel, to take her to the Tower. Helen grasped the pilot’s rough hand, and in a paroxysm of gratitude pressed it to her lips; then, forgetful of her engagements with the insensible man who stood unmoved by his side, sprung into the boat. The Norwegian followed her, and in a threatening tone demanded his hire. She now recollected it, and putting her hand into her vest, gave him the string of pearls which had been her necklace. He was satisfied, and the boat pushed off.

The cross, the hallowed pledge of her chaste communion with Wallace in the chapel of Snawdoun, and which always hung suspended on her bosom, was now in her hand and pressed close to her heart. The rowers plied their oars: and her eyes, with a gaze as if they would pierce the horizon, looked intently onward as the men laboured through the tide. Even to see the walls which contained Wallace, seemed to promise her a degree of comfort she dared hardly hope in such an abyss of misery she was fated to enjoy. At last the awful battlements of England’s state prison rose before her. She could not mistake them. “That is the Tower,” said one of the rowers. A shriek escaped her, and instantly covering her face with her hands, she tried to shut out from her sight those very walls she had so long sought amongst the clouds. They imprisoned Wallace? He groaned within their confines! and their presence paralyzed her heart.

“Shall I die before I reach thee, Wallace!” was the
question which her almost flitting soul uttered as she trembling yet with swift step ascended the stone stairs which led from the water’s edge to the entrance of the Tower. She flew through the different courts to the one in which stood the prison of Wallace. Here she dismissed the boatman who conducted her, with a ring from her finger as his reward; and passing a body of soldiers which kept guard before a large porch that led into the vestibule of the dungeons, she entered and found herself in an immense paved room. A single sentinel stood at the end near an iron door. There then was Wallace! Forgetting her disguise and situation in the frantic eagerness of her pursuit, she hastily advanced to the man:—“Let me pass to Sir William Wallace,” cried she, “and treasures shall be your reward!” “Whose treasures? my pretty page;” demanded the soldier, “I dare not, were it at the suit of the Countess of Gloucester herself.” “O!” cried Helen, “For the sake of a greater than any countess in this land, take this jewelled bracelet and let me pass!” The man, misapprehending the words of this adjuration, at sight of the diamonds, supposing the page must come from the queen, no longer demurred; and putting the bracelet into his bosom, told Helen that, as he granted this permission at the risk of his life, she must conceal herself in the interior chamber of the prisoner’s dungeons should any from the warden visit him during their interview. She readily promised this; and he informed her, that when through this door she would cross two other apartments, the bolts to the entrances of which she must undraw, and then at the extremity of a long passage she would see a door fastened by a latch which would admit her to Sir William Wallace. With these words the soldier removed the massy bars, and Helen entered.

CHAP. XXXIII.

HELEN’s fleet steps carried her in a few minutes through the intervening dungeons to the door which
would restore to her eyes the being with whose life her existence seemed blended. The bolts had yielded to her hands. The iron latch now gave way, and the ponderous oak grating dismally on its hinges, she looked forward, and beheld the object of all her solicitude seated at a stone table, apparently writing. He raised his head at the sound. The peace of heaven was in his eyes, and a smile on his lips as if he had expected an angel visitant.

The first glance of him struck to the heart of Helen; veneration, anguish, shame, all rushed on her at once. She was in his presence! but how might he turn from consolations he had not sought! The intemperate passion of her step-mother now glared before her: his contempt of the Countess's unsolicited advances, appeared ready to be extended to her rash daughter-in-law; and with an irrepressible cry, which seemed to breathe out her life, Helen would have fled; but her failing limbs bent under her, and she fell senseless into the dungeon. Wallace started from his seat. He thought his senses must deceive him, and yet the shriek was Lady Helen's! He had heard the same cry which had brought him to her side on the Pentland hills; and bending to the inanimate form before him, he took off the plumed hat, and parting the heavy locks which now fell over her face, he recognised the features of her who alone had ever shared his meditations with Marion. He sprinkled water on her face and hands: he put his cheek to hers; it was ashy cold; he felt the chill at his heart. "Helen!" exclaimed he in a voice of alarm, "Helen awake! Speak to thy friend!"

Still she remained motionless. "Dead!" cried he with increased emotion; "Gone so soon!—Gone to tell Marion that her Wallace comes. Blessed angel!" cried he clasping her to his breast with an energy of which he was not aware. "Take me, take me with thee!" The pressure, the voice, roused the dormant life of Helen. With a torturing sigh she unsealed her eyes from the death-like load that oppressed them, and found herself in the arms of Wallace.

All her wandering senses, which the promulgation
of his danger had dispersed at Hunting-tower and maintained in a bewildered state even to the moment of her seeing him in the dungeon, now rallied, and in recovered sanity smote her to the soul. Though still overwhelmed with grief at the fate which threatened to tear him from her and life, she now wondered how she could ever have so trampled on the retreating modesty of her nature, as to have brought herself thus into his presence; and in a voice of horror, of despair, believing that she had for ever destroyed herself in his opinion, she exclaimed, "Father of Heaven! how came I here?—I am lost, and innocently;—but who can read the heart!"

She lay in hopeless misery on his breast with her eyes again closed, almost unconscious of the pillow on which she leaned. "Lady Helen," returned he, hardly comprehending her, "was it other than Wallace you sought in these dungeons? I dared to think that the parent we both adore had sent you hither to be his harbinger of my heavenly consolations!" Helen, recalled to self-possession by the kindness of these words, turned her head on his bosom, and in a burst of grateful tears hardly articulated, "And will you not abhor me for this act of madness? But I was not myself. And yet, where should I live or die, but at the feet of my benefactor?" The stedfast soul of Wallace was subdued by this language, and the manner of its utterance. It was the disinterested dictates of a pure though agitated spirit which, he now was convinced, did most exclusively love him, but with the passion of an angel; and the tears of a sympathy which spoke their kindred natures, stole from his eyes as he bent his cheek on her head. She felt them; and rejoicing in such an assurance that she yet possessed his esteem, a blessed calm diffused itself over her mind, and raising herself, with a look of virtuous confidence she exclaimed, "Then you do understand me, Wallace? you pardon me this apparent forgetfulness of my sex, and you recognise a true sister in Helen Mar? I may administer to that noble heart till——" She paused, turned deadly pale, and then clasping his hand in both hers to her lips, in bitter agony added "till we meet in heaven!"
"And blissful, dearest saint, will be our union there," replied he, "where soul meets soul unencumbered of these earthly fetters, and mingles with each other, even as thy tender tear-drops now glide into mine! But there, my Helen, we shall never weep. No heart will be left unsatisfied; no spirit will mourn in jealousy, for that happy region is the abode of love:—of love without the defilements or the disquietudes of mortality; for there it is an everlasting, pure enjoyment. It is a full diffusive tenderness which, penetrating all hearts, unites the whole in one spirit of boundless love in the bosom of our God!"

"Ah!" cried Helen, throwing herself on her knees in holy enthusiasm; "Join then your prayers with mine, most revered of friends, that I may be admitted into such blessedness! Petition our God to forgive me, and do you forgive me, that I have sometimes envied the love you bear your Marion! But I now love her so entirely, that to be her and your handmaid in paradise would amply satisfy my soul." "O! Helen," cried Wallace, grasping her uplifted hands in his and clasping them to his heart, "thy soul and Marion's are indeed one, and as one I love ye!"

This unlooked for declaration almost overpowered Helen in its flood of happiness; and with a smile which seemed to picture the very heavens opening before her, she turned her eyes from him to the crucifix which stood on the table, and bowing her head on its pedestal, was lost in the devotion of rapturous gratitude.

At this juncture, when, perhaps, the purest bliss that ever descended on woman's heart, now glowed in that of Helen, the Earl of Gloucester entered. His were not visits of consolation; for he knew that his friend, who had built his heroism on the rock of Christianity, did not require the comfortings of any mortal hand. At sight of him, Wallace, pointing to the kneeling Helen, beckoned him into the inner cell where his straw pallet lay; and there, in a low voice, declared who she was, and requested the earl to use his authority to allow her to remain with him to the last. "After that," said he, "I rely on you, generous Gloucester, to convey safely back to her country, a being who seems
to have nothing of earth about her but the terrestrial body which enshrines her angelic soul."

The sound of a voice speaking with Wallace aroused Helen from her happy trance. Alarmed that it might be the horrid emissaries of the tyrant, come prematurely to tear him from her, she started on her feet; "Where are you, Wallace?" cried she looking distractedly around her; "I must be with you even in death!"

Wallace, hearing her fearful cry, hastened into the dungeon and relieved her immediate terror by naming the Earl of Gloucester, who followed him. The conviction that Wallace was under mortal sentence, which his beatified representations of the bliss he was going to meet had almost lost in its glories, now rushed upon her with redoubled horrors. This world again rose before her in the person of Gloucester. It reminded her that she and Wallace were not yet passed into the hereafter whose anticipated joys had wrapt her in such sweet elysium. He had yet the bitter cup of death to drink to the dregs; and all of human weakness again writhed in her breast. "And is there no hope?" cried she, looking earnestly on the disturbed face of Gloucester; "Ah conduct me to this lawless king! If tears, if a breaking heart can avail, I will kneel before him; I will die before him; only let Sir William Wallace live!"

"Dearest sister of my soul!" cried Wallace, throwing his arms around her agitated figure, "thy knees shall never bend to any less than God, for me! Did He will my longer pilgrimage on this earth, of which my spirit is already weary, it would not be in the power of any human tyrant to hold me in these bonds. I am content to go, my Helen; and angels whisper me, that thy bridal bed will be William Wallace's grave!" At this assurance, she looked upon him with a blush of strange delight; but she spoke not.

Gloucester for a moment contemplated this chaste union of two spotless hearts, with an admiration almost amounting to devotion. "Gentle lady," said he, "the message that I came to impart to Sir William Wallace bears with it a shew of hope; and I trust that your tender spirit will be as persuasive, as consolatory. A
private embassy has just arrived in haste from France, to negotiate with King Edward for the safety of our friend as a prince of that realm.” I left the embassadors,” continued he, turning to the Scottish chief, “in vehement debate with his majesty; and he has at length granted a suspension of the horrible injustice that was to have been completed to-morrow, until some conditions are replied to by you, on your acceptance of which, he declares, shall depend his compliance with King Philip’s demands.”

“And you will accept them?” cried Helen, in a tumult of wild hope. The communication of Gloucester had made no change in the equable pulse of Wallace; and he replied, with a look of tender pity upon her animated countenance, “The conditions of Edward are too likely to be snares for that honour which I will bear with me uncontaminated to the grave. Therefore, dearest consoler of my last hours, do not give way to hopes which a greater king than Edward may command me to disappoint.” Helen bowed her head in silence. The colour again faded from her cheek, and despair once more tugged at her heart-strings.

Gloucester resumed; and after narrating some particulars concerning the conference between the king and the embassadors, (deeming it probable, that should Wallace even finally refuse the terms which would be proposed to him, that the time of the negotiation would at least very much prolong his sojourn in this world;) he suggested the impracticability of secretly retaining Lady Helen for so long a period in the dungeon with him. “I dare not,” continued he, “be privy to such a circumstance and conceal it from the king. I know not what messengers he may send to impart his conditions to you; and should she be discovered, Edward, doubly incensed, would tear her from you; and as an accessory so involve me in his displeasure, that I must be disabled from serving either of you farther. Were I so far to honour his feelings as a man, as to mention it to him, I do not believe that he would oppose her wishes; but how to reveal such a circumstance with any regard to her fair fame, I know not; for all are not sufficiently virtuous to believe her spotless inno-
cence." Helen, who summoned all her strength at the intimation which threatened to separate her from Wallace, hastily interrupted Gloucester, and with firmness said, "When I entered these walls, the world and I parted for ever. The good or the evil opinion of the impure in heart can never affect me:—they shall never see me more. The innocent will judge me by themselves, and by the end of my race. I came here to minister with a sister's duty to my own and my father's preserver; and while he abides here I will never consent to leave his feet. When he goes hence, if it be to bless mankind again, I shall find the longest life too short to pour forth all my gratitude; and for that purpose I will dedicate myself in some nunnery of my native land. But should he be taken from a world that is unworthy of him, soon, very soon, shall I cease to feel its aspersions, in the grave."

"No aspersions which I can avert, dearest Helen," cried Wallace, "shall ever tarnish the fame of one whose purity can only be transcended by her who is now made perfect in heaven! Consent, noblest of women, to wear for the few days I may yet linger here, a name which thy sister angel has sanctified to me. Give me a legal right to call you mine, and Edward himself will not then dare to divide what God has joined together!"

Helen attempted to answer, but the words died on the seraphic smile which beamed upon her lips, and she dropped her head upon his breast.

Gloucester, who saw no other means of insuring to his friend her society, was rejoiced at this resolution of Wallace; he had himself longed to propose it, but knew not how to do so with sufficient delicacy; and reading the consent of Helen in the tender emotion which denied her speech, without further delay, as the hour was advancing towards midnight, he quitted the apartment to bring the confessor of the warden to join their hands before he should leave them for the night.

On his re-entrance, he found Helen sitting dissolved in tears, with her hand clasped in his friend's. The sacred rite was soon performed, which endowed her with all the claims upon Wallace which her devoted
heart had so longed sighed after with resigned hopefulness:—to be his help-mate on earth, his partner in the tomb, his dear companion in heaven! With the last benediction she threw herself on her knees before him, and put his hand to her lips in eloquent silence. Gloucester with a look of kind farewell withdrew with the priest.

"Thou noble daughter of the noblest Scot!" said Wallace, raising her from the ground, "this bosom is thy place, and not my feet. Long it will not be given me to hold thee here: but even in the hours of our separation, my spirit will hover near thee, to bear thine to our everlasting home."

The heart of Helen alternately beat violently, and paused as if the vital currents were suddenly stopped. Hope and fear agitated her by turns; but clinging to the flattering prospect which the arrival of the embassadors had excited; and almost believing, that she could not be raised to such a pinnacle of felicity as to be made the wife of Wallace, only to be hurled to the abyss of misery by his instant and violent death; she timidly breathed a hope that by the present interference of King Philip, Edward might not be found inexorable.

"Disturb not the holy composure of your soul by such an expectation," returned he, "I know my adversary too well to anticipate his relinquishing the object of his vengeance, but at a price more infamous than the most ignoble death. Therefore, best beloved of all on earth! look for no deliverance for thy Wallace but what passes through the grave; and to me, dearest Helen, its gates are on golden hinges turning, for all is light and bliss which shines on me from within their courts!"

Helen's thoughts, in the idea of his being torn from her, could not wrest themselves from the direful images of his execution; she shuddered, and in faltering accents replied, "Ah! could we glide from sleep into so blessed a death, I would hail it even for thee! But the threatened horrors, should they fall on thy sacred head, will, in that hour, I trust, also divorce my soul from this grievous world!"
"Not so, my Helen," returned he; "keep not thy dear eyes for ever fixed on the gloomy appendages of death. The scaffold and the grave have nought to do with the immortal soul: it cannot be wounded by the one, nor confined by the other. And is not the soul thy full and perfect Wallace? It is that which now speaks to thee, which will cherish thy beloved idea for ever. Lament not then how soon this body, its mere apparel, is laid down in the dust. But rejoice still in my existence which, through Him who led captivity captive, will never know a pause. Comfort then thy heart, my soul's dear sister, and sojourn a little while on this earth to bear witness for thy Wallace to the friends he loves!"

Helen, who felt the import of his words in her heart, gently bowed her head, and he proceeded:

"As the first who stemmed with me the torrent which, with God's help, we so often laid into a calm, I mention to you my faithful Lanarkers. Many of them bled and died in the contest; and to their orphans, with the children of those who yet survive, I consign all the world's wealth that yet belongs to William Wallace: Ellerslie and its estates are theirs. To Bruce, my sovereign and my friend, the loved companion of the hour in which I freed you my Helen from the arms of violence! To him I bequeath this heart, knit to him by bonds more dear than even loyalty. Bear it to him; and when he is summoned to his heavenly throne, then let his heart and mine fill up one urn. To Lord Ruthven, to Bothwell, to Scrymgeour, and Kirkpatrick, I give my prayers and blessings."—

Here Wallace paused. Helen, who had listened to him with a holy attention which hardly allowed a sigh to breathe from her steadfast heart, spoke; but the voice was scarcely audible:—"And what for Edwin, who loves you dearer than life? He cannot be forgotten!" Wallace started at this: then she was ignorant of the death of that too faithful friend! In a hurrying accent he replied, "Never forgotten! Oh, Helen! I asked for him life, and heaven gave him long life, even for ever and ever!" Helen's eyes met his with a look of awful inquiry: "That would mean, he is gone before you?"
countenance of Wallace answered her. "Happy Ed- 
win!" cried she, and the tears rained over her checks 
as she bent her head on her arm. Wallace continued; 
"He laid down his life to preserve mine in the hovel of 
Lumloch. The false Menteith could get no Scot to 
lay hands on their true defender; and even the foreign 
ruffians he brought to the task, might have spared the 
noble boy, but an arrow from the traitor himself pierced 
his heart. Contention was then no more, and I resign-
ed myself to follow him."

"What a desert has the world become!" exclaimed 
Helen; then turning on Wallace with a saintlike smile, 
she added, "I would hardly now withhold you. You 
will bear him Helen's love, and tell him how soon I 
will be with ye. Our Father may not allow my heart 
to break; but in his mercy he may take my soul in the 
prayers which I shall hourly breathe to him!" "Thou 
hast been lent me as my sweet consolation here, my 
Helen;" replied he, "and the Almighty dispenser of 
that comfort will not long banish you from the object 
of your innocent wishes."

While they thus poured into each others bosoms the 
ineffable balm of friendship's purest tenderness, the eyes 
of Wallace insensibly closed. "Your gentle influence," 
gently murmured he, "brings that sleep to these eye-
lids which has not visited them since I first entered 
these walls. Like my Marion, Helen, thy presence 
brings healing on its wings." "Sleep, then," replied 
she, "and her angel spirit will keep watch with mine."

CHAP. XXXIV.

THOUGH all the furies of the elements seemed let 
loose to rage around the walls of the dungeon, still Wal-
lace slept in the loud uproar. Calm was within; and 
the warfare of the world could not disturb the balmy 
rest into which the angel of peace had steeped his 
senses. From this profound repose he was awoke, just 
as Helen had sunk into a light slumber, by the entrance 
of Gloucester. But the first words of the earl aroused
her, and rising, she followed her beloved Wallace to his side.

He came by the king's order thus early, to shew his majesty's readiness to comply with the wishes of his royal brother of France. Gloucester put a scroll into the hand of Wallace:—"Sign that," said he, "and you are free. I know not its contents; but the king commissioned me, as a mark of his grace, to be the messenger of your release."

Wallace read the conditions, and the colour deepened on his cheek as his eye met each article. He was to reveal the asylum of Bruce; to foreswear Scotland for ever; and to take an oath of allegiance to Edward, the seal of which should be the English Earldom of Cleveland! Wallace closed the parchment. "King Edward knows well what will be my reply; I need not speak it." "You will accept his terms?" asked the earl.

"Not to insure me a life of ages with all earthly bliss my portion! I have spoken to these offers before. Read them, my noble friend, and then give him as mine the answer that would be yours." Gloucester obeyed; and while his eyes were bent on the parchment, those of Helen were fixed on her almost worshipped husband: she looked through his beaming countenance into his very soul, and there saw the sublime purpose that consigned his unbending head to the scaffold. When Gloucester had finished, covered with the burning blush of shame he crushed the disgraceful scroll in his hand, and exclaimed with honourable vehemence against the deep duplicity and the deeper cruelty of his father-in-law, by such base subterfuges to mock the embassy of France and its noble object.

"This is the morning in which I was to have met my fate!" replied Wallace. "Tell this tyrant of the earth, that I am even now ready to receive the last stroke of his injustice. In the peaceful grave, my Helen," added he, turning to her, who sat pale and aghast, "I shall be beyond his power!" Gloucester walked the room in great disturbance of mind, while Wallace continued in a lower tone his attempts to recall some perception of his consolations to the abstracted and soul-struck Helen. The earl stopped suddenly be-
fore them. "That the king did not expect your acquiescence without some hesitation, I cannot doubt; for he told me, when I informed him that the Lady Helen Mar, now your wife, was the sharer of your prison, that should you still oppose yourself to what he called your own interest, I must bring her to him, as the last means of persuading you to receive his mercy."

"Never!" replied Wallace, "I reject what he calls mercy. He has no rights of judgment over me; and his pretended mercy is an assumption which, as a true born Scot, I despise. He may rifle me of my life, but he shall never beguile me into any acknowledgment of an authority that is false. No wife, nor ought of mine, with my consent, shall ever stand before him as a suppliant for William Wallace. I will die as I have lived, the equal of Edward in all things but a crown: and his superior in being true to the glory of prince or peasant—unblemished honour!"

Finding the Scottish chief not to be shaken in this determination, Gloucester, humbled to the soul by the base tyranny of his royal father-in-law, soon after withdrew to acquaint that haughty monarch with the ill-success of his embassy. But ere noon had turned, he re-appeared, with a countenance declarative of some distressing errand. He found Helen awakened to the full perception of all her pending evils—that she was on the eve of losing for ever, the object dearest to her in this world; and though she wept not, though she listened to the lord of all her wishes with smiles of holy approval, her heart bled within, and with a welcome, which enforced his consolatory arguments, she hailed its mortal pains.

"I come," said Gloucester, "not to urge you to send Lady Helen as a suitor to King Edward; but to spare her the misery of being separated from you while life is yours." He then proceeded to relate, that the French embassadors knew not the conditions which were offered to the object of their mission; but being informed that he had refused them, they still continue to press their sovereign's demands with a power which Edward seemed cautious to provoke; and, therefore, as a last proof of his desire to acquiesce in the wishes
of Philip, he told the French lords that he would send his final propositions to Sir William Wallace by that chieftain's wife, who he found was then his companion in the Tower. "On my intimating," continued the earl, "that I feared she would be unable to appear before him, his answer was:—Let her see to that; such refusal shall be answered by her immediate separation from her husband."

"Let me, in this demand," cried she, turning with collected firmness to Wallace, "satisfy the will of Edward, it is only to purchase my continuance with you: trust me, noblest of men! I should be unworthy of the name you have given me, could I sully it in my person, by one debasing word or action to the author of all our ills!" "Ah, my Helen!" replied he, "what is it you ask? Am I to live to see a repetition of the horrors of Ellerslie?" "No, on my life!" answered Gloucester; "my soul in this instance, I would pledge for King Edward's manhood. His ambition might lead him to trample on all men; but still for woman, he feels as becomes a man and a knight."

Helen renewed her supplications: and Wallace, on the strength of her promise, (and aware, that should he withhold her attendance, that his implacable adversary, however he might spare her personal injury, would not forbear wounding her to the soul by tearing her from him,) in pity to her, gave an unwilling consent to what might seem a submission on his part to an authority he had shed his blood to oppose. "But not in these garments" said he, "must my Helen appear before the eyes of our enemy. She must be habited as becomes her sex and her own delicacy."

Anticipating this propriety, Gloucester had imparted the circumstance to his countess, and she had sent a box of female apparel, which the earl now brought in from the passage. Helen retired to the inner cell, and hastily arraying herself in the first suit that presented itself, reappeared in a blue mantle wrapped over her white robes, and her beautiful hair covered with a long veil. As Gloucester took her hand to lead her forth, Wallace clasped the other hand in his, and said, "Remember my Helen, that on no terms but un-
trammelled freedom of soul will your Wallace accept of life. This, I know, will not be granted by the man to whom you go; therefore, speak and act in his presence, as if I were already beyond the skies."

Had this faithful friend, now his almost adoring wife, left his side with more sanguine hopes, how grievously would they have been blasted!

Edward received her alone. The tender loveliness of her perfect form, and the celestial dignity which seemed to breathe in all her words and movements, at first struck him with that admiration and awe which he had been accustomed to feel towards the eminently beautiful of her sex; but the domineering passion of his soul soon put to flight these gentle respects; and finding that the noble spirit of Helen rose above the proud demands he urged her to enforce on her husband, he gave way to the violence of his resentment, and with many invectives against the rebellious obstinacy of Wallace, painted to her in all its horrible details the punishment he was doomed to suffer. Then, when he saw her transfixed in mute despair, and leaning against a pillar, as if ready to sink under the blow he had given her, he expatiated on the years of happiness and splendour which should await her husband, would he accept his conditions. "Counsel him, lady," repeated he, "to reveal to me the hiding-place of Robert Bruce: and that he does so, shall ever be a secret between us. Let him bind his faith to me by the oath of allegiance, and I will make him as the right hand of my throne. And for you, romantic woman, if you will awake to your own true interest and bring him to the same conviction, all the honours which I would have bestowed on you as the Countess of Aymer de Valence, shall be redoubled as the wife of my Earl of Cleveland!"

"Mortal distinctions, King of England!" replied she, summoning all the strength of her soul to give utterance to her answer, "cannot bribe the wife of Sir William Wallace to betray his virtues. His life is dear to me, but his immaculate faith to his God and his lawful prince, are dearer. I can see him die, and smile;—for I shall join him triumphant in heaven;—but to be-
hold him dishonour himself! to counsel him so to do, is beyond my power; I should expire with grief in the shameful moment.”

"And this is your proud reply, madam?"

"I can give no other."

"Then be his blood upon your head, for you have pronounced his doom!"

The words struck like the bolt of death upon her heart. She reeled, and fell senseless on the floor.

She awoke to recollection, lying on a couch, with a lady weeping over her. It was the Countess of Gloucester. When the king perceived the state into which his headlong fury had cast the innocent victim of his wrath against Wallace, and as he wished to keep these negotiations respecting that chief a secret from the nation, he called his daughter, the compassionate wife of Gloucester; and while he gave his final orders to the earl, left her to recover the unhappy Lady Helen.

Eager to be restored to him from whom she knew she must now so soon be most cruelly separated, Helen, without regarding who might be the benevolent lady that attended her, started from the couch, and implored to be immediately taken back to the Tower. The Countess quieted her terrors that Edward meant to detain her; and telling her who she was, soon after withdrew to see if the earl was released by the king and ready to re-conduct his charge to her husband.

A long hour was now passed in solitude, during which Helen suffered the dreadful agonies of a mind torn between suspense of again being with Wallace, and the horrible certainty of his impending fate. At last, even in the moment when her impatience had precipitated her into the resolution of finding her way from the palace alone, the Earl of Gloucester entered the room:—his countess was too much overcome by the scene she had witnessed, again to look on the youthful wife of the hero who was so soon to leave her the most bereaved of widows:—and Helen, rushing towards the earl, hardly articulated in a cry of phrenzied joy, “Take me hence!”—and giving him her hand, spoke not till she was again clasped in the arms of Wallace.
"Here will I live! Here will I die!" cried she, in a passion of tears; "they may sever my soul from my body, but never again part me from this dear bosom!" "Never, never, my Helen!" said he, reading her conference with the king, in the wild terror of its effects. Her senses seemed fearfully disordered, as she clung to him, and muttered sentences of such incoherency that shook him to the soul, he cast a look of such expressive inquiry upon Gloucester, that the earl could only answer by hastily putting his hand on his face to hide his own emotion. At last the tears she shed appeared to relieve the excess of her agonies, and she gradually sunk into an awful calm. Then rising from her husband's arms she seated herself on the stone bench and said in a firm voice, "Earl, I can now bear to hear you repeat the last decision of the King of England."

"Dearest lady," returned he, "to convince your suffering spirit that no earthly means have been left unessay'd to change the unjust purpose of the king, know that I left in his presence the queen and my wife both weeping tears of disappointment. On the moment when I found that arguments could no longer avail, I implored him by every consideration of God and man to redeem his honour, sacrificed by the unjust decree pronounced on Sir William Wallace. My entreaties were repulsed with anger, for the sudden entrance of Lord Athol with fresh fuel to his flame, so confirmed his direful resolution, that, desperate for my friend, I threw myself on my knees. The queen, and then my wife, both prostrate at his feet, enforced my suit, but all in vain: his heart seemed hardened by our earnestness; and his answer, while it put us to silence, granted Wallace a triumph even in his chains. "Cease!" cried he, "Wallace and I have now come to that issue that one must fall. I shall use my advantage, though I should walk over the necks of half my kindred to accomplish his fate. I can find no security on my throne, no peace in my bed, until I know that he, my direst enemy, is no more!"

"Sorry am I, generous Gloucester," interrupted Wallace, "that for my life you have stooped your knee
to one so unworthy of your nobleness. Let, then, his tyranny take its course. But its shaft shall not reach the soul his unkingly spirit hopes to wound. He may dishonour my body, may mangle these limbs, but William Wallace will then be far beyond his reach!" Gloucester gazed on him, doubting the inspired expression of his countenance. "Surely," said he, "my unconquered friend will not now be forced to self-violence?"—"No," returned Wallace, "suspect me not of such base vassalage to this poor tabernacle of clay. Did I believe it my Father's will that I should die at every pore, I would submit. For so his immaculate Son laid down his life for a rebellious world!—And is a servant greater than his master, that I should be exempt from this trial?—But I await his summons, and he whispers to my soul that the rope of Edward shall never make this free-born neck feel its degrading touch."

Helen, with re-awakened horror, listened to the words of Wallace, which referred to the last outrage to be committed on his sacred remains. She recalled the corresponding threats of the king, and again losing self-possession, starting wildly up, she exclaimed, "And is there no humanity in his ruthless heart!—Am I to be deprived of—O!" cried she, tearing her eyes from the beloved form on which they too fondly doted, "let the sacrifice of my life be offered to this cruel man, to save from indignity—" She could add no more, but dropt half fainting on the arm of Wallace.

Gloucester understood the object of such anguished solicitude, and while Wallace again seated her, he revived her by the assurance that the clause she so fearfully deprecated, had been repealed by Edward. But the good earl blushed as he spoke, for in this instance he said what was not the truth. Far different had been the issue of all his attempts at mitigation. The arrival of Athol from Scotland with advices from the Countess of Strathearn, that Lady Helen Mar had fled southward to raise an insurrection in favour of Wallace, and that Lord Bothwell had gone to France to move Philip to embrace the same cause, precipitated Edward to command the instant and full execution of that sentence he
was previously determined not to abrogate. It was merely to satisfy the French ambassadors of his desire to accord with their master's wish, that he devised the mockery of sending the articles of pardon to Wallace, which he well knew would be rejected. And his interview with Lady Helen, though so intemperately conducted, was dictated by the same subtle policy.

When on the representations of Lord Athol, Gloucester found the impossibility of obtaining any further respite of the murderous decree, he attempted to prevail for the remission of the last clause, which ordered, that his friend's noble body should be dismembered and his limbs sent as terrors to rebellion, to the four capital fortresses of Scotland. Edward spurned at this petition with even more acrimony than he had done the prayer for his victim's life; and Gloucester then starting from his knee, in a burst of honest indignation, exclaimed, "Oh! king, remember what is done by thee this day! Refusing to give righteous judgment in favour of one who prefers virtue to a crown and life! as insincere as secret have been your last conditions with him; but they will be revealed when the great judge that searcheth all men's hearts shall cause thee to answer for this matter at the dreadful day of universal doom. Thou hast now given sentence on a patriot and a prince; and then shall judgment be given on thee!"

"Dangerous, indeed, is his rebellious spirit," cried Edward, in almost speechless wrath, "since it affects even the duty of my own house! Gloucester, leave my presence; and on pain of your own death, dare not to approach me till I send for you to see this rebel's head on London bridge!"

To disappoint the revengeful monarch of at least this object of malice, Gloucester was now resolved; and imparting his wishes to the warden of the Tower, his trusty friend, he laid a plan accordingly.

Helen believed his declaration to her, and bowed her head in sign that she was satisfied with his zeal. The earl, addressing Wallace, continued, "Could I have purchased thy life, thou preserver of mine! with the forfeiture of all I possess, I should have rejoiced in the exchange. But as that may not be, is there aught
in the world which I can do to administer to thy wishes?"

"Generous Gloucester!" exclaimed Wallace, "how unwearied has been your friendship! But I shall not tax it much farther. I was writing my last wishes, when this angel entered my apartment: she will now be the voice of William Wallace to his friends. But still I must make you one request, and one which I trust will not be out of your power. Let this heart, ever faithful to Scotland, be at least buried in its native country.—When I cease to breathe, give it to Helen, and she will mingle it with the sacred dust of those I love. For herself, dear Gloucester! ah! guard the vestal purity and life of my best beloved, for there are those who, when I am gone, may threaten both."

Gloucester, who knew that Wallace meant the Lords Soulis and De Valence in this apprehension, pledged himself for the performance of his first request; and for the second, he assured him that he would protect Helen as a sister. But she, regardless of all other evils than that of being severed from her dearest and best friend, exclaimed in bitter sorrow, "Wherever I am, still, and for ever, shall all of Wallace that remains on earth be with me. He gave himself to me, and no mortal power shall ever divide us!"

Gloucester could not reply before the voice of the warden, calling to him that the hour of the gates being shut was arrived, compelled him to bid his friend farewell. He grasped the hand of Wallace with a strong emotion; for he knew that the next time he should meet him would be on the scaffold. During the moments of this parting, Helen, with her hands clasped on her knees, and her eyes bent downwards, inwardly and earnestly invoked the Almighty to endow her with fortitude to bear the horrors she was to witness, that she might not, by her agonies, add to the tortures of Wallace.

The cheering voice that was ever music to her ears, recalled her from this devout abstraction. He laid his hand on hers, and held such sweet discourse with her, on the approaching end of all his troubles, of his everlasting beatitude, that she listened and wept, and even smiled. "Yes," added he, "a little while, and my vir-
gin bride shall give me her dear embrace in heaven; and my Marion’s generous soul will join the blest communion!—She died to preserve my life:—you suffered a living death to maintain my honour! Can I then divide ye, noblest of created beings, in my soul! Take then, my heart’s dear Helen, thy Wallace’s last earthly kiss!” She bent towards him and fixed her lips to his. It was the first time they had met; his parting words still hung on them, and an icy cold ran through all her veins. “I have not many hours to be with thee, and yet a strange drowsiness overpowers my senses; but I shall speak to thee again!” He looked up as he spoke, with such a glance of holy love, that not doubting he was now bidding her indeed his last farewell; that he was to pass from this sleep out of the power of man; she pressed his hand without a word, and as he dropt his head upon her lap, with an awed spirit she saw him sink to profound repose.

CHAP. XXXV.

Long and silently had she watched his rest. So gentle was his breath, that he scarcely seemed to breathe; and often, during her sad vigils did she stoop her cheek to feel the respiration which bore witness that his outraged spirit was yet fettered to earth. She tremulously placed her hand on his heart; but still its warm beats spake comfort to hers. The soul of Wallace, as well as his beloved body, was yet clasped in her arms. “The arms of a true sister enfold thee,” murmured she to herself, “and would bear thee up, to lay thee on the bosom of thy martyred wife; and there, how wouldst thou smile upon and bless me!”

The first rays of the dawn shone upon his peaceful face, just as the door opened and a priest appeared. He held in his hands the sacred cup, and the chalice for performing the rites of the dying. At this sight, the harbinger of a fearful doom, the fortitude of Helen forsook her; and throwing her arms frantically over the sleeping Wallace, she exclaimed, “He is dead! his
sacrament is now with the Lord of Mercy!"—Her voice awakened Wallace; he started from his position: and Helen, (seeing that he, whose gliding to death in his sleep she had so lately deprecated, now indeed lived to mount the scaffold;) in unutterable horror, fell back with a heavy groan.

Wallace having accosted the priest with a reverential welcome, turned to Helen, and tenderly whispered her, "Let not the completion of my fate, dearest half of myself! shake your dependance on the only True and Just. Rejoice that Wallace has been deemed worthy to die for his virtues. And what is death, my Helen, that we should shun it even to rebelling against the Lord of Life?—Is it not the door which opens to us immortality? and in that blest moment, who will regret that he passed through it in the bloom of his years?—Come then, sister of my soul, and share with thy Wallace the last supper of his Lord; the pledge of the happy eternity to which, by his grace, I now ascend!"

Helen, conscience-struck, and re-awakened to holy confidence by the heavenly composure of his manner, obeyed the impulse of his hand; and they both knelt together before the minister of peace. As the sacred right proceeded, it seemed the indissoluble union of Helen's spirit with that of Wallace:—"My life will expire with his!" was her secret response to the venerable man's exhortation to the passing soul; and as he sealed Wallace with the holy cross under the last unction; as one who believed herself standing on the brink of eternity, she longed to share also that mark of death. At that moment the dismal toll of a bell sounded from the top of the Tower. The heart of Helen paused. The warden and his train entered. "I will follow him," cried she, starting from her knees; "into the grave itself!"

What was said, what was done, she knew not, till she found herself on the scaffold upheld by the arm of Gloucester. Wallace stood before her with his hands bound across, and his noble head uncovered. His eyes were turned upwards with a godlike confidence in the power he served. A silence, as of some desert waste, reigned throughout the thousands who stood below.
The executioner approached to throw the rope over the neck of his victim. At this sight, Helen, with a cry that was re-echoed by the compassionate spectators, rushed to his bosom. Wallace, with a mighty strength, burst the bands asunder which confined his arms, and clasping her to him with a force that seemed to make her touch his very heart; his breast heaved, as if his soul were breaking from its outraged tenement, and while his head sunk on her neck he exclaimed in a low and interrupted voice—"My prayer is heard!—Helen, we shall next meet to part no more. May God preserve my country, and—" He stopped. The struggle was over in his bosom:—all there was still. She laid her hand on his heart; it beat no more.

In a glow of grateful exultation, she half rose from his breast, and putting back the executioner with her hand, cried aloud, "He is gone! your cruelties cannot now reach him!" and then sunk again upon his bosom. The executioner, believing her words the mere exclamation of frantic grief, attempted to reason with her on the fruitlessness of thus impeding the course of justice: he expostulated, he threatened; but she returned no answer. Gloucester, in an agitation which hardly allowed him power to move or speak, and yet determined not to desert his friend in his last extremity, drew near, and whispered Wallace to yield her to him. But all was silent there! He then remembered the words which Wallace had said, That the rope of Edward should never sully his animate body. He raised the chieftain's head, and looking on his face, found indeed the indisputable stamp of death. "There," cried he, in a burst of grief, letting it fall again upon the insensible bosom of Helen; "There broke the noblest heart that ever beat in the breast of man!"

The priests, the executioners, crowded round him at this declaration. But giving a command in a low tone to the warden, he took the motionless Helen in his arms, and carried her from the scaffold back into the Tower.
ON the evening of the fatal day in which the sun of Wallace set for ever on his country, the Earl of Gloucester was giving his latest directions for the night to the warden of the Tower, when the door of the chamber was suddenly burst open by a file of soldiers. A man in armour, with his visor closed, was in the midst of them. The captain of the band told the warden that the stranger before him had behaved in a most seditious manner. He had demanded admittance into the Tower; and on the sentinel to whom he spoke, answering that, in consequence of the execution of Sir William Wallace, orders had been issued “that no strangers should enter the gates until the following morning,” he asked some questions relative to the condemnation of the Scottish chief; and finding that the sentence of the law had been executed to the utmost, he burst into a passionate emotion, and uttered such threats against the King of England that the captain thought it his duty to have him seized and brought before the warden.

On the entrance of the soldiers, Gloucester had retired from observation into the shadow of the room. He turned anxiously round on hearing these particulars. The stranger, who stood in the midst, when the captain ceased speaking, fearlessly threw up his visor, and exclaimed, “Take me not to your warden alone, but to your king; and there let me pierce his conscience with his infamy—aye, and stab him, ere I die!”

In this frantic adjuration, Gloucester discovered the gallant Bruce. And hastening towards him to prevent his apparently determined exposure of himself; with a few words he dismissed the officer and his guard; and then turning to the warden, “Sir Edward,” said he, “This stranger is not less my friend than he was that of Sir William Wallace!” “Then far be it from me, earl, to denounce him to our enraged monarch. I have seen noble blood enough already; and
though we, the subjects of King Edward, cannot call your late friend a martyr, yet we must think his country honoured in so steady a patriot, and may surely wish we had many the like in our own!" The worthy old knight, judging that Gloucester would desire to be left alone with the stranger, with these words bowed and withdrew.

Bruce, who had hardly heard the observation of the warden, on his departure turned upon the earl, and with a bursting heart, exclaimed, "Tell me, is it true? Am I so lost a wretch as to be deprived of my best, my dearest friend? Answer me to the fact, that I may speedily take my course!" Gloucester, alarmed at the direful expression of his countenance, with a quivering lip, but in silence, laid his hand upon his arm. Bruce too well understood what he durst not speak; and shaking it off franticly, "I have no friend!" cried he, "Wallace! my brave and only Wallace, thou art rifled from me! And shall I have fellowship with these?—No; all mankind are my enemies; and soon will I leave their detested sojourn!" Gloucester attempted to interrupt him; but he broke out afresh and with redoubled violence:—"And you, carl," cried he, "lived in this realm, and suffered such a sacrilege on God's most perfect work? Ungrateful, worthless man! fill up the measure of your baseness: deliver me to Edward; and let me brave him to his face. Oh! let me die covered with the blood of thy enemies, my murdered Wallace! my more than brother! and that shall be the royal robes thy Bruce will bring to thee!"

Gloucester stood in dignified forbearance under the invectives and stormy grief of the Scottish prince; and when exhausted nature seemed to take rest in momentary silence, he approached him. Bruce cast on him a lurid glance of suspicion. "Leave me," cried he, "I hate the whole world; and you the worst in it, for you might have saved him, and you did not; you might have preserved his sacred limbs from being made the gazing stock of traitors, and you did not:—away from me, apt son of a tyrant! lest I tear you piece-meal!" "By the heroic spirit of him whom this outrage on me dishonours, hear my answer, Bruce! And if not on this
spot, let me then exculpate myself by the side of his body yet uninvaded by a sacrilegious touch.—"How?" interrupted Bruce with less harshness, and looking doubtfully. Gloucester continued: "All that was mortal in our friend, now lies in a distant chamber of this quadrangle. When I could not prevail on Edward, either by entreaty or reproaches, to remit this last gloomy vengeance of tyrants, I determined to wrest its object from his hands. A notorious murderer died yesterday under the torture. By the assistance of the warden, after the inanimate corpse of our friend was brought into this house to be conveyed to the scene of its last horrors, the malefactor's body was placed on the sledge in its stead; and on that murderer most justly fell the rigour of that dreadful sentence."

The whole aspect of Bruce changed during this explanation, which was followed by a brief account of their friend's heroic death. "Can you pardon my mad reproaches to you?" cried he, stretching out his hand; "Forgive, generous Gloucester, the distraction of a severely wounded spirit!" This pardon was immediately accorded; and Bruce impetuously added, "Lead me to these dear remains, that with redoubled certainty I may strike this steel deep into his murderer's heart! I came to succour him; I now stay to die,—but not unrevenged!" "I will lead you," returned the earl, "where you shall learn a different lesson. His soul will speak to you by the lips of his bride, now watching by his sacred relics." A few words gave Bruce to understand that he meant Lady Helen Mar; and with a deeper grief, when he heard in what an awful hour their hands were plighted, he followed his conductor through the quadrangle.

When Gloucester gently opened the door which contained the remains of the bravest and the best, Bruce stood for a moment on the threshold. At the further end of the apartment, lit only by a solitary lamp, lay the body of Wallace on a bier, covered with a soldier's cloak. Kneeling by its side, with her head on its bosom, was Helen. Her hair hung disordered over her shoulders and shrouded with its dark locks.
the marble features of her beloved. Bruce scarcely breathed. He attempted to advance, but he staggered, and fell. She looked up at the noise; but her momentary alarm ceased when she saw Gloucester. He spoke in a tender voice: "Be not agitated, lady; but here is the Earl of Carrick."

"Nothing can agitate me more," replied she, turning mournfully towards the prince, who, raised from the floor by Gloucester, and opening his eyes, beheld her regarding him with a look as of one already an inhabitant of the grave.—"Helen!" faintly articulated Bruce, approaching her; "I come to share your sorrows; and to do more, to avenge them." "Avenge them!" repeated she, after a pause; "Is there aught in vengeance that will awaken life in these cold veins again? Let the murderers live in the world they have made a desert by the destruction of its brightest glory;—and then our home will be his tomb!" Again she bent her head upon his breast, and seemed to forget that she had been spoken to, that Bruce was present.

"May I not look on him?" cried he, grasping her hand; "O! Helen, show me that heroic face from whose beams my heart first caught the fire of virtue!" She moved, and the clay-cold features of all that was ever perfect in manly beauty, met his sight. But the bright eyes were shut: the radiance of his smile was dimmed in death; yet still that smile was there. Bruce precipitated his lips to his; and then sinking on his knees, remained in a silence only broken by his sighs.

It was an awful, and a heart-breaking pause; for the voice which, in all scenes of weal or woe, had ever mingled sweetly with theirs, was silent. Helen, who had not wept since the tremendous hour of the morning, now burst into an agony of tears which seemed to threaten the extinction of her being. Bruce, aroused by her smothered cries as she lay almost expiring upheld by Gloucester, hurried to her side. By degrees she recovered to life and observance; but finding herself removed from the bier, she sprung wildly towards it. Bruce caught her arm to support her yet tottering
steps. She looked steadfastly at him, and then at the motionless body. "He is there!" cried she, "and yet he speaks not!—He soothes not my grief—I weep, and he does not comfort me!—And there he lies! O! Bruce, can this be possible? Do I really see him dead?—And what is death?" added she grasping the cold hand of Wallace to her heart; "Didst thou not tell me, when this hand pressed mine and blessed me, that it was only a translation from grief to joy!—And is it not so, Bruce? Behold how we mourn, and he is happy!—I will obey thee, my immortal Wallace!" cried she, casting her arms about him, and placing her cheek to his; "I will obey thee, and weep no more!"

She was silent and calm. And Bruce, kneeling on the opposite side of his friend, listened without interruption to the arguments which Gloucester adduced, to persuade him to abstain altogether from discovering himself to Edward, or uttering his resentments against him, till he could do both as became the man for whom Wallace had sacrificed so much, even till he was King of Scotland. "To that end," said Gloucester, "did this gallant chieftain live. For, in restoring you to the people of Scotland, he believed he was setting a seal to their liberties and peace. To that end did he die, and in the direful moment, uttered prayers for your establishment. Think then of this; and let him not look down from his heavenly dwelling and see that Bruce despises the country for which he bled, that the now only hope of Scotland is sacrificed in a moment of inconsiderate revenge to the cruel hand which broke his dauntless heart!"

Bruce did not oppose this counsel, but in proportion as the flames of passion passed away, and left a manly sorrow and determination of revenge in his soul, he listened with approbation, and finally resolved, whatever violence he might do his nature, not to allow Edward the last triumph of finding him in his power.

The earl's next essay was with Helen. He feared that a rumour of the stranger's indignation at the late execution, and that the Earl of Gloucester had taken him in charge, might, when associated with the fact that the widow of Sir William Wallace also remained
under his protection, awaken some suspicion; and direct investigations, too likely to discover the imposition he had put on the executioners of the last clause in his royal father's most iniquitous sentence. He therefore explained his new alarm to Helen, and conjured her, if she would yet preserve the hallowed remains before her from any chance of violence, (which her lingering near them might induce, by attracting notice to her movements,) she must consent almost immediately to leave the kingdom. The valiant and ever faithful heart of Wallace should be her companion; and an English captain, who had partaken of his clemency at Berwick, should be her trusty conductor to her native land. To bear away every objection, before she returned any answer, he added, that Bruce should be protected by him with strict fidelity, till some safe opportunity should offer for his taking to Scotland the sacred corse, which must ever be considered as the most precious relic in that country.

"As heaven wills the trial of my heart," returned she, "so let it be!" and bending her head on the dear pillow of her rest, the bosom which, cold and deserted as it was by its heavenly inhabitant, was still the bosom of her Wallace, the temple, rendered sacred by the footsteps of a God!—For, had not virtue and Wallace dwelt there? and where virtue is, there abides the spirit of the holy one! She passed the remainder of the night in vigils, which were not less devoutly maintained by the chastened heart of the Prince of Scotland.

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CHAP. XXXVII.

THE tidings of the dreadful vengeance which Edward had taken against the Scottish nation, by pouring all his wrath upon the head of Wallace, whose only offence was known to be that of having served his country too faithfully, struck like the lightning of heaven through the souls of men. The English turned
blushing from each other, and ventured not to breathe the name of a man whose virtues seemed to have found him a sanctuary in every honest heart. But when the news reached Scotland, the indignation was general. All envyings, all strife were forgotten in unqualified resentment of the deed. There had not been a man, even amongst the late refractory chieftains, excepting the Cummins, and their coadjutors Soulis and Men-teith, who believed that Edward seriously meant to sentence the patriot Wallace to a severer fate than that which he had pronounced against his rebellious vassal, the exiled Baliol. His execution, (for none but those who were in the confidence of Gloucester knew that heaven had snatched him from the dishonour of so vile a death,) was therefore so unexpected, that the first promulgation of it excited such an abhorrence of the perpetrator in every breast, that the whole country rose as one man, and threatened to march instantly to London, and sacrifice the tyrant on his throne.

At this crisis, when the mountains of the north seemed heaving from their base to overwhelm the blood-stained fields of England, every heart which secretly rejoiced in the late sanguinary event, quailed within its possessor as he tremblingly awaited the moment when the consequences of the fall of Wallace should prove the ruin of his enemies.—At this instant, when the furies armed every clan in Scotland, Kirkpatrick, at the head of a band of Wallace's old soldiers, breathing forth revenge like a consuming fire before them, led the way to the general destruction of Edward's newly established power in the country. John Cummin, the Regent, stood aghast. He foresaw his own downfall in this re-awakened enthusiasm for the man whom his treachery, or pusillanimity, all saw had been the first means of betraying to his enemies. Baffled in the aim of his own ambition, by the very means he had taken to effect it, he saw no alternative but to throw himself at once upon the bounty of England; and to this purpose he betheought him of the only chance of preserving the power of Edward, and consequently his own, in Scotland. Knowing by past events, that this tem-
pest of the soul, excited by remorse in some, and gra-
titude in others, could only be maintained to any con-
cclusive injury to England by a royal hand; and that
that hand was expected to be Bruce's; he determined
at once, that the prince to whom he had sworn fealty,
and to whom he owed his present elevation, should
follow the fate of his friend. By the spies which he
constantly kept round Hunting-tower, he was ap-
prized that Bruce had set off towards London in a
vessel from Dundee; and on these grounds he sent a
dispatch to King Edward, informing him that destiny
had established him supreme lord of Scotland, for
now its second and its last hope had put himself as
it were into his hands. With this intelligence he
gave a particular account of all Bruce's proceedings,
from the time of his meeting him with Wallace in
France, to his present following that chief to London.
He then craved his majesty's pardon for ever having
been betrayed into an union with such conspirators,
and repeated his hope that the restitution he made in
thus showing him where to find his last opponent,
would fully convince him of his penitence and duty.
He closed his letter by urging the king to take in-
stant and effectual measures to disable Bruce from
disturbing the quiet of Scotland, or ever again dispu-
ing his royal claims.

Gloucester was in the presence when this epistle
was delivered in and read by his majesty. On the
suit of his daughter, Edward had been reconciled to
his son-in-law; but when he showed to him the con-
tents of Cummin's letter, with a suspicious smile he
said in a low voice, "In case you should know any
thing of this new rebel's lurking place, you leave not
this room till he is brought before me. See to your
obedience, Hugh, or your head shall follow Wal-
lace's."

The king instantly withdrew: and the earl, aware
that search would most probably be made through all
his houses, sought in his own mind for some expedi-
ent to apprize Bruce of his danger.—To write in the
presence-chamber was impossible: to deliver a mes-
sage in a whisper would be very hazardous, for most
of the surrounding courtiers saw the frown with which the king had left the apartment, and marked the commands he gave the marshal: "See that the Earl of Gloucester quits not this room till I return."

The earl, in the confusion of his thoughts, turned his eye on Lord Montgomery, who had only arrived that very morning from an Embassy to Spain. He had heard with unutterable horror the fate of Wallace; and extending his interest in him to those whom he loved, he had arranged with Gloucester to accompany him that very evening to pledge his friendship to Bruce. To Montgomery, then, as to the only man acquainted with his secret, he turned; and taking his spurs off his feet, and pulling out a purse of gold, he said aloud, and with as easy an air as he could assume, "Here, my Lord Montgomery; as you are going directly to Highgate, I will thank you to call at my lodge, and put these spurs and this purse into the hands of the groom we spoke of; he will know what use to make of them." He then turned negligently on his heel, and Montgomery quitted the apartment.

The apprehension of this young lord was not less quick than the invention of his friend. He guessed that the Scottish prince was betrayed; and to render his escape the less likely to be traced, (the ground being wet and liable to retain impression,) before he went to the lodge he dismounted in the adjoining wood, and with his own hands reversed the iron on the feet of the animal he had provided for Bruce. He then proceeded to the house, and found the object of his mission disguised as a priest, and in the chapel paying his vesper adorations to the Almighty Being on whom his whole dependance hung. Uninfluenced by the robes he wore, his was the devotion of the soul: and not unaptly at such an hour came one to deliver him from a danger which, unknown to himself, was then within a few minutes of seizing its prey.

Montgomery entered, and being instantly recognized by Bruce, the ingenuous prince, never doubting a noble heart, stretched out his hand to him.—"I "take it," returned the earl, "only to give it a part-
ing grasp. Behold these spurs and purse sent to you by Gloucester!—You know their use. Without further observation follow me.” Montgomery was thus abrupt, because, as he left the palace, he had heard the marshals give orders for different military detachments to search every residence of Gloucester for the Earl of Carrick, and he did not doubt that the party dispatched to Highgate were now mounting the summit of the hill.

Bruce, throwing off his cassoc and cowl, again appeared in complete armour; and after bending his knee for a moment on the stone which covered the remains of Wallace, he followed his friend from the chapel, through a solitary path in the park to the centre of the wood. Montgomery pointed to the horse. Bruce grasped the hand of his faithful conductor with fervency: “I go, Montgomery,” said he, “to my kingdom. But its crown shall never clasp my brows till the remains of Wallace return to their country. And whether peace or the sword restore them to Scotland, still shall a king’s, a brother’s friendship, unite my heart to Gloucester and to you.” As he spoke, he vaulted into his saddle; and receiving the cordial blessings of Montgomery, he touched his good steed with his pointed rowels, and was out of sight in an instant. (v)

CHAP. XXXVIII.

ABOUT the hour of twilight, on the eighth day after Bruce had cast his last look on the capital of England,—that scene of his long captivity under the spell of delusion, that theatre of his family’s disgrace, and of his own eternal regrets!—he crossed the little stream which marked the oft-contended barrier land of the two kingdoms. He there checked the headlong speed of his horse, and having alighted to give it breath, walked by its side, musing on how different were the feelings with which he now entered Scotland, from
the buoyant emotions with which he had sprung on its shore in the beginning of the year. These thoughts, as full of sorrow as of hope, had not occupied him long, when he espied a man in the Red Cummin's colours, galloping towards him. He guessed him to be some new messenger of the Regent to Edward, and throwing himself before the horse, caught it by the bridle, and commanded its rider to deliver to him the dispatches which he knew he carried to the King of England. The man, as was expected, refused, and striking his spurs into his beast, tried to trample down his assailant. But Bruce was not so to be put from his aim. The manner of the Scot convinced him that his suspicions were right, and putting forth his nervous arm, with one action he pulled him from his saddle and laid him prostrate on the ground. Again he demanded the papers: "I am your prince," cried Bruce, "and by the allegiance you owe to Robert Bruce, I command you to deliver them into my hands. Life shall be your reward. Immediate death the punishment of your obstinacy."

In such an extremity, the man did not hesitate: and taking from his bosom a sealed packet, immediately resigned it.—Bruce ordered him to stand before him till he had read the contents. The poor fellow, trembling with terror of this formidable freebooter, (for he placed no belief in the declaration that he was the Prince of Scotland,) obeyed, and Bruce breaking the seals, found, as he expected, a long epistle from the Regent, urging the sanguinary aim of his communications. He reiterated his arguments for the expediency of speedily putting Robert Bruce to death; he represented "the danger that there was in delay, lest a man so royally descended, and so popular as he had become, (since it was now publicly understood that he had already fought his country's battles under the name of Sir Thomas de Longueville,) should find means of placing himself at the head of so many zealous in his favour. These circumstances, so propitious to ambition, and his now adding personal revenge to his former boldness and policy, would, at this juncture, (the Regent pronounced,) should he arrive
in Scotland turn its growing commotions to the most decisive uses against the English power." He concluded with saying, that the Lords Loch-awe, Douglas, and Ruthven, were come down from the Highlands with a multitudinous army, to drive out the Southron garrisons, and repossess themselves of the fortresses of Stirling and Edinburgh. That Lord Bothwell had returned from France with the real Sir Thomas de Longueville, a knight of great valiancy. And that Sir Roger Kirkpatrick, after having massacred half the English Castellans in the border counties, was now lying at Torforthald ready to commence his murderous reprisals through the coasts of Galloway. For himself, he told the king, that he had secretly removed into the Franciscan monastery at Dumfries, where he should most anxiously await his majesty's pardon and commands."

Bruce closed the packet. To prevent his designs being blown before they were ready to open, he laid his sword upon the shoulder of the man. "You are my prisoner," said he, "but fear not. I only mean to hold you in safety till your master has answered for his treason."—The messenger thought that whoever this imperious stranger was, he saw a truth in his eyes which ratified this assurance, and without opposition he walked before him till they stopped at Torforthald.

Night had closed in when Bruce sounded his bugle under the walls. Kirkpatrick himself answered from the embrasure over the Barbican-gate, and demanded who desired admittance. "None," added he, "that is not a true Scot, need venture his neck within these towers!" "'Tis the avenger of Sir William Wallace," was the reply. The gates flew open at the words, and Kirkpatrick standing in the arch-way amid a blaze of torches, received his guest with a brave welcome.

Bruce spoke no more till he entered the banqueting hall, where he found three other knights. He then turned to Kirkpatrick, "My valiant friend," said he, "order your servants to keep that Scot," pointing to the messenger of Cummin, "in safe custody till I
command his release: but till then, let him be treated with the lenity which shall ever belong to a prisoner of Robert Bruce!" As he spoke, he threw up his visor; and Kirkpatrick, who with others, had heard the report that the De Longueville, who had been the companion of Wallace, was their rightful prince, now recognized the well-known features of the brave foreigner in the stranger before him. Not doubting the verity of his words, he bent his knee with the homage due to his king; and in the action was immediately followed by Sir Eustace Maxwell, Sir James Lindsay, and Adam Fleming, who were the other knights present.

"I come," cried the prince, "in the spirit of my heart's sovereign and friend, the now immortal Wallace, to live or to die with you in the defence of my country's liberties. With such assistance as yours, his invincible coadjutors, and with the blessing of heaven on our arms, I hope to redeem Scotland from the disgrace which her late horrible submission to the tyrant has fastened on her name. The transgressions of my house have been grievous: but this last deadly sin of my people, calls for expiation dire indeed!—And in their crime they have received their punishment. They broke from their side the arm which alone had rescued them from their enemies! I now come to save them from themselves. Their having permitted the sacrifice of the rights of my family, was the first injury committed on the constitution, and it prepared the way for the ensuing tyranny which seized upon the kingdom. But by resuming these rights, which is now my firm purpose, I open to you a way to recover our ancient hereditary independence. The direful scene just acted on the Tower-hill of London, that horrible climax of Scottish treason! must convince every reasonable mind, that all the late misfortunes of our country have proceeded from the base jealousies of its nobles. There then let them die, and may the grave of Wallace be the tomb of dissention! Seeing where their own true interests point, surely the brave chieftains of this land will rally round their
lawful prince, who here declares he knows no medium between death and victory!"

The spirit with which this address was pronounced, the magnanimity it conveyed, assisted by the graces of his youth and noble deportment, struck forcibly to the hearts of his auditors, and aroused in double vigour those principles of resentment with which they were already so powerfully actuated. Kirkpatrick needed no other stimulus than his almost idolatrous memory of Wallace, and he listened with an answering ardour to Bruce's exhortation. The prince next disclosed to his now zealously pledged friends, the particulars of the Red Cummin's treachery. "He now lies at Dumfries!" cried Kirkpatrick, "thither then let us go, and confront him with his treason. When falsehood is to be confounded, it is best to grapple with the sorceress in the moment of detection: should we hesitate, she may elude our grasp."

Dumfries was only a few miles distant, and they might reach the convent before the first mattins. Fatigue was not felt by Bruce when in the pursuit of a great object, and after a slight refreshment, he and his four determined friends took horse.

As they had anticipated, the midnight bell was ringing for prayers as the troop stopped at the Franciscan gate. Lindsay having been in the Holy Land during the late public struggles, and not being likely to be suspected of any hostility against the inhabitants of the monastery, (the principal of which was a Cummin,) alleged business with the abbot and desired to see him. On the father bidding him welcome, Bruce stepped forward and said, "Reverend sir, I come from London. I have an affair to settle with Lord Badenoch: and I know by his letters to King Edward that he is secretly lodged in this convent, I therefore demand to be conducted to him." This peremptory requisition, and the superior air of the person who made it, did not leave the abbot room to doubt that he was some illustrious messenger from the King of England, and with hardly a demur he left the other knights in the cloisters of the church, and led the noble Southeren, (as he thought,) to his kinsman.
The treacherous Regent had just quitted the refectory, and retired to his own apartment, as the abbot conducted the stranger into his presence. Badenoch started frowningly from his seat at such an unusual intrusion. Bruce's visor was closed. And the ecclesiastic perceiving the Regent's displeasure, dispersed it by announcing the visitant as a messenger from King Edward. "Then leave us alone," returned he, unwilling that even this his convenient kinsman should know the extent of his treason against his country. The abbot had hardly closed the door, when Bruce, whose indignant soul burnt to utter his full contempt of the wretch before him, hastily advanced to speak, but the cautious Badenoch, fearful that the father might yet be within hearing, put his finger to his lips. Bruce paused, and listened to the departing steps of the abbot as he passed along the cloisters. When they were no more heard, with one hand raising his visor, and the other grasping the scroll of detection—"Thus, basest of the base race of Cummin!" exclaimed he, "may you for a moment elude the universal shame which awaits your crimes."

At sight of the face, on hearing the words of Bruce, the unmanly coward uttered a cry of terror and rushed towards the door. "You pass not here," continued the prince, "till I have laid open all your guilt, and pronounced on you the doom due to a treacherous friend and traitorous subject." "Infatuated Bruce," exclaimed Badenoch, assuming an air of insulted friendship, now that he found escape impossible, "what false tongue has persuaded you thus to arraign one who has ever been but too faithfully the adherent of your desperate fortunes?—I have laboured day and night in secret in your service, and thus am I repaid."

Bruce smiled disdainfully at this poor attempt to throw dust in his eyes, and as he stood with his back against the door, he opened the murderous packet, and read from it all its contents. Cummin turned pale and red at each sentence.—And at last Bruce closing it, "Now, then, faithful adherent of Robert Bruce!" cried he, "say what the man deserves, who, in these blood-red lines petitions the death of his law-
ful prince?—Oh! thou arch-regicide! Doth not my very looks kill thee?".

Badenoch, with his complexion of a livid hue, and his voice faltering, first attempted to deny the letter having been his hand-writing, or that he had any concern in the former embassy to Edward:—Then finding that these falsehoods only irritated Bruce to higher indignation; and beside himself with terror that he should now be sacrificed to his prince's just resentment; he threw himself on his knees, and confessing each transaction, implored his life and pardon in pity to the fear which had alone precipitated him to so ungrateful a proceeding. "Oh!" added he, "I have given myself to danger upon your account! Even for your ultimate advantage did I bring on my head the perils which now fill me with dismay! Love alone for you made me hasten the seizure and execution of William Wallace, that insidious friend, who would have crept into your throne.—And then fear of your mistaking the motives of so good a service, betrayed me to throw myself into the arms of Edward!"

"Bury thyself and crimes, thou foulest traitor, deep in the depths of hell, that I may not pollute these hands with thy monstrous blood. Out of my sight for ever!" cried the prince, starting away with a tremendous gesture. Till this moment, Bruce was ignorant that Badenoch had been an instigator in the murder of Wallace; and forgetting all his own personal wrongs in this more mighty injury, with tumultuous horror in his soul, he turned from the coward to avoid the self-blame of stabbing a wretch at his feet. But at that moment, Cummin, who believed his doom only suspended, rose from his knee and struck his dirk into the back of the prince. Bruce turned on him with the quickness of thought, "Hah!" exclaimed he, seizing him by the throat, "then take thy fate! This accursed deed has removed the only barrier between vengeance and thee, and thus remember William Wallace!"—As the prince spoke, he plunged his dagger into the breast of the traitor. Cummin uttered a fearful cry, and rolled down at his feet murmuring imprecations.
Bruce fled from this scene of such horror. It was the first time his arm had drawn blood but in the field of battle, and he felt as if the base tide had contaminated his royal steel. In the cloisters he was encountered by his friends.—A few words informed them of what had happened.—“Is he dead?” inquired Kirkpatrick. “I can hardly doubt it,” answered Bruce.—“Such a matter,” returned the veteran, “must not be left to conjecture. I will secure (w) him!” And running forward immediately, followed by Lindsay, he found the wounded Regent crawling from the door of the cell, and throwing himself upon him, without noise stabbed him to the heart.

Before the catastrophe was known in the convent, Bruce and his friends had left it, and were far on their road to Lochmaben, his own paternal castle. He arrived before sun-rise, and thence dispatched Fleming to Lord Ruthven with a transcript of his designs.

In the same packet he inclosed a letter for the Lady Isabella. It contained this brave resolution, That in his present return to Scotland, he did not consider himself merely as Robert Bruce, come to reclaim the throne of his ancestors, but as the executor of the last and dying will of Sir William Wallace, which was, that Bruce should confirm the liberty of Scotland, or fall as Wallace had done, invincible at his post.—“Till that freedom is accomplished,” continued the virtuous prince, “I will never shake the steadfast purpose of my soul, by even one glance at thy life-endearing beauties. I am Wallace’s soldier, Isabella, as he was heaven’s! and while my captain looks down upon me from above, shall I not approye myself worthy his example?—I wooed you as a knight, I will win you as a king: and on the day when no hostile Southron breathes in Scotland, I will demand my sweetest reward, my beloved bride, of her noble uncle. You shall come to me as the angel of peace, and in one hour we will receive the nuptial benediction, and the vows of our people!”

The purport of the prince’s letter to Ruthven was well adapted to the strain of the foregoing. He there announced his intention of immediately putting him-
self at the head of his loyal Scots on the plains of Stirling, and there, declaring himself their lawful sovereign, proclaim to the world that he acknowledged no legal superior but the Great Being, whose vicegerent he was. From that centre of his kingdom he would make excursions to its furthest extremities, and with God’s will, would either drive his enemies from the country, or perish with the sword in his hand, as became the descendant of William the Lion; as became the friend of William Wallace!

Ruthven was encamped on the carse of Gowrie when this letter was delivered to him. He read it aloud to his assembled chieftains, and with waving bonnets they all hailed the approach of their valiant prince. Bothwell alone, whose soul-devoted attachment to Wallace could not be superseded by any other affection, allowed his bonnet to remain inactive in his hand, but with the fervour of true loyalty he thanked God for thus bringing the sovereign whom his friend loved, to bind in one the contending interests of his country; and to wrest from the hands of that friend’s assassin, the sceptre for which he had dyed them so deep in blood.

CHAPEL. XXXIX.

THE word of Bruce was as irreversible as his spirit was determined. No temptation of indulgence could seduce him from the one; no mischance of adversity, could subdue the other. The standard of liberty had been raised by him amidst his faithful chieftains on the carse of Gowrie, and carried by his victorious arm from east to west; from the most northern point of Sutherland to the walls of Stirling: but there, the garrison which the treason of the late Regent had admitted into the citadel, gave a momentary check to his career. The English governor refused to surrender on the terms proposed; and while his first flag of truce was yet in the tent of the Scottish monarch, a
second arrived to break off the negotiation. King Edward at the head of a hundred thousand men, having forced a rapid passage through the Southern low-lands, was within a few hours march of Stirling; not only to relieve that place, but with a determination to bury Scotland in her own slain, or to restore it at once to his sole empire.

When this was uttered by the English herald, Bruce turned to Ruthven with an heroic smile; "Let him come, my brave barons! and he shall find that Bannockburn shall page with Cambuskenneth!"

The strength of the Scottish army did not amount to more than thirty thousand men against this host of Southerns. Bruce, in his unequal contest, lost not the advantage of choosing his ground first; and therefore, as his power was deficient in cavalry, he so took his field as to compel the enemy, who must act on the offensive, to make it a battle of infantry alone. To protect his flank from the innumerable squadrons of Edward, he dug deep and wide pits near to Bannockburn; and then having overlaid their mouths with turf and brushwood, proceeded to marshal his little phalanx on the shore of that brook, till his front stretched to St. Ninian's monastery. The centre was led by Lord Ruthven and Walter Stewart, the Lord of Bute; the right owned the valiant leading of Douglas and Ramsay; and the left was put in charge of Lennox, with Sir Thomas Randolph as his second, a brave chieftain who, like Lindsay and others, had lately returned from a distant land, and now embraced the cause of his country with a patriot's zeal. Bruce stationed himself at the head of the reserve; and with him was the veteran Loch-awe, and Kirkpatrick, and Lord Bothwell with the true De Longueville and the brave Lanarkers of Wallace; all determined to make this division the stay of their little army, or the last sacrifice for Scottish liberty. Before they entered on the field the heads of these battalions assembled around their king in his tent, and there, on the mysterious iron box, (which Douglass had caused to be brought by the abbot of Inchaffray from St. Fillan's priory,) they swore to fill up one grave rather than
alive yield one inch of the ground which Wallace had rendered doubly sacred by his victories. The abbot, who laid the box before his young monarch, repeated the prohibition which had been given with it, and added, "since then these canonized relics, (for none can doubt that they are so,) have found protection under the no less holy arm of St. Fillan, he now delivers them to your youthful majesty to penetrate their secrets, and to nerve your mind with a redoubled trust in the saintly host."

"The saints are to be honoured, reverend father; and on that principle I shall not invade their mysteries, till the God in whom alone I trust, marks me with more than the name of king; till He establishes me by victory, the approved champion of my country. But as a memorial that the spirits of the blessed lean from their bright abodes to wish well to this day, let these holy relics be borne next our standard in the battle!"

Bruce having placed his array, disposed the supernumeraries of his army, the families of his soldiers, and other apparently useless followers of the camp, under shelter of a hill which would lie between them and the enemy. He ordered Scrymgeour to strike the royal standard deep into a stone which grew out of the ground in the centre of his line. "By it," said he, "we must this day stand or fall!"

The following morning the whole of the Southron army appeared in sight. The van, consisting of archers, and men at arms, was commanded by Earl de Warenne; and the main body was led on by Edward himself, supported by Aymer de Valence and a train of his most redoubted generals. As they approached, the warlike Bishop of Dunkeld appeared on the face of the opposite hill, between the abbots of Cambuskenneth and Inchaffray, celebrating mass in the sight of the opposing armies. He then passed along in front of the Scottish lines barefoot, with the crucifix in his hand, and in few, but forceful words, exhorted them by every sacred hope to fight with an unceasing step for their rights and king! At this adjuration, which seemed the call of heaven itself, the Scots fell
on their knees to confirm their resolution with a vow. The sudden humiliation of their posture excited an instant triumph in the haughty mind of Edward, and spurring forward, he shouted aloud, "They yield! They cry for mercy!" "They cry for mercy!" returned Percy, trying to withhold his majesty, "but not from us. On that ground on which they kneel, they will be victorious, or find their graves!"

The king, contemning this opinion of the earl, and inwardly believing that now Wallace was gone, he need fear no other opponent, ordered his men to charge. The horsemen, to the number of thirty thousand, obeyed; and rushing forward to the shock, with the hope of overwhelming the Scots ere they could arise from their knees, met a different destiny. They found destruction amid the pits and hollows of the way, and with broken ranks and fearful confusion, fell, or fled under the missive weapons which poured on them from the adjoining hill. De Valence was overthrown and severely wounded on the first onset; and being carried off the field, filled the rear ranks with dismay; while the king's division was struck with consternation at so disastrous a commencement of an action in which they had promised themselves so easy a victory, Bruce, who felt his little army much distressed by the arrows of the English, sent Bothwell round with a resolute body of men to attack the archers on the height they had seized. This was instantly effected; and Bruce coming up with his reserve to fill the deficiencies which this artillery had made in his foremost ranks, the battle in the centre became close, obstinate, and decisive. Many fell before the determined arm of the youthful king; but it was the fortune of Bothwell to encounter the false Menteith in the train of Edward. The Scottish earl was then at the head of the intrepid Lanarkers.— "Fiend of the most damned treason!" cried he, "vengeance is come!" and with an iron grasp throwing him into the midst of the Lanarkers, the wretched traitor breathed out his treacherous breath under the strokes of a hundred swords. "So," cried the veteran, Ireland, "perish the murderers of William,
Wallace!" "So," shouted the rest, "perish the ene-
mies of the bravest of men!"

At this crisis, the women and the followers of the
Scottish camp, hearing such an exclamation from their
friends, not doubting it was victory, impatiently quit-
ted their station behind the hill, and appeared on the
summit, waving their bonnets and handkerchiefs,
which they had exultingly mounted on their staffs,
and re-echoed with loud huzzas the shouts they had
heard from below. The English, mistaking these
people for a new army, had not the power to recover
from the increasing confusion which had seized them
on King Edward himself receiving a wound; and pa-
nic-struck with the sight of their generals falling
around them, they flung down their arms and fled.—
The king narrowly escaped being taken; but being
mounted on a stout and fleet horse, he put him to the
speed before his pursuing foe, till he found shelter in
Dunbar: whence the young earl of that place, almost
as much attached to the cause of England as his father
was, gave him a passage to England.
The Southron camp, with all its riches, fell into the
hands of Bruce. And when he returned to Stirling
from his victorious chase with the keys of Edinburgh
in his hand, and the Lord March his prisoner, (after
having stormed that nobleman’s castle, and beat it to
the ground;) he brought happy news which had met
him on the way, that Edward had died suddenly of
chagrin in the palace of Carlisle. So heaven had re-
moved for ever the prime instigator of Scotland’s
woes! and with this intelligence, as a conclusive ar-
gument, he demanded the unconditional surrender of
Stirling Castle. The English governor knew the no-
ble nature of the prince who made this proud requis-
ition; and aware that further opposition would be in
vain, he resigned the fortress to his mercy, and open-
ed the gates.—In that hour Bruce entered as a con-
queror, with the whole of his kingdom at his feet: for,
from the Solway Frith to the Northern Ocean, no
Scottish town nor castle owned a foreign master. The
acclamations of a rescued people rent the skies; and
while prayers and blessings poured on him from
above, below, and around, he did indeed feel himself a
king, and that he had returned to the land of his fore-
fathers. While he stood on his proud war-horse in
front of the great gates of the citadel, now thrown
wide asunder to admit their rightful sovereign, the
noble prisoners from the camp came forward, and
those from the garrison appeared. They bent their
knees before him, and delivering their swords, receiv-
ed in return his gracious assurance of mercy. At this
moment all Scottish hearts and wishes seemed rivet-
ted on their youthful monarch. And he, dismounting
from his steed with a gallant grace that took captive
even the souls of his enemies, raised his helmet off
his head as the bishop of Dunkeld, followed by all the
ecclesiastics in the town, came to wait upon the tri-
umph of his king.

The beautiful anthem of the virgins of Israel on
the conquests of David, was chanted forth by the nuns
who, for this heaven-hallowed hour, like the spirits of
the blest, revisited the world to give the chosen of
their land, All hail!

The words, the scene, smote the heart of Bothwell;
he turned aside and wept. Where were now the
buoyant feelings with which he had followed the simi-
lar triumph of Wallace into these gates? "Buried,
thou martyrred hero, in thy bloody grave!" New men,
and new services, seemed to have worn out remem-
brance of the past; but in the memories of even this
joyous crowd, Wallace lived, though like a bright
light passed through their path, and gone, never more
to be beheld.

Bruce, on entering the citadel, was told by Mow-
bray, the English governor, that he would find a lady
there who was in a frightful state of mental derange-
ment. A question or two from the victorious mo-
arch soon informed him that this was the Countess
of Strathearn. On the revolted abthanes having sur-
rendered Wallace and the kingdom to England, the
joy and ambition of the Countess knew no bounds;
and hoping in the end to persuade Edward to adjudge
to her the crown, to silence the rivalry of the nobles,
she made it apparent to the English king how useful
her services would be in Scotland; and with a plenary, though secret mission, she took her course through her native land, to discover who were inimical to the foreign interest, and who likely to promote her own: and after this circuit, fixing her court at Stirling, she lived there in regal magnificence, and exercised the functions of a vice-queen. At this period had arrived intelligence which, from some of her late embassies to London, Mowbray thought would fill her with exultation; and therefore he hastened to tell her that the king of England’s authority was now firmly established in Scotland, for that Wallace had been executed on the twenty-third of August according to all the forms of law upon the Tower-hill.

At the first declaration of this event, she fell senseless on the floor. It was not until the next morning that she recovered to perfect animation, and then her ravings were as horrible as violent. She accused herself of the murder of Sir William Wallace. She seemed to hear him upbraid her with his fate; and her shrieks and tremendous ejaculations so fearfully presented the scene of his death before the eyes of her attendants, that the women fled; and none other of that sex would afterwards venture to approach her. In these fearful moments, the dreadful confession of all her premeditated guilt; of her infuriate and disappointed passion for Wallace, and her vowed revenge; were revealed under circumstances so shocking, that Mowbray declared to the King of Scots as he conducted him towards her apartment, that he would rather wear out his life in a rayless dungeon, than endure one hour of her agonies.

There was a dead silence in her chamber as they approached the door. Mowbray cautiously opened it, and discovered the object of their visit at the further end of the room. She was seated on the floor, enveloped in a mass of scarlet velvet, which she had drawn off her bed: her hands clasped her knees; and she bent forward, with her eyes fixed on the door at which they entered. Her once dazzling beauty was now transformed to the terrible lightning which
gleamed on the face of Satan when he sat brooding on the burning marl of his new dominions.

She remained motionless as they advanced. But when Bruce stopped directly before her, contemplating with horror the woman whom he regarded as one of the murderers of his most beloved friend, she sprung at once upon him, and clinging to him with shrieks, buried her head in his bosom, and exclaimed;—“Save me!—Mar drags me down to hell; I burn there, and yet I die not!”—then bursting from Bruce with an imprecation that froze his blood, she dashed to the other side of the chamber, crying aloud, “He tore out my heart!—Fiend, I took thee for Wallace; but I murdered him!” Her agonies, her shrieks, and her attempts at self-violence were now so dreadful, that Bruce, raising her bleeding from the stone hearth on which she had furiously dashed her head, put her into the arms of the men who attended her; and then with an awful sense of divine retribution, left the apartment.

The generality of the Southron prisoners he directed should be lodged in the citadel. But to Mowbray he gave his liberty; and ordered every means to facilitate the safe and commodious journey of that brave knight, whom he requested to convey Lady Strathearn to her husband, with the King of Scots wishes that so gallant and worthy a nobleman might soon be released by heaven from so unhappy an union.

CHAP. XL.

HAVING dispatched his army, under the command of the Lords Lenox and Douglas, to spread themselves over the face of the border counties, till that peace should be signed by England which he was determined by unabated hostilities to compel; he sent Ruthven to Hunting-tower to bring his affianced bride to Cambuskenneth; before whose altar, he had
informed the Bishop of Dunkeld, his nuptial faith should be sealed with hers.

At the close of the second day after he had taken these measures for the security of his kingdom and the establishment of his own happiness, he had just returned to his tent on the banks of Bannockburn, (for it was from the very field of victory that he had promised to lead Isabella to the altar! and therefore the camp would be his dwelling until she should arrive;) when Grimsby, his now faithful attendant, conducted an armed knight into his presence. The light of the lamp which stood on the table, streaming full on the face of the stranger, discovered to the king his English friend, the intrepid Montgomery. Bruce, with an exclamation of glad surprise, would have clasped him in his arms, but Montgomery dropping on his knee, exclaimed, "Receive a subject as well as a friend, victorious and virtuous prince!—I have foresworn the vassalage of the Plantagenets; and thus, without title or land, with only a faithful heart, Gilbert Hambledon comes to vow himself yours and Scotland's for ever.

Bruce raised him from the ground; and then welcoming him with the warm embrace of friendship, inquired of him the cause of so extraordinary an abjuration of his legal sovereign. "No light matter," observed the king, "could have so wrought upon my noble Montgomery!"—"Montgomery, no more!" replied the earl with indignant eagerness; "When I threw the insignia of my earldom at the feet of the unjust Edward, I told him that I would lay the saw to the root of the nobility I had derived from his house, and cut it through; and that I would sooner leave my posterity without titles and without wealth, than deprive them of real honour. I have done as I said!—And yet I come not without a treasure; for the sacred corse of William Wallace is now in my barque, floating on the waves of the Forth!"

The subjugation of England would hardly have been so welcome to Bruce as this intelligence. He received it with an eloquent, though unutterable look of gratitude, which he enforced by an ardent pressure of the
narrator's hand. Hambledon continued: "On the late tyrant summoning the peers of England to follow him to the destruction of Scotland, Gloucester refused under a plea of illness, and I could not but shew a disinclination to obey. This occasioned some remarks from Edward respecting my want of allegiance, and my known attachment to the Scottish cause, which drew from me the answer,—That my heart would not for the wealth of the world, permit me to join him in the projected invasion, since I had seen the spot in my own country where, actuated by a most unkingly jealousy, he had cut down the flower of all knighthood, because he was a Scot, and would not sell his birth-right!—The king left me in wrath, and threatened, when he returned, to make me recant my words:—I as proudly declared I would maintain them. And this was my situation, when, on entering the prince's chamber immediately on the news of Edward's defeat and death, I found John Le de Spencer, (the coward who had so basely insulted Wallace on the day of his condemnation,) sitting with his highness. On my offering the condolences due from my rank, this worthless minion turned on me, and accused me in the most insolent language of rejoicing in the late king's ill-success. He taxed me with having remained behind in London for the sole purpose of executing some plot, devised between me and my Scottish partisans, for the subversion of the English monarchy. I denied the charge. He enforced it with oaths and new allegations. The prince furiously gave me the lie, and commanded me as a traitor from his presence. I refused to stir an inch till I had made the base heart of Le de Spencer retract his falsehood. The coward took courage at his master's passion, and drawing his sword upon me, in language that would blister my tongue to repeat, he threatened to compel my departure; and as a first motion, he struck me on the face with his weapon. The arms of his prince could not then save him; I thrust him through the body, and he fell. Edward ran on me with his dagger, but I wrested it from him; and then it was that, in reply to his menaces, I revoked my fealty to a sovereign I despised. And leaving the pre-
sence, before the fluctuations of his versatile mind could fix upon seizing me, I had borne away the body of our friend from its sanctuary: and embarking it and myself on board a ship of my own, am now at your feet, brave and just king, a true Scot in heart and loyalty!

"And as a brother, generous Hambledon!" returned Bruce, "I receive, and will portion thee. My paternal lands of Cadzow on the Clyde, shall be thine for ever. And may thy posterity be as worthy of the inheritance, as their ancestor is of all my love and confidence!"

Hambledon having received his new sovereign's directions concerning the disembarkation of those sacred remains, which the young king declared that he should welcome as the pledge of heaven to bless his victories with peace; he returned the same night to the haven, where Wallace rested in that sleep which even the voice of friendship could not disturb.

At an early hour next morning Bruce appeared on horseback armed cap-a-pee, with his helmet royally plumed, and a mantle of the same significance over his shoulders. Bothwell, (whom he had summoned as soon as Hambledon quitted the tent, to communicate to him tidings so grateful to his heart,) appeared at his side. The troops he had retained at Bannockburn were drawn out on the field. In a brief address he unfolded to them the solemn duty to which he had called them: to receive once more, and for ever, to its native land, the body of William Wallace!

At the words, a cry, as if they beheld that beloved chieftain slain before them, issued from every heart. The news spread to the town: and with tears and lamentations, a vast crowd had collected themselves around the royal troop, just as a messenger arrived to inform the king that the body was landed, and now bearing towards him. Bruce told Scrymgeour to elevate the Scottish standard and begin the march. The whole train followed in speechless woe, as if each individual had lost his dearest relative, and was attending him to the grave. Having passed the wood, they came in view of the black hearse which covered all that now remained of him who had so lately crossed
these precincts in all the panoply of triumphant war; in all the graciousness of peace and love to man!—At the sight, the soldiers, the people, rushed forward, and precipitating themselves before the bier, which now stopped, on their knees implored for his pardon on their ungrateful country. They adjured him by every tender name of father, benefactor, and friend; and in such a sacred presence, forgetting that their king was by, they gave way to a grief which most eloquently told, the young monarch that he who would be respected after William Wallace, must not only possess his power and valour, but imitate his virtues.

Scrymgeour, who well remembered the desire that Wallace had expressed on the battlements of the Keep of Dumbarton Castle, with a holy reference to the vow he made to him at that time, now obeyed his prince, and laid the standard of Scotland upon the pall. Bruce, uncovering his royal head, with his kingly purple sweeping in the dust, walked before the bier, shedding those tears, more precious in the eyes of his subjects than the oil which was soon to pour upon his brow. It was, as he thus moved on, the mourner of all mortal excellence, that he heard acclamations mingle with the voice of sorrow. "This is our king, worthy to have been the friend of Wallace! worthy to succeed him in the kingdom of our hearts?"

At the gates of Cambuskenneth, the venerable abbot whom Wallace’s valiant arm had placed there, appeared at the head of his religious brethren; and without uttering the grief that shook his aged frame, he raised the golden crucifix over the head of the bier; and after leaning his face for a few minutes on it, preceded the procession into the church. None but the soldiers entered. The people remained without; and as the doors closed on them they fell on the pavement, weeping as if the living Wallace had again been torn from them.

On the steps of the altar the bier rested. The Bishop of Dunkeld in his pontifical robes, received the sacred deposit with a cloud of incense; and the pealing organ, answered by the voices of the choristers, breathed forth the solemn requiem of the dead. The
wreathing frankincense parted its vapour, and a wan but beautiful form appeared clad in a nun’s black vestments, and clasping an urn to her breast. She was supported by Lord Bothwell towards the spot. Her veil was open, and discovered a face as of one just awaked from the sleep of death: it was ashy pale; but it bore a celestial brightness, which, like the silver lustre of the moon, declared its approach to the fountain of its glory. Her eye fell on the bier: and with a momentary strength, she left the arms on which she had leaned in dying feebleness, and rushing towards it, threw herself upon the coffin.

There was an awful pause while Helen seemed to weep. But so was not her sorrow to be shed. It was locked within the flood-gates of her heart.

In that suspension of the soul, when Bothwell knelt on one side of the bier, and Bruce bent his knee on the other, the church door opened, and Ruthven advanced, leading in his agitated hand the Lady Isabella, dressed in her bridal attire. She hurried forward with her fair face bathed in tears at the recital she had just heard. Bruce stretched out his hand towards her: “Come here, my youthful bride, and let thy first duty be paid to the shrine of thy benefactor and mine!—So may we live, sweet excellence, and so may we die, if the like may be our meed of heavenly glory!” Isabella threw herself into his arms and wept: and Helen, slowly raising her head at these words, gazed at her sister with a look of awful tenderness, and then turning her eyes back upon the coffin, as if they would have pierced its confines, she clasped the urn suddenly to her heart and exclaimed, “Thy bridal bed shall be my grave!”

Bruce and Isabella, not aware that she repeated words which Wallace had said to her, believing she addressed them, turned to her with portentous emotion. She understood the terrified glance of her sister; and with a smile, which spoke her kindred to the soul her’s was panting to join, she said, “I speak of my own espousals. But ere that moment comes, let my Wallace’s hallowed presence bless your nuptials!—Thou wilt breathe thy benediction through my
"O! no, no;" returned Isabella with a superstitious dread, and shrinking from the almost unembodied aspect of her sister.

"It is indeed her spirit that speaks;" cried Dunkeld, observing the awe, which not only shook the tender frame of Isabella, but had communicated itself to Bruce, who stood, not in fear, but in heart-struck veneration before the yet un-ascended angel; "holy inspiration," continued the Bishop, "beams from her eyes; and as ye hope for further blessings, obey its dictates!"

Isabella bowed her head in acquiescence. Bruce, as he approached to take his part in the sacred rite, raised the hand which lay on the pall to his lips. The ceremony began; was finished!—As the bridal notes resounded from the organ, and the royal pair rose from their knees, Helen held her hands over them, "God is in this house! And in like manner, hold him in your hearts, your light and glory!—Be you blest in all things as Wallace would have blessed you!—From his side I pour out my soul upon you, my sister—my brother!—and with its inward breathed prayers to the Giver of all Good for your eternal happiness, I turn to my long looked for rest!" Then, after fervently kissing her sister, she again turned to the coffin, and exclaimed, "We have met at last!—I waited only for this: to unite thy noble heart to thee again, and then I claim thy promise—at our Father's hands!" She sank on her knees, and clasping her hands strongly, in low accents faintly uttered, "Death! where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?" and then ceasing, seemed in earnest prayer.

At this awful moment, the abbot of Inchaffray approached the king with the iron box. "Before the sacred remains of the once champion of Scotland, (v) and in the presence of his royal successor," exclaimed the abbot, "let this mysterious cofffer of St. Fillan's be opened, to reward the deliverer of Scotland according to its intent!" "If it were to contain the relics
of St. Fillan himself," returned the king, "they could not meet a holier bosom than this!" and resting the box on the coffin, he unclasped the lock; and the Regalia of Scotland was discovered! At this sight Bruce exclaimed in an agony of grateful emotion, "Thus did this truest of human beings protect my rights, even while the people I had deserted, and whom he had saved, knelt to him to wear them all!"

"And thus Wallace crowns thee!" said Dunkeld, taking the diadem from its coffer, and setting it on his head.

"My husband, and my king!" gently exclaimed Isabella, sinking on her knee before him, and clasping his hand to her lips. Ruthven, at this motion, took a roll of parchment from his breast. "I must not be the last to bring a precious gift to my sovereign. Here," added he, presenting the scroll, "I received this from English envoys as I came through Stirling. It contains honourable offers of peace from the young King Edward."

"Hearest thou that? my sweet cousin, Helen!" cried Bothwell, touching the clasped hands which rested on the coffin. He turned pale, and looked on Bruce. Bruce, in the glad moment of his joy at this happy consummation of so many years of blood, observed not his glance, but in exulting accents, exclaimed, "Look up, my sister; and let thy soul, discoursing with our Wallace, tell him that Scotland is free, and Bruce a king!"

She spoke not, she moved not. Bothwell raised her clay-cold face. "That soul is fled, my lord!" said he, "but from yon eternal sphere they now together look upon your joys. Here let their bodies rest; for they loved in their lives, and in their deaths they shall not be divided."

THE END.
NOTES

TO THE SECOND VOLUME OF

THE SCOTTISH CHIEFS.

(a p. 4.) The ruins of this tower are still visible; and near to them the people of the country point out the place where Wallace encamped his brave army.

(b p. 6.) Several of these vaulted residences may now be seen in Crawford-Moore. Tradition informs us of the use to which they were applied. Not only the poor outraged people thus found shelter in the bosom of their mother earth, but the cattle also.

(c p. 10.) There are hills in Annandale and Clydesdale, called Watches, where persons in old times were stationed to give different signals appointed by their commanders. These notices were communicated with wonderful rapidity by smoke in the day, and flame at night.

(d p. 24.) To throw a spear, was an ancient mode of denouncing war.

(e p. 25.) Wallace’s rejection of King Edward’s splendid offers is particularly noted by the old British historians, and the substance of his answer is particularly recorded.

(f p. 33.) Alexander III. was killed in this manner on the 18th of April 1290; just seven years before the consequent calamities of his country made it necessary for Wallace to rise in its defence. Hollingshed gives a circumstantial account of Thomas of Learmont’s (or as the translator o’ Hector Boetius names him, Thomas of Er- cildoun) prophecy of this event.

(g p. 36.) The fine ruins of Kilsurh-Castle are still to be seen on a rocky point, projecting into Loch-awe. The lofty Ben-Cruachan rises immediately behind the castle in stupendous grandeur.

(h p. 43.) Huntingdon Tower, a castle of the Lords Ruthven, in the near neighbourhood of Perth, is still a fine structure. It consists of two square towers connected by other buildings. Much of it is in ruins, but the banqueting-hall is discoverable. The situation is delightful; and every acre about it is heroically consecrated ground.

(i p. 47.) Tinto or Tintoc, signifying the hill of fire; is the last great mountain to the north in Clydesdale. Its height is about 2260 feet from the sea.—Not far from it, at Biggar, the spot is shewn which was Wallace’s camp.

(k p. 49.) Roycross (or King’s-cross) erected on the heath of Stammore, (a stony tract of land between Richmondshire and Cumberland) by William the first of England, and Malcolm III. of Scotland, as the boundary mark of their separate domains.

(l p 56.) The name by which Patrick Dunbar, Earl of March, was familiarly called.
(m p. 81.) Sir Colin Campbell, surnamed More, (great), from his extraordinary valour, was the father of Neil Campbell, Lord of Loch-aw; and in memory of his renown, the head or chief of his family was for ages after distinguished by the title of Mack-cullanmore, which means son of the great Colin.

(n p. 81.) John Cummins, Lord of Badenoch (usually called the Black Cummin) married Marjory, sister to Balfol, King of Scots. In the year 1290, Lord Badenoch was one of the competitors for the crown as heir in the seventh generation, from Donald King of Scots.

(o p. 87 ) Brandanes was the distinguishing appellation of the military followers of the chiefs of Bute.

(p p. 96.) The jealousy of the lords against Wallace, and the particulars of the battle of Falkirk, with his discourse with Bruce on the banks of the Carron, are well known events in Scottish annals; and the writer of this work has spared no researches to bring the account here presented as near the facts as possible.

(q p. 98 ) William Sinclair, the patriotic Bishop of Dunkeld, was brother to the Lord of Roslyn.

(r p. 99 ) Dunipacis, means the hills of peace. There are two on the banks of the Carron; and are supposed to have been erected by the Normans in some treaty with the natives.

(s p. 113.) The lamentations which Sir William Wallace made over the body of Sir John Graham his faithful friend, are recorded by several historians; and this epitaph is still extant on that warrior's grave in the church of Falkirk.—The English of it is this:

"Here lies Graham, slain in battle by the English; he was strong in mind and body; and was the faithful friend [Achates] of Wallace."

Not far from Graham's tomb, is buried John Stewart Lord of Bute, and brother to the Steward of Scotland, from whom the royal family of that name descended. His grave is marked by a plain stone without any inscription.

(t p. 123.) The family of Cummins was so powerful and numerous, that an incredible number of chieftains of that name attended the first parliament which Robert I. held at Dunstaffnage Castle. The relationship between the heirs of Strathearn and that family, was very near; her paternal grand-mother having been the daughter of Lord Badenoch.

(u p. 139.) In commemoration of the victory which this ancient Scottish prince obtained over the Britons before the christian era, the field of conquest has ever after been called Rutherglen.

(v p. 139.) A senachie (or bard) was an indispensable appendage of rank in every noble Scottish family. —The senachie always slept in his lord's apartment.

(w p. 140.) This round tower (or keep) is the only part of the castle of Durham in any good preservation.

(x p. 146.) These speeches are historically true, as is also the after-treatment of Edward to the Earl of Carrick.

(y p. 151.) It is a superstition with the lower orders in the north, that when a man is going to die, some of his friends see his apparition, which they call his wrath, and they say it often appears in the presence of the doomed person.

(z p. 162.) The remains of this curious subterraneous passage are yet to be seen; but parts of them are now broken in upon by water, and therefore the communication between Durham and Fincklay is now cut off. Many strange legends are told of this passage.
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