

# **The Scottish Chiefs**

Jane Porter



# Table of Contents

<b>The Scottish Chiefs</b> .....	<b>1</b>
Jane Porter.....	2
PREFACE.....	5
<b>VOL. I.</b> .....	<b>7</b>
CHAP. I.....	8
CHAP. II.....	14
CHAP. III.....	22
CHAP. IV.....	28
CHAP. V.....	32
CHAP. VI.....	34
CHAP. VII.....	38
CHAP. VIII.....	41
CHAP. IX.....	44
CHAP. X.....	51
CHAP. XI.....	55
CHAP. XII.....	58
CHAP. XIII.....	63
CHAP. XIV.....	66
CHAP. XV.....	70
CHAP. XVI.....	76
<b>VOL. II.</b> .....	<b>80</b>
CHAP. I.....	81
CHAP. II.....	88
CHAP. III.....	91
CHAP. IV.....	94
CHAP. V.....	98
CHAP. VI.....	105
CHAP. VII.....	113
CHAP. VIII.....	119
CHAP. IX.....	126
CHAP. X.....	133
CHAP. XI.....	138
CHAP. XII.....	142
<b>VOL. III.</b> .....	<b>151</b>
CHAP. I.....	152
CHAP. II.....	156
CHAP. III.....	164
CHAP. IV.....	168
CHAP. V.....	172
CHAP. VI.....	178
CHAP. VII.....	182
CHAP. VIII.....	187
CHAP. IX.....	190
CHAP. X.....	196
CHAP. XI.....	199
CHAP. XII.....	203
CHAP. XIII.....	206
CHAP. XIV.....	213

# Table of Contents

## The Scottish Chiefs

<u>CHAP. XV.</u> .....	218
<u>CHAP. XVI.</u> .....	222
<u>CHAP. XVII.</u> .....	227
<u>CHAP. XVIII.</u> .....	230
<u>VOL. IV.</u> .....	234
<u>CHAP. I.</u> .....	235
<u>CHAP. II.</u> .....	244
<u>CHAP. III.</u> .....	250
<u>CHAP. IV.</u> .....	255
<u>CHAP. V.</u> .....	260
<u>CHAP. VI.</u> .....	269
<u>CHAP. VII.</u> .....	272
<u>CHAP. VIII.</u> .....	278
<u>CHAP. IX.</u> .....	283
<u>CHAP. X.</u> .....	290
<u>CHAP. XI.</u> .....	295
<u>CHAP. XII.</u> .....	301
<u>CHAP. XIII.</u> .....	305
<u>CHAP. XIV.</u> .....	308
<u>VOL. V.</u> .....	310
<u>CHAP. I.</u> .....	311
<u>CHAP. II.</u> .....	316
<u>CHAP. III.</u> .....	319
<u>CHAP. IV.</u> .....	323
<u>CHAP. V.</u> .....	333
<u>CHAP. VI.</u> .....	338
<u>CHAP. VII.</u> .....	343
<u>CHAP. VIII.</u> .....	345
<u>CHAP. IX.</u> .....	350
<u>CHAP. X.</u> .....	356
<u>CHAP. XI.</u> .....	359
<u>CHAP. XII.</u> .....	361
<u>CHAP. XIII.</u> .....	365
<u>CHAP. XIV.</u> .....	370
<u>CHAP. XV.</u> .....	372
<u>CHAP. XVI.</u> .....	375
<u>CHAP. XVII.</u> .....	377
<u>CHAP. XVIII.</u> .....	381
<u>CHAP. XIX.</u> .....	384

# The Scottish Chiefs

**Jane Porter**

This page copyright © 2001 Blackmask Online.  
<http://www.blackmask.com>

- PREFACE.

- VOL. I.

- CHAP. I.
- CHAP. II.
- CHAP. III.
- CHAP. IV.
- CHAP. V.
- CHAP. VI.
- CHAP. VII.
- CHAP. VIII.
- CHAP. IX.
- CHAP. X.
- CHAP. XI.
- CHAP. XII.
- CHAP. XIII.
- CHAP. XIV.
- CHAP. XV.
- CHAP. XVI.

- VOL. II.

- CHAP. I.
- CHAP. II.
- CHAP. III.
- CHAP. IV.
- CHAP. V.
- CHAP. VI.
- CHAP. VII.
- CHAP. VIII.
- CHAP. IX.
- CHAP. X.
- CHAP. XI.
- CHAP. XII.

- VOL. III.

- CHAP. I.
- CHAP. II.
- CHAP. III.
- CHAP. IV.
- CHAP. V.
- CHAP. VI.
- CHAP. VII.

## The Scottish Chiefs

- CHAP. VIII.
  - CHAP. IX.
  - CHAP. X.
  - CHAP. XI.
  - CHAP. XII.
  - CHAP. XIII.
  - CHAP. XIV.
  - CHAP. XV.
  - CHAP. XVI.
  - CHAP. XVII.
  - CHAP. XVIII.
- 
- VOL. IV.
    - CHAP. I.
    - CHAP. II.
    - CHAP. III.
    - CHAP. IV.
    - CHAP. V.
    - CHAP. VI.
    - CHAP. VII.
    - CHAP. VIII.
    - CHAP. IX.
    - CHAP. X.
    - CHAP. XI.
    - CHAP. XII.
    - CHAP. XIII.
    - CHAP. XIV.
- 
- VOL. V.
    - CHAP. I.
    - CHAP. II.
    - CHAP. III.
    - CHAP. IV.
    - CHAP. V.
    - CHAP. VI.
    - CHAP. VII.
    - CHAP. VIII.
    - CHAP. IX.
    - CHAP. X.
    - CHAP. XI.
    - CHAP. XII.
    - CHAP. XIII.
    - CHAP. XIV.
    - CHAP. XV.
    - CHAP. XVI.
    - CHAP. XVII.
    - CHAP. XVIII.
    - CHAP. XIX.
-

## The Scottish Chiefs

The Scottish Chiefs, A Romance. In Five Volumes.

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.



## PREFACE.

To paint the portrait of one of the most complete heroes that ever filled the page of history, may be a bold, though I hope not a vain design. The contemplation of virtue is an improving as well as a delightful employment: and however inadequate this picture may be to represent duly its great original, yet, that it is a copy of such excellence, will give it some merit in the eyes of those who love virtue even in its shade.

I have spared no pains in consulting almost every writing extant which treats of the sister kingdoms during the period of my narrative. It would be tedious to swell this page with a list of these authorities, for they are very numerous; but all who are well acquainted with our old British historians, must perceive on reading the Scottish Chiefs, that in the sketch which history would have laid down for the biography of my principal hero, I have not added to the outline, excepting, where time having made some erasure, a stroke was necessary to fill the space and unite the whole. Tradition has been a great assistant to me in this respect. And for the most essential information on the subject, I am indebted to the suggestions of my invaluable friend Mr. Thomas Campbell, who has so nobly mingled the poet's brightest bays with the ancient laurels of his clan.

While tracing the characters of my personages in the Scottish annals, it was with infinite pleasure that I found those virtues in the fathers, which have attached me to their posterity. Delighted with this most dear proof of kindred, I have fondly lingered over my work; reenjoying in its visionary scenes, hours fled to heaven; I have again discoursed, and mingled my soul, with friends whose nobility of spirit honoured the illustrious stems from which they sprung:—But like the blossomed bough torn untimely from its branch, they are gone; and spread fragrance in my path no more.

It is the fashion to condemn even an honest pride in ancestry. But where is the Englishman who is not proud of being the countryman of Nelson? Where the British sailor that does not thirst to emulate his fame? If this sentiment be right, respect for noble progenitors cannot be wrong; for it proceeds from the same source: the principle of kindred, of inheritance, and of virtue. Let the long race of Douglas, or the descendants of the Percy, say, if the name they bear is not as a mirror to shew them what they ought to be, and as a burning-glass to kindle in their hearts the flame of their fathers? Happy is it for this realm that the same destiny which now unites the once contending arms of these two brave families, has also consolidated their rival nations into one; and by planting the heir of Plantagenet and of Bruce upon the British throne, hath redeemed the peace of the land, and fixed it on lasting foundations.

From the nature of my story, more agents have been used in its conduct than I should have adopted had it been a work of mere imagination; for taste would have selected the simplest means of accomplishing the fable; and even here, where the principle could be followed without any extravagant violation of the fact, it has been obeyed.—Very few persons wholly imaginary have been introduced: and wishing to keep as near historical truth as was consistent with my plan, no intentional injustice has been committed against the characters of the individuals who were the real actors with the hero of the tale. The melancholy circumstance which first excited him to draw his sword for Scotland, though it may be thought too much like the creation of modern romance, is recorded as a truth in the old poem by Blind Harrie. Other private events have been interwoven with the public subjects of these volumes, that the disagreeable monotony of a continued series of warlike achievements might be avoided. Some notes are added, to point out the historical incidents; but finding that were they all marked, such a plan would swell each volume beyond its proper size; in one word I assure the reader that I seldom lead him to any spot in Scotland whither some written or oral testimony respecting my hero had not previously conducted myself. In the same spirit, being careful to keep to the line of chronology, I have not strayed from it in any instance until my chief personages return from France; and then my history being intended to be within the bounds of modern romance, and not to rival the folios of Scudery, I found myself obliged to take some liberties with time and circumstance; for both of which offences, and particularly for the management of my catastrophe, I hope the historical, if he be also a gentle reader, will find no difficulty in forgiving me.

Long Ditton,

The Scottish Chiefs

December, 1809.

The Scottish Chiefs

**VOL. I.**

## CHAP. I.

The war which had desolated Scotland was now at an end. Ambition seemed satiated; and the vanquished, after passing under the yoke of their enemy, concluded they might wear their chains in peace. Such were the hopes of those Scottish noblemen who, early in the spring of 1296, signed the bond of submission to a ruthless conqueror; purchasing life at the price of all that makes life estimable—Liberty and Honour.

Prior to this act of vassalage, Edward the First of England had entered Scotland at the head of an immense army. He seized Berwick by a base stratagem; laid the country in ashes; and on the field of Dunbar forced the King and his nobles to acknowledge him their liege lord.

While the courts of Edward, or of his representatives, were crowded by the humbled Scots, the spirit of one brave man remained unsubdued. Disgusted alike at the facility with which the sovereign of a war-like nation could resign his people and his crown into the hands of a treacherous invader, and at the pusillanimity of the nobles who could ratify such a sacrifice, William Wallace retired to the glen of Ellerslie. Withdrawn from the world, he hoped to avoid the sight of oppressions he could not redress, and the endurance of injuries beyond his power to avenge.

Checked at the opening of life in the career of glory that was his passion, secluded in the bloom of manhood from the social haunts of men, he repressed the eager aspirations of his mind; and strove to acquire that resignation to inevitable evils which could alone reconcile him to forego the promises of his youth; and enable him to view with patience that humiliation of Scotland which blighted her honour, menaced her existence, and consigned her sons to degradation or obscurity. The latter was the choice of Wallace. Too noble to bend his spirit to the usurper, too honest to affect submission, he resigned himself to the only way left of maintaining the independence of a true Scot; and giving up the world at once, all the ambitions of youth were extinguished in his breast, since nothing was preserved in his country to sanctify their fires. Scotland seemed proud of her chains. Not to share in such debasement seemed all that was now in his power; and within the shades of Ellerslie he found a retreat and a home, whose sweets beguiled him of every care; and made him sometimes forget the wrongs of his country in the tranquil enjoyments of wedded love.

During the happy months of the preceding autumn, while Scotland was yet free and the path of honourable distinction lay open before her young nobility, Wallace married Marion Braidfoot the beautiful heiress of Lammington. Of the same age, and brought up from childhood together, reciprocal affection grew with their growth; and sympathy of taste, virtues, and mutual tenderness, gradually mingling their spirits, made them so entirely one, that when at the age of twenty two the enraptured lover was allowed by his grandfather to pledge that faith publicly at the altar which he had so often vowed to his Marion in secret, he clasped her to his heart, and softly whispered—dearer than life! part of my being now and for ever! blessed is this union that mingles thy soul with mine to all eternity!"

Edward's invasion of Scotland broke in upon their innocent joys. Wallace threw aside the wedding garment for the cuirass and the sword. But he was not permitted to use either—Scotland submitted to her enemies; and he had no alternative but to bow to her oppressors, or to become an exile from man amid the deep glens of his country.

The tower of Ellerslie was henceforth the lonely abode of himself and his bride. The neighbouring nobles avoided him, because the principles he declared were a tacit reproach on their proceedings; and in the course of a short time, as he forbore to seek them, they even forgot that he was in existence. Indeed, all occasions of mixing with society were now rejected by Wallace. The hunting—spear, with which he delighted to follow the flying roe—buck from glade to glade, from mountain to mountain; the arrows with which he used to bring down the heavy termagan or the towering eagle, all were laid aside: Scottish liberty was no more; and Wallace would have blushed to have shewn himself to the free born deer of his native hills, in communion with the spoilers of his country. Had he pursued his once favorite exercises, he must have mingled with the English now garrisoned in every town; and who passed their hours of leisure in the chase.

Being resigned to bury his youth, since its strength could be no longer serviceable to his country; books, his harp, and the sweet converse of his tender Marion, were the occupations of his days. Ellerslie was his hermitage; and there, closed from the world, with an angel his companion, he might have forgotten that Edward was lord in

## The Scottish Chiefs

Scotland; had not what was without his little paradise, made a way to its gates, and shewed him the slavery of the nobles, and the wretchedness of the people. In these cases, his generous hand gave succour where it could not bring redress. Those whom the lawless plunderer had driven from their houses, or stripped of their covering, found shelter, cloathing and food, at the house of Sir William Wallace.

Ellerslie was the refuge of the friendless and the comfort of the unhappy. Wherever lady Wallace moved, whether looking out from her window on the accidental passenger; or taking her morning, or moonlight walks through the glen leaning on the arm of her husband; she had the rapture of hearing his steps greeted and followed by the blessing of the poor destitute, and the prayers of them who were ready to perish. It was then that this happy woman would raise her husband's hand to her lips, and in silent adoration thank God for blessing her with a being made so truly in his own image.

Wallace, who read her heart in this action, would reply—"Sweetest Marion, what merit has thy Wallace in mere benevolence? contracted is now my sphere of duty, and easily fulfilled; it is only to be—friend the oppressed to the utmost of my power! And while tyranny leaves me that privilege I shall not consider myself quite a slave. Were I useless to my fellow—creatures, I should be miserable; for, in blessing others, I bless myself—I bless thee my Marion; and the grateful countenances of these poor people add beauty even to thine! art thou not loveliest in my eyes at this moment, thou angel of peace and love! dost thou not praise thy husband, for what is common with thee?" She smiled, and a happy tear glittered in her eye. "To be lovely to thee, Wallace, is all my joy; and to see thee so worthy of all my love, fills me indeed with an angel's happiness!"

Several months of this blissful and uninterrupted solitude had elapsed, when lady Wallace saw a stranger chieftain arrive at her gate. He inquired for Sir William, requested a private conference, and retired with him into a remote room. They remained there for above an hour; when Wallace coming forth, ordered his horse and four servants to be in readiness, saying he meant to accompany his guest to Douglas castle. When he embraced his wife at parting, he told her that as it was only a few miles distant, he should be at home again before the moon rose.

She passed the tedious hours of his absence with tranquillity, till after she saw the moon, the appointed signal of his return, rise behind the highest summits of the opposite mountains. So bright were its beams, that she did not need any other light to shew her the stealing sands of her hour—glass, as they numbered the prolonged hours of her husband's stay. She dismissed all her servants to their rest, excepting Halbert the grey—haired harper of Wallace; and he, like herself, was too unaccustomed to the absence of his master, to find sleep visit his eyes, while Ellerslie was bereft of its joy and its guard.

As the night advanced, Lady Wallace sat in the window of her bed—chamber, which looked towards the west. She watched the winding path—way that led from Lanerk down the opposite heights; eager to catch a glimpse of the waving plumes of her husband, when he should emerge from behind the hill, and pass through the mingling thicket which over—hung the road. How often, as a cloud obscured for an instant the moon's light, and threw a transitory shade across the path, did her heart bound with the thought that her watching was at an end. It was he whom she had seen suddenly start from some abrupt turning of the rock! They were the folds of his tartan that darkened the white cliff! but the moon again rolled through her train of clouds, and threw her light around. Where was then her Wallace? Alas, it was only a shadow she had seen: the hill was still lonely, and he whom she sought was yet far away! Overcome with watching, expectation, and disappointment; unable to say whence arose her fears; she sat down again to look, but her eyes were blinded with tears; and in a voice interrupted by sighs, she exclaimed, "Not yet, not yet!—ah, my Wallace, what evil has betided thee?"

Trembling with a nameless terror, she knew not what to dread. She believed all hostile rencontres had ceased, when Scotland no longer contended with Edward. The nobles, without remonstrance, had surrendered their castles into the hands of the usurper; and the peasantry, following the example of their lords, had allowed their homes to be ravaged without lifting an arm in their defence. Opposition being entirely over, nothing then could threaten her husband from the enemy; and was not the person who had taken him from Ellerslie, a friend!

Before Wallace's departure he had spoken to Marion alone, and told her that the stranger was Sir John Monteith, the youngest son of the brave Walter Lord Monteith, who was so treacherously put to death by the English in the early part of the last year. This young nobleman was then left by his dying father to the particular charge of his friend William Lord Douglas, at that time governor of Berwick. After the fall of that place, and the captivity of its defender, Sir John Monteith had returned to Douglas castle in the vicinity of Lanerk; and was now

## The Scottish Chiefs

the only master of that princely residence. Sir James Douglas, the only son of the veteran lord, was still at Paris; whither he had gone before the defeat at Dunbar, to negotiate a league between the French monarch and the then King of Scots.

Informed of the privacy in which Wallace wished to live, Monteith had never ventured to disturb it until this day; and then, knowing the steady honour of his old school-fellow, he came to intreat, by the reverence he entertained for the memory of the sacrificed Lord Monteith, by the respect he had for the brave Douglas, and by his love for his country, that he would not refuse to accompany him that day to Douglas castle.

"I have a secret to disclose to you," said he, "which cannot be divulged on any other spot."

Unwilling to deny so small a favour to the son of one who had so often shed his blood in his country's service, Wallace, as has been said before, consented; and was conducted by Monteith towards Douglas.

As they descended the heights which lead down to the castle, Monteith kept a profound silence; and when they crossed the draw-bridge which lay over the water at its base, he put his finger to his lips, in token to the servants for equal taciturnity: this was explained as they entered the gate and looked around: they saw it guarded by English soldiers. Wallace started, and would have drawn back, but Monteith laid his hand on his arm and whispered, "For your country!" upon these words, which struck like a spell upon the ear of Wallace, he proceeded; and his attendants followed into the court-yard.

The sun was just setting as Monteith led his friend into a room which looked towards the east. The reflexion of the departing orb upon the distant hills, reminded Wallace of the stretch he had to retread, to reach his home before midnight; and thinking of his anxious Marion, he proposed with impatience, to be told the object of his journey.

Monteith closed the door, looked fearfully around for some time, and trembling at every step, approached Wallace. When drawn quite near, in a low voice he said, "You must swear upon the cross that you will keep inviolable the secret I am now going to reveal."

Wallace put aside the hilt of the sword which Monteith presented to receive his oath;—"No," said he with a smile, "I take no oaths.—In these times I would not bind my conscience on subjects that I do not know. If you dare trust the word of a Scotsman and a friend, speak out; and if it be honest, my honour is your pledge."

"And you will not swear?!" demanded Monteith, with a doubtful look.

"No."

"Then I must not trust you."

Then our business is at an end;" returned Wallace, rising, "and I may return home."

"Stop!" cried Monteith, "Forgive me noble Wallace, that I have dared to hesitate? These are indeed times of such treason to honour, that I do not wonder you should be careful how you swear. But the nature of the confidence reposed in me, will, I hope, convince you that I ought not to share it rashly. Of any one but you, whose truth stands as fair as virgin purity, I would exact oaths on oaths; but your word is given, and on that I rely. Await me here."

Monteith unlocked a door which had been concealed by the tapestry of the room, and in a few minutes re-entered with a small iron box. He set it hastily on the table near his friend; then went to the great door which he had before so carefully closed, tried that the bolts were secure, and returned with a still more pallid countenance towards the table. Wallace, surprised at so much precaution, and at the extreme apprehension visible in these actions, awaited with wonder the promised explanation. Monteith sat down with his hand on the box, and fixing his eyes on it, began:

"I am going to mention a name which you may hear with patience, since the power by which its bearer insulted you is no more.—The successful rival of Bruce, and the enemy of your family, is now a prisoner in the tower of London."

"You speak of Baliol?"

"I do," answered Monteith, "and his present sufferings will perhaps soften your indignation at his too vindictive resentment of the injury he received from Sir Ronald Crawford."

"My grandfather never injured him nor any man!" interrupted Wallace, "Sir Ronald Crawford was ever as incapable of injustice, as of flattering the minion of his country's enemy. But Baliol is fallen, and I forgive him."

"Did you witness his degradation," returned Monteith, "you would even pity him."

"He was always an object of my pity," continued Wallace. "I never thought him worthy of a stronger

## The Scottish Chiefs

sentiment: and as you are ignorant of the cause of his enmity against Sir Ronald and myself, in justice to the character of that most venerable of men, I will explain it. I first saw Baliol four years ago, when I accompanied my grandfather to witness the arbitration of the King of England between the two contending claimants for the Scottish crown. Sir Ronald came on the part of Bruce. I was deemed too young to have a voice in the council; but I was old enough to understand what was passing; and to perceive in the crouching demeanor, with which Baliol received the crown, that it was the price for which he had sold his country. However, as Scotland acknowledged him sovereign, and as Bruce submitted, my grandfather silently acquiesced. But Baliol forgot not former opposition: his behaviour to Sir Ronald and myself at the beginning of this year, when, according to the privilege of our birth, we appeared in the field against the public enemy, fully demonstrates what was the injury Baliol complains of; and how unjustly he drove us from the standard of Scotland. None, said he, shall serve under me who ever presumed to declare themselves the friends of Bruce! Poor, weak man! The purchased vassal of England; yet enamoured of his ideal Kingship, he hated all who had opposed his power, even while his own treachery sapped its foundation.—Edward having made use of him, all these sacrifices of honour and of conscience were insufficient to retain his favour. The treason completed, his employer detests the traitor; and Baliol is removed from his throne to a prison! Can I feel one revengeful pang against a wretch so abject?—No! I do indeed pity him. And now that I have cleared my grandfather's name of his calumny, I am ready to hear you further."

Monteith, after remarking on the well-known honour of Sir Ronald Crawford, resumed.

"During the massacre at the capture of Berwick, Lord Douglas, who had defended it to the last, was taken, wounded and insensible, by a trusty band of Scots, out of the citadel; and they contrived to escape with him out of the town, even through the midst of the carnage. I followed to Dunbar, where he sufficiently recovered to witness that day's dreadful loss which completed the victory of the English. When the few nobles who survived the battle, dispersed, he took the road to Forfar: hoping to meet King Baliol there, and to concert with him new plans of resistance. I accompanied him; and when we arrived, we found his Majesty in close conversation with John Cummin, Earl of Athol; and this worthless Scot had thoroughly persuaded him, that by the disaster at Dunbar, all was so lost, that if he wished to save his life, he must immediately go to the King of England, at Montrose, and surrender himself to his mercy.

"Our brave Douglas tried to alter Baliol's resolution, but without effect. The King only wept at the picture our friend drew of the miseries to which his flight would abandon Scotland; he could not return any reasonable answers to the arguments which were offered to induce him to remain, but continued to repeat with sobs and tears, It is my fate, it is my fate! Athol sat knitting his black brows during this conversation; and at last, throwing out some sullen remarks to Lord Douglas on the vehemence with which he exhorted the King to defy his liege lord, he abruptly left the room.

"As soon as he was gone, Baliol rose from his seat with a very anxious countenance, and taking my patron into an adjoining room, they continued there a few minutes, and then re-entered, Douglas bearing with him this iron box. Monteith, said he, I confide this to your care. As he spoke, he put the box under my arm, and concealing it with my cloak, added, Carry it directly to my castle in Lanerkshire. I will rejoin you there in four-and-twenty hours after you arrive. Meanwhile, by your affection to me, and fidelity to your King, breathe not a word of what has passed.

"Look on this, and be faithful, said Baliol, putting this ruby ring on my finger. I withdrew, and as I crossed the outward hall was met by Athol. He eyed me sternly, and inquired whither I was going. I replied, To Douglas, to prepare for the coming of its lord. The hall was full of armed men in Athol's colours. Not one of the remnant who had followed Lord Douglas from the bloody field of Dunbar was visible. Athol looked round on his myrmidons:—Here, cried he, see that you speed this fellow on his journey. His master goes with us to London. I saw the danger that threatened Lord Douglas; but as I attempted to return to give him warning, a score of spears were presented at my breast. I was forced to desist; and to secure my charge, which farther resistance might have hazarded, I hastened into the courtyard, and being permitted to mount my horse, set off on full gallop.

"I arrived at this place on the second day; and remembering that secret closet, carefully deposited the box within it. A week passed without any tidings of Lord Douglas. However, I still flattered myself, notwithstanding the menace of Athol, that by some means he might escape the snare, and reach his castle: but the arrival of a pilgrim, on his way to the shrine of St. Ninian, in Galway, cut off all my hopes. He requested to see me alone; and

## The Scottish Chiefs

fearing nothing from a man in so sacred a habit, I admitted him. He presented me with a packet, saying it had been entrusted to him by Lord Douglas, at Montrose. He proceeded to tell me that my brave friend, having been forcibly carried on board a vessel which was to convey him and the unhappy Baliol prisoners to London, (for such it seems were King Edward's orders) he sent to the Tironensian monks, at Aberbrothick, and under a pretence of making a religious confession before he sailed, begged to be visited by the sub prior. I am that prior, continued the pilgrim; and having been born on the Douglas lands, he well knew he had every claim to my fidelity. He gave me this packet, and conjured me to lose no time in conveying it to you. The task was difficult; and as in these calamitous times for Scotland, when every man's hand seems raised against his brother, we know not whom on earth to trust, I determined to bring it myself; and vowed to visit the holy shrine of St. Ninian, if it should please the blessed saints to carry me safely through my embassy.

"I enquired of the reverend father whether Lord Douglas had actually sailed. Yes, replied he, I stood on the beach at Montrose, till the ship disappeared! and woeful was the sight, for it carried away the benefactor of my youth."

A half-stifled groan burst from the indignant breast of Wallace. It interrupted Monteith for an instant, but without noticing it, he proceeded, not appearing to have paused.

"Not only the brave Douglas was wrested from our country, but so was our King, and that holy pillar of Jacob, which prophets have declared the palladium of Scotland!"

"What?" inquired Wallace, with a frown, "has Baliol robbed Scotland of that trophy of one of her best kings? Is the sacred gift of Fergus to be made the spoil of a coward?"

"Baliol is not the robber," rejoined Monteith, "the hallowed stone was taken from its sanctuary at Scone, by the command of the King of England, and carried on board the same vessel, with the sackings of Icolmkill; the archives of the kingdom have also been torn from that monastery, and thrown by Edward's own hands into the fire."

"Tyrant!" exclaimed Wallace, "Thou may'st fill the cup too full!"

"His depredations," continued Monteith, "the good monk told me, have been as wide as they were destructive. He has not left a parchment, either of public records, or of private annals, in any of the monasteries or castles around Montrose; all have been searched and plundered. And besides, Patrick Dunbar the faithless Earl of March, and Lord Soulis, have been such parricides of their country, as to be his coadjutors, and have performed the like robberies from the eastern shores of the Highlands, to the furthest of the Western Isles."

"Do the traitors think," cried Wallace, "that by robbing Scotland of her annals, and of that stone, that they really deprive her of her palladium? Fools! fools! Scotland's history is in the memories of her sons; her palladium is in their hearts; and Edward may one day find that she remembers the victory of Largs, and needs not talismans to give her freedom."

"Alas! not in our time!" answered Monteith, "The spear is at our breasts, and we must submit. You see this castle is full of Edward's soldiers! Every house is a garrison for England; but more of this by and by; I have yet to tell you the contents of the packet which the monk brought. As soon as he had declared to me what I have told you, I ordered proper means to forward him on his pilgrimage, and bidding him farewell, retired to open the packet. It contained two, one directed to Sir James Douglas, at Paris, and the other to me; I read as follows:—"Athol has persuaded Baliol to his ruin, and betrayed me into the hands of Edward. I shall see Scotland no more. Send the enclosed to my son at Paris; it will inform him what is the last wish of William Douglas for his country. The iron box I confided to you, guard as your life, until you can deposit it with my son. But should he remain abroad, and you ever be in extremity, commit the box in strict charge to the worthiest Scot you know; and tell him, that it will be at the peril of his soul who dares to open it till Scotland be again free! when that hour comes, then let the man by whose valour God restores her rights, receive the box as his own; for by him only, is it to be opened.

"Monteith, as you would not disgrace the memory of your noble father, and as you hope for honour here, or happiness hereafter, attend to these injunctions of your friend Douglas."

Monteith finished reading the letter, and remained silent. Wallace, who had listened to it with increasing indignation against the enemies of Scotland, spoke first;—"Tell me in what I can assist you; or how serve these last wishes of the brave Douglas?"

Monteith replied by reading over again this sentence,—"should my son remain abroad, and you ever be in



## The Scottish Chiefs

extremity, commit the box in strict charge to the worthiest Scot you know". I am in that extremity now. Edward had formed his plan of desolation, when he placed English governors throughout our towns: and the rapacious Heselrigge, his representative in Lanerk, is not backward to execute the despot's will. He has just issued an order for all the houses of the absent chiefs to be searched for records and secret correspondences. Two or three in the neighbourhood have already gone through this ordeal; and the event has proved that it was not papers they sought, but plunder; and an excuse for dismantling the castles, or occupying them with English officers.

"A detachment of soldiers were sent hither by Heselrigge this morning by daybreak, to guard the castle, until he could in person be present at the examination. This ceremony is to take place to-morrow; and as Lord Douglas is considered a traitor to Edward, I am told the place will be sacked to its bare walls. In such an extremity, to you, noble Wallace, as to the worthiest Scot I know, I fly to take charge of this box: within the remote cliffs of Ellerslie it will be safe from suspicion; and when Sir James Douglas arrives from Paris, to him you can resign the trust. Meanwhile, as I shall not resist the plunderers to-morrow, after delivering up the keys of the state apartments to Heselrigge, I will submit to necessity, and beg his permission to retire to my lodge on Ben Venu."

Wallace made no difficulty in granting this request; and desiring Monteith, when he found means to forward Lord Douglas's packet to his son, to inform that young nobleman of the circumstances which deposited the box in Ellerslie, he proposed to depart immediately.—There being two iron rings on each side the casket, Wallace took the leathern belt which girded his sword, and putting it through them, swung it easily under his left arm, and covered it with his plaid.

His charge being secured, Monteith's eyes brightened, the paleness left his cheek, and with a firmer step, as if suddenly relieved of a heavy load, he called a servant to prepare Sir William Wallace's horses and attendants.

As Wallace shook hands with his friend, Monteith in a low and solemn voice, bade him be cautious in what part of his house he kept the box: "Remember," said he, "the penalty that hangs over him who looks into it."

"Be not afraid," answered Wallace, "even the outside shall never be seen by other eyes than my own, unless the same circumstance which now induces you, mortal extremity, should force me to confide it to safer hands."

"Beware of that!" exclaimed Monteith, "for who is there that would adhere to the prohibition as I have done, as you will do? and, besides, as I have no doubt it contains holy relics, who knows what calamities a sacrilegious look might bring upon our already devoted country."

"Relics or no relics," replied Wallace, "it would be an equal sin against good faith to invade what is forbidden: but, from the weight, I am rather inclined to suspect that the box contains gold; probably a treasure, with which the sordid mind of Baliol thinks to compensate the hero who may free his country, for all the miseries a traitor King, and a treacherous usurper have brought upon it."

"A treasure!" repeated Monteith, "I never thought of that,—it is indeed very heavy!—as we are responsible for the contents of the box, I wish we were certain of what it contains; let us consider that!"

"It is no consideration of ours," returned Wallace, "with what is in the box we have no concern, all we have to do, is to preserve the contents unviolated by even our own eyes; and to that, as you have now transferred the charge to me, I pledge myself,—farewel."

"But why this haste?" rejoined Monteith, "surely you had best stay a little, indeed I wish I had thought,—stay only a little."

"I thank you," returned Wallace, proceeding to the court-yard, "but it is now dark, and I promised to be at home before the moon rises; I must bid you good night. If you wish me to serve you farther, I shall be happy to see you at Ellerslie to-morrow. My Marion will have pleasure in entertaining for days or weeks, the friend of her husband."

While Wallace spoke, he advanced to his horse, to which he was lighted, not only by the servants of the castle, but by several English soldiers who crowded forward out of curiosity. As he put his foot in the stirrup, he held in his hand the loosened sword which, to accommodate his charge, he had unbuckled from his side. Monteith, whose dread of detection was ever awake, whispered, "a weapon in your hand will excite suspicion!" Fear incurred what it would have avoided: as he hastily pulled aside Wallace's plaid to throw it over the glittering hilt of the sword, he exposed the iron box. The light of so many torches striking upon the polished rivets, displayed it to all eyes; but no remark being made, and Wallace not observing what was done, again shook hands with Monteith, and calling his servants about him, galloped away; and being obliged to leave the northern and direct road, because of the English marauders swarmed there, he was presently lost amid the thick shades of Clydesdale.

## CHAP. II.

The darkness was almost impenetrable. Musing on what had passed with Monteith; and on the little likelihood of any hero appearing who, by freeing his country, could ever claim the privilege of investigating the mystery which was now committed to his care, Wallace rode on; till, crossing the bridge of Lanerk, he saw the light of the rising moon silvering the tops of the distant hills; and his meditations embraced a gentler subject. This was the time he had promised Marion to be returned; and he had yet five long miles to go before he could reach the glen of Ellerslie! He thought of her being alone; and watching, with perhaps a chiding heart, the minutes of his delay. Scotland and its wrongs, he forgot in the idea of her whose happiness was dearer to him than life; he could not achieve the deliverance of the one, but it was his bliss to preserve the peace of the other; and putting spurs to his horse, under the now bright beams of the ascending moon, he galloped through the town.

He was abruptly turning the angle of a street, which leads down to the Mouse river, when the cry of murder arrested his ear; he checked his horse, and listened; the clashing of arms told him that the sound had issued from an alley to the left; he alighted in an instant, and drawing his sword, threw away the scabbard, (prophetic omen!) and leaving his horse with one of his servants, was followed by the other three to the spot whence the noise proceeded.

On arriving, he discovered two men in tartans, with their backs to the opposite wall, beset by a throng of Edward's soldiers, who were cutting at them with merciless fury. At this sight, the brave Scots who accompanied Wallace, were so enraged, that, blowing their bugles to encourage the assailed, they hurried after their gallant leader, and attacking the banditti, each man cut his opponent to the ground.

Such unexpected assistance re-animated the drooping strength of one of the two from whom the cry had issued. He sprung from the wall with the vigor of a tiger, but at the moment received a wound in his back, which would have thrown him into the hands of his enemies, had not Wallace, who at that moment penetrated to his side, caught him in his left arm, and with his right cleared the way, while he called to his men who were fighting near him—"To the Glen!" as he spoke, he threw the wounded stranger, who had fainted with loss of blood, into their arms. The other poor fellow, whose cries had first attracted Wallace, at that instant fell covered with blood, exclaiming—"save! save! my lord!"

Two of the servants having obeyed, had carried their senseless burthen towards the horses; but the third could not move, being hemmed in by the furious soldiers. Wallace made a passage to his rescue; but he soon found himself alone with the assailants, for his already wounded follower received a gash in the sword arm which so disabled him, that his master ordered him to seek safety in flight, and leave him to his own strength and heaven. One base wretch, as the poor servant was retreating, made a stroke at his neck, which would have severed his head from his body, had not the trusty claymore of Wallace struck down the pending weapon of the coward, and received his rushing body upon its point. He fell with bitter imprecations, calling aloud for vengeance.

A dreadful cry was now raised by the whole band of assassins.—"Murder!—treason!—Arthur Heselrigge is slain!" The uproar became general. The windows of the adjoining houses were thrown open; people armed and unarmed issued from their doors, and pressed forward to enquire the cause of the alarm. Wallace was nearly overpowered; a hundred swords flashed in the torch-light, and were levelled towards him; but at the moment when he expected they would all be sheathed in his heart, the earth gave way under his feet, and he sunk into utter darkness.

He fell upon, what he knew by its perfume, to be a quantity of gathered broom; and concluding that the weight of the thronging multitude had burst his passage through some archway into a cellar, he sprung on his feet; and though he heard the curses of several wretches who had fallen with him and fared worse, he moved gently towards a half-opened door, pointed out to him by a faint gleam from an inner passage. The men uttered a shout as they saw him darken the light which glimmered through it; but they were incapable of pursuit; and Wallace, aware of his danger, flew with the fleetness of a deer across the adjoining apartment, (a kitchen deserted by its inhabitants now in the street;) and darting through the window, which he burst open, leaped out at the foot of the Lanerk hills.

The cries of the soldiers, enraged at his escape, echoed in his ears till distance sunk them into hoars murmurs.

## The Scottish Chiefs

He pursued his way without stopping, along the crags, through the valley, and across the river to the cliffs which overlooked the garden of Ellerslie. Springing on the projecting point of the nearest, he leaped into the midst of a thicket of honey-suckles. This was the favorite bower of his Marion! The soft perfume, as it saluted his senses, seemed to breathe peace and safety; and as he emerged from their fragrant embraces, he walked with a calmer step towards the house. He approached the door which led from the parlour into the garden. It was open. He beheld his beloved, in her white night-dress leaning over a couch on which was laid the person he had rescued. Halbert was dressing his wounds.

Wallace paused for a moment to contemplate his lovely wife in this more lovely act of charity. Her beautiful hands held a cup to the lips of the stranger, while her long hair, escaped from the band that confined it, fell in long jetty ringlets, and mingled with his silver locks.

"Marion!" burst from the overflowing soul of her fond husband. She looked up at the well-known sound, and with a cry of joy rushed forward and threw herself into his arms; her tears flowed, she sobbed—she clung to his breast. It was the first time that Wallace had been from her; she had feared it would have been the last. The hour—the conflict—the bleeding stranger! But now he was returned—he was safe!

"Art thou indeed here?" exclaimed she.—Blood fell from his forehead upon her face and bosom; "O my Wallace, my Wallace," cried she, in an agony clasping him to her heart.

"Fear not my love! it is a mere scratch. All is well, since the wounded stranger is safe."

"But you bleed!" returned she.—No tears now impeded her voice. Terror had checked their joyful currents; and she felt as if she expected the life-blood to issue from the wound on which she gazed.

"I hope my preserver is not mortally hurt?" inquired the stranger.

"Oh, no," replied Wallace, putting back the hair from his forehead; "a mere trifle!"—That the action had discovered the gash to be wider than he thought, he saw in the countenance of his wife; she turned deadly pale. "Marion," said he, "to convince you how causeless are your fears, you shall cure me yourself; and with no other surgery than your girdle!"

When lady Wallace heard his gay tone, and saw the unforced smiles on his lips, she took courage; and remembering the deep wounds she had just assisted Halbert to dress without any alarm for the stranger's life, she began to hope that she need not now fear for the object dearest to her in existence. Rising from her husband's arms, with a languid smile she unbound the linen fillet from her waist; and Halbert having poured some balsam into the wound, she prepared to apply the bandage; but when she lifted his hair from his temple, that hair which had so often been the object of her admiration as it hung in amber tresses over his polished forehead! when the clotted blood met her fingers, a mist seemed to pass over her sight; she paused for a moment: but rallying her strength as the cheerful voice of her husband conversing with his guest, assured her fear was groundless, she tied the fillet; and stealing a soft kiss on his cheek as she finished, seated herself yet trembling by his side.

"Gallant Wallace," continued the stranger; for agitation had prevented her hearing what had been said before; "it is Donald Earl of Mar who owes to you his life."

"Then blest be my arm," exclaimed Wallace, in a glow of surprised delight, "that has preserved a life so precious to my country!"

"May it indeed be blest!" cried Lord Mar, "for this night it has made the Southrons feel that there is yet one man in Scotland who fears not to resist oppression and to punish treachery."

"Treachery! what treachery?" inquired Lady Wallace, her alarmed spirit still hovering about her soul's far dearer part! and thinking that all pointed at him; "is any meant to my husband?"

"None to Sir William Wallace, more than to any other brave Scot," replied the Earl; "But we all see the oppression of our country, we all know the treachery by which it was subjugated; and this night, in my own person, I have felt the effects of both. Heselrigge, the English governor of Lanerk, dispatched a body of men to Bothwell castle, (where my family now are) on a plea, that as its lord was adverse from Edward, and gone to the Highlands, it must be searched in the King's name for traitorous papers. Considering myself the representative of my, brother-in-law Lord Bothwell, and suspecting they might be only a private marauding party, I refused to admit the soldiers; and saw them depart from the gates, swearing to return the next day with a stronger force and storm the castle. To be ascertained of the fact, and to appeal against such unprovoked tyranny, should it be true, I immediately followed the detachment to Lanerk.

"I saw Heselrigge—He avowed the transaction; but being awed by the power which he thinks I possess in the

## The Scottish Chiefs

country, he consented to spare Bothwell while I and my family remain in it. As it was nearly dark, I took my leave; and was proceeding out of the hall to join my servants in the court-yard, when a young man accosted me. I recognized him to be the officer who had commanded the party I had driven from the castle. Heselrigge having told me that he was his nephew, I made no hesitation to go back with him, as he said his uncle had forgotten to communicate something of importance, and begged me to return. I followed his steps; but instead of conducting me to the room in which I had conversed with Heselrigge, he led me along a dark passage into a small apartment, where, telling me his uncle would attend me; he suddenly retreated out of the door, and before I could recollect myself, I heard him bolt it after him.

"I now judged myself a prisoner; and alarmed at what might be the fate of my defenceless family, made every essay, but in vain, to force open the door; the noise seemed to reach no ear; and driven to despair, I was in a state of mind not to be described, when the bolt was undrawn, and two men entered with manacles in their hands. They attempted to seize me, telling me I was the prisoner of King Edward. I listened not to what they said, but wounding one with my dagger, (which I had previously drawn, to be prepared against violence,) I knocked the other down; and darting past him, made my way through what passages I cannot tell, till I found myself in a street leading from behind the governor's house. I ran against some one as I rushed from the portal; it was my servant Neil. I hastily told him to draw his sword and follow me. We then hurried forward, he telling me he had just stepped out of the hall to observe the night, while the rest of my men were awaiting me there, with wonder at my delay.

Rejoicing at my escape, and fearing the worst of consequences from the visit of Heselrigge and his miscreants at Bothwell castle, I was hastening onward, determined to pursue my way on foot to the protection of my family, when, at the turning of an angle which leads to the Bothwell-road, we found ourselves surrounded by a crowd of armed men. The moon shone full on their faces, and I discovered they were Southrons, and that young Heselrigge was at their head.

"Villain!" cried he, aiming a blow at my head with his uplifted battle-axe, "you have escaped me once, but you shall now die! The plunder of Bothwell, my lads!" cried he to the soldiers; "down with its lord, and all but the lovely Helen shall be yours!"

In a moment every sword was levelled towards me. They wounded me in several places; but the thought of my daughter gave supernatural vigour to my arm, and I defended myself from the death they threatened, till the cries of my dying servant brought you my brave deliverer to my rescue. But, while I am safe, perhaps my treacherous assaulter has marched towards Bothwell, too sure to commit the horrid violence he meditates: there are none to guard my child but a few domestics, the unpractised sword of my stripling nephew, and the feeble arms of my wife."

"Be easy on that head," interrupted Wallace, "I believe the infamous leader of the banditti fell by my hand; for the soldiers made an outcry that Arthur Heselrigge was killed; and then pressing on me to take revenge, their weight broke a passage into a vault, through which I escaped—"

"Save, save yourself, my master!" cried a man rushing in from the garden; "you are pursued:—save, save—" while he spoke, he fell down covered with blood, and in a swoon, at Wallace's feet. The chief perceived that it was honest Dugald; he whom he had bidden seek safety in flight; and who, from the bleeding of his wounds and consequent debility, had been all this while reaching Ellerslie.

Wallace had hardly time to give him to the care of Halbert, when the voice of war assaulted his ears. The outcry of men demanding admittance, and the terrific sounds of spears rattling against the shields of their owners told the astonished group within that the house was beset by armed men.

Blood for blood! cried a horrid voice, which penetrated the almost palsied senses of lady Marion; vengeance on Wallace for the murder of Heselrigge!

"Fly! fly!" cried she, looking wildly at her husband.

"Whither?" answered he, supporting her in his arms; "would this be a moment to leave you and our wounded guest? I must meet these assailants."

"Not now;" cried Lord Mar, "hear you not by the uproar how numerous they are? mark that shout; they thirst for blood. In pity fly! if you have love for your wife or regard for me, delay not a moment! again—" The uproar redoubled, and the room was instantly filled with shrieking women in their night clothes; the attendants of lady Wallace. She lay almost expiring on her husband's breast.

## The Scottish Chiefs

"O my lord," cried the terrified creatures wringing their hands, "what will become of us? the Southrons are at the gates, and we shall be lost for ever."

"Fear not," replied Wallace, "retire to your chambers. I am the person they seek; none else will meet with injury."

The women, appeased by this assurance, retreated to their apartments; and Wallace turning to the earl, who continued to enforce the necessity of his flight, repeated that he would not consent to leave his wife in such a tumult. "I entreat you to leave me," cried she in a hardly articulate voice, "Leave me, or see me die!"

As she spoke, there was a violent crash, and a tremendous burst of imprecations. Three of Wallace's men ran breathlessly into the room. Two of the assailants had climbed to the hall window; they were just thrown back upon the cliffs, and one killed. "Conceal yourself," said the Scots to Wallace, "for in a few minutes more, your men will not be able to maintain the gates."

"Yes, my dear lord," cried Halbert, "there is the dry well at the end of the garden; at the bottom of that you will be safe."

"By your love for me, Wallace; by all you owe to the tender affections of your grandfather, hearken to him!" cried Lady Marion, falling at his feet, and clasping his knees with energy, "I kneel for my life in kneeling for yours! Pity the grey hairs of Sir Ronald, whom your untimely death would bring to the grave!—Pity your unborn child!—Fly, Wallace, fly, if you would have me live!"—She was pale and breathless.

"Angel of my life!" exclaimed Wallace, straining her to his heart, "I obey thee. But if a hand of one of these desperate robbers dares to touch thy hallowed person.—"

"Think not so, my lord!" interrupted Halbert, "it is you they seek.—Not finding you, they will be too eager in pursuit, to molest my lady.—I will preserve her from affront at the peril of my life."

"I shall be safe," whispered Marion, "only fly! while you are here, their shouts kill me."

"But thou shalt go with me," returned he, "the well will contain us all. But first, let our faithful Halbert, and these honest fellows, lower Lord Mar into the place of refuge. He being the cause of the affray, if discovered, would be immediately sacrificed."

Lord Mar acquiesced. And while the contention was so loud without, as to threaten the tearing down of the walls, the Earl was carried into the garden. He was followed by Sir William Wallace, to whose arm his wife yet fondly clung. At every cry of the enemy, and at every shock they gave to his yet impregnable gates, she breathed the shorter, and was clasped by the lord of her heart still more closely to his bosom.

At the well side they found the Earl bound with the rope that was to lower him down. By great care it was safely done; and the cord being brought up again, before it was tied round Wallace, (as Marion insisted he should descend next) he recollected that the iron box swung at his side, might hurt the wounded nobleman, by striking him in his descent. Unbuckling it, he told his faithful old harper it contained matters of great value, and desired it might be lowered first.

Lord Mar, beneath, was releasing it from the rope, when a shout of triumph pierced their ears. A party of the English soldiers having come round the heights, from the point of a high craig, had leaped the wall of the garden, and were within a few yards of the well. For Wallace to descend now was impossible. "That tree!" whispered Marion, pointing to an oak near which they stood. As she spoke she slid from his arms, and in a moment, along with the venerable Halbert who seized her by the hand, she disappeared amid the adjoining thicket. The two servants fled also.

Wallace finding himself alone, the next instant was like one of his native eagles, looking down from the towering top of the wood, upon his enemies.—They passed, beneath him, denouncing vengeance upon the assassin of Arthur Heselrigge! At that moment, one who seemed by the brightness of his armour to be their leader, stopped under the tree, declaring he had sprained his ankle in leaping from the wall, and must wait a few minutes to recover himself. Several of the soldiers crowded round him; but he desired them to pursue their duty, to leave him, search the house, and bring Wallace dead or alive before him.

They obeyed; while others, who had gained admittance to the tower through the now forced gates, ran towards their leader, saying that the murderer could no where be found.

"But here is a gay lady," cried one, "perhaps she can inform us!" and at that moment Marion and Halbert appeared between a band of men. The lighted torches which the soldiers held, shone full on her face. Though pale as monumental marble, yet the exquisite beauty of her features, and the calm dignity which commanded from her

## The Scottish Chiefs

eyes, awed the officer into respect and admiration.

"Soldiers, stand back!" cried he, advancing to Lady Wallace; "Fear not madam!" as the words passed his lips a flight of arrows flew into the bosom of the tree.—A piercing shriek from Marion was her only answer.—"O! my lady's falcon!" cried Halbert, alarmed for the fate of his master.—He saw a violent agitation of the branches had excited an indefinite suspicion in a body of archers who stood near, and who, with one mind, discharged their arrows to the spot.—Halbert's ready excuse both for the disturbance in the tree, and his lady's shriek, was prompted and warranted true, by the appearance of a large bird which the rushing of the arrows had frightened from her nest; she rose suddenly from amongst the branches, and soared away far to the east, with loud screams.—

All being again still, Marion hoped that her husband had escaped any mortal injury from the arrows; and turning with recovered composure to the officer, heard him, with a glow of comfort, reprimand his men for daring to draw their bows without his orders. Then addressing her, "I beg your pardon madam," said he, "both for the alarm these hot-headed men have occasioned you, and for the violence they have committed in forcing one of your sex and beauty before me. Had I expected to have found a lady here, I should have issued orders to have prevented this: But, I am sent hither in quest of Sir William Wallace, who, by a mortal attack made on the person of the governor of Lanerk's nephew, has forfeited his life. The scabbard of his sword, found beside the murdered Heselrigge, is an undeniable proof of his guilt.—Direct us to find him, and not only release, but the favor of the English monarch will await your allegiance."—

"I am Sir William Wallace's wife."—Returned the gentle Marion in a firm tone; "and by what authority you seek him thus, and presume to call him guilty, I cannot understand."—

"By the authority of the laws, madam, which he has violated."—

"What laws?" rejoined she; "Sir William Wallace acknowledges none but those of his God and his country.—Neither of these has he transgressed!"—

"He, this night, assassinated Arthur Heselrigge in the streets of Lanerk; and that condemns him by the last declaration of King Edward:—Whatever Scot maltreats any one of the English soldiers, or civil officers garrisoned in the towns of Scotland, shall thereby forfeit his life as the penalty due to his crime."—

"A tyrant's law, sir, to which no freeborn Scot will submit! But even were it allowed by my countrymen, in this case it can have no hold on my husband.—That he is a Scot, he glories: and not that he maltreated any Englishman in the streets of Lanerk, do I glory;—but, because, when he saw two defenceless men borne down by a band of armed soldiers, he exposed his unshielded breast in their defence! one of the two, died, covered with wounds. That the governor's nephew also fell, was a just retribution for his heading so unequal a contest; and no crime in Sir William Wallace: for he slew him to preserve a feeble old man, who had a hundred English swords levelled at his life."—

The officer paused for a moment; and then ordering his solders to fall farther back; when they were at a sufficient distance, he offered to take Lady Wallace's hand, but she withstood his motion with a reserved air, and said, "Speak, sir, what you would say, or allow me to retire."—

"I mean not to offend you, noble lady;" continued he—"had I a wife lovely as yourself, I hope, were I in like circumstances, in the like manner she would defend my life and honor.—I knew not the particulars of the affair in which Arthur Heselrigge fell, till I heard them from your lips; I can easily credit them, for I know his unmanly character. Wallace is a Scot; and acted in Scotland, as Gilbert Hambleton would have done in England, were it possible for any vile foreigner there to put his foot upon the neck of a countryman of his.—Wherever you have concealed your husband, let it be a distant asylum, until the rage of the governor be appeased. At present, no track within the jurisdiction of Lanerk will be left unsearched by his indefatigable revenge."

Lady Wallace, overcome with gratitude at this generous speech of the English officer, uttered some inarticulate words, expressive more in sound, than clearness, of her grateful feelings.—Hambleton continued.—"I will use my influence with Heselrigge to prevent the interior of your house being disturbed again; but, it being in the course of military operations, it will be impossible for me to free you from the disagreeable ceremony of a guard being placed to-morrow morning around the domains.—This, I know, will be done to intercept Sir William Wallace, should he attempt to return."

"Oh! that he were indeed far distant!" thought the now trembling Lady Wallace. The officer added;—"However, you shall be relieved of my detachment directly. I will now call off my men from a search which they must see is unavailing; and leave you, noble lady, to your rest." As he spoke, he waved his sword to

## The Scottish Chiefs

them who had seized the harper: They advanced, still holding their prisoner. He ordered them to commit the man to him, and to sound. The trumpeter obeyed; and in a few seconds the whole detachment was assembled before their commander.

"Soldiers!" cried he; "Sir William Wallace has escaped our hands. Return to your horses that we may march back to Lanerk, and search the other side of the town. Lead forth, and I will follow."

The troops obeyed; and falling back through the opened gates, left Sir Gilbert Hambleton alone with Lady Wallace and the wondering Halbert. The brave young man took the now not withdrawn hand of the grateful Marion, who had stood trembling while so many of her husband's mortal enemies were assembled under the place of his concealment.

"Noble Englishman," said she, as the last body of soldiers passed from her sight, "I cannot enough thank you for this generous conduct! but, should you or yours be ever in the like extremity with my beloved Wallace; (and in these tyrannous times, what brave spirit can answer for its continued safety?) May the ear which has heard you this night, at that hour repay my gratitude!"

"Sweet lady," answered Hambleton; "I thank you for your prayer. God is indeed the benefactor of a true soldier: and though I serve my King and obey my commanders, yet it is only to the Lord of battles that I look for a sure reward; and whether he pay me here with victories and honors, or take my soul through a rent in my breast to receive my laurel in paradise, it is all one to Gilbert Hambleton.—But the night is cold: I must see you safe within your own doors; and then, lady, farewell!"

Lady Wallace yielded to the impulse of his hand with redoubled haste, as she heard a sudden rustling of the tree above her head. Hambleton did not notice it; but desiring Halbert to follow, in a few minutes disappeared with the agitated Marion into the house.

Wallace, whose spirit could ill brook the sight of his domains filled with hostile troops, and the wife of his bosom brought a prisoner before their commander, would instantly have braved all dangers, and have leaped down amongst them, had not, at the instant he placed his foot on a lower bough to make a spring, the courteous address of Hambleton to his wife, made him hesitate. He listened to the replies of his Marion with exultation; and when the Englishman ordered his men to withdraw, and delivered himself so generously respecting the safety of the man he came to seize, Wallace could hardly prevent a noble confidence in such virtue from compelling him to come from his concealment, and thank him on the spot. But the consideration that such a disclosure would put the military duty and the generous nature of the commander at variance, he desisted with such an agitation of spirits, that the boughs again shook under him, and re-awakened the alarm of his trembling wife.

"Omnipotent Virtue!" exclaimed Wallace to himself; "if it were possible that thy generous spirit could animate the breast of an invading conqueror, how soon would the vanquished cease to forget their former freedom, and learn to love their vassalage.—This man's nobleness, how soon has it disarmed the vengeance with which, when I ascended this tree, I prayed might extirpate every follower of the detested Edward!"

"Sir William! my master!" cried a well known voice in a suppressed tone, as if still fearful of being overheard. It was Halbert's; "speak, my dear lord, are you safe?"

"In heart and body!" returned Wallace, sliding from the tree, and leaping on the ground;—"One only of the arrows touched me; and that merely struck against my bugle and fell back amongst the leaves. I must now hasten to the dearest, the noblest of women!"

Halbert begged him to stay till they should hear the retreat from the English trumpets. "Till their troops are out of sight," added he, "I cannot believe you will be safe."

"Hark!" cried Wallace; "The horses are now descending the craig. That must satisfy you, honest Halbert." With these words he flew across the lawn, and entering the house, met the returning Marion, who had just bade farewell to Hambleton.—She rushed into his arms, and with the excess of a disturbed and uncertain joy, fainted on his neck. Her gentle spirit had been too powerfully excited by the preceding scenes. Unaccustomed to tumult of any kind, and nursed in the bosom of fondness, till now no blast had blown on her tender form, no harshness had ever ruffled the blissful serenity of her mind. What then was the shock of this evening's violence! Her husband pursued as a murderer; herself exposed to the midnight air, and dragged by the hands of merciless soldiers, to betray the man she loved! All these scenes were new to her; and though a kind of preternatural strength supported her through them, yet when the cause of immediate exertion was over; when she fell once more into her husband's extended arms, she seemed there to have found again her shelter, and the pillow whereon her harrassed soul might

## The Scottish Chiefs

again repose.

"My life! my best treasure! preserver of thy Wallace! look on him!" exclaimed he; "bless him with a smile from those dear eyes."

His voice, his caresses, soon restored her to sensibility and recollection. She leaned on his breast, and wept tears of heavenly delight: With love's own eloquence he thanked heaven that he had escaped the search and the arrows of his enemies.

"But my dear lady," interrupted Halbert; "remember that my master must not stay here. You know the English commander said, that if he would preserve his life, he must fly far away.—Nay, spies may even now be lurking to betray him."

"You are right;" said Marion, rising from her husband's arms; "my Wallace, you must depart. Should the guard arrive soon, your flight may be prevented. You must go now:—But, oh, whither?"

"Not very distant, my love.—In going from thee, I leave behind all that makes life precious to me; how then can I go far away? No; there are recesses amongst the Cartlane craigs discovered by me when hunting, and which I believe have been visited by no mortal foot but my own: There will I be, my Marion, before sunrise; and before it sets, thither must you send Halbert to tell me how you fare. Three notes from thine own sweet strains of *Thusa ha measg na reultan mor*, blown by his pipe, shall be a sign to me that he is there, and I will come forth to hear tidings of thee."

"Ah, my Wallace, let me go with thee!"

"What, dearest," returned he, "to live amidst rocks and streams! to expose thy tender self and thine unborn infant to all the accidents of such a lodging?"

"But are not you going to so rough, so dangerous a lodging?" asked she, winding her arms around him. "O! would not rocks and streams be heaven's paradise to me, when blessed with the presence of my husband? Ah! let me go!"

"Impossible, my lady," cried Halbert; afraid that the melting heart of his master would consent; "You are perfectly safe here; and your flight would awaken suspicion in the English that he had not gone far.—Your ease and safety would be dearer to him than his own life; and most likely, by his anxiety to preserve them, he would the more easily be traced; and so fall a ready sacrifice to the enemy."

"It is true, my Marion, what he says; I could not preserve you in the places to which I go."

"But the hardships you will endure!" cried she, "to sleep on the cold stones, with no covering but the sky, or the dripping vault of some dreary cave! I have not courage to abandon you alone to such cruel rigors."

"Cease, my beloved!" interrupted he, "cease these groundless alarms. Neither rocks nor storms have any threats to me. It is only tender woman's cares that make man's body delicate. Before I was thine, my Marion, I have lain whole nights upon the mountain's brow counting the wintry stars, as I impatiently awaited the hunter's horn that was to recal me to the chace in Glenfinlass. Alike to Wallace is the couch of down, or the bed of heather; so, best beloved of my heart, grieve not at hardships which were once my sport, and will now be my safety."

"Then farewell! May good angels guard thee!" Her voice failed, she put his hand to her lips. "Courage, my Marion," said he "remember that Wallace lives but in thee. Revive, be happy for my sake; and God, who putteth down the oppressor, will restore me again to thine arms." She spoke not, but rising from his breast, clasped her hands together, and looked up with an expression of fervent prayer; and then smiling through a shower of tears, she waved her hand to him to depart, and instantly disappeared into her own chamber.

Wallace gazed at the closed door with his soul in his eyes. To leave his Marion thus; to quit her who was the best part of his being; who seemed the very spring of the life now throbbing in his heart; was a contention with his fond, fond love, almost too powerful for his resolution. Here indeed his brave spirit gave way, and he would have followed her, and perhaps have determined to await his fate at her side, had not Halbert, reading his mind in his countenance, taken him by the arm and drawn him towards the portal.

Wallace soon recovered his better reason; and obeying the friendly violence of his servant, who had pulled him out into the garden, he accompanied him to the quarter which pointed towards the heights that lead to the remotest recesses of the Clyde. In their way they approached the well where lord Mar lay. Wallace finding that the Earl had not been inquired for, deemed his stay to be without peril; and intending to inform him of the necessity which still impelled his own flight, he called to him, but no voice answered. He looked down, and seeing him extended at the



## The Scottish Chiefs

bottom without motion; "I fear," said he, "the Earl is dead. As soon as I am gone, and you can collect the dispersed servants, send one into the well to bring him forth; and if he be indeed no more, deposit his body in my oratory, and then send to the Countess of Mar, and receive her commands respecting his remains. The iron box, now in the well, is of inestimable value. Take it to lady Wallace, and tell her she must guard it as she has done my life; but not to look into it at the peril of what is yet dearer to her—my honour."

Halbert promised to adhere to his master's orders: and Wallace girding on his sword, and taking his hunting spear in his hand, (a weapon with which the care of his venerable domestic had provided him, for the convenience of leaping the precipices) he pressed the faithful hand that presented it; and enjoining him to be watchful of the tranquillity of his lady, and to be with him in the evening near the Corie Lin; he climbed the wall which joined the nearest craig, and bounding over it, was out of sight in an instant.

### CHAP. III

Halbert returned to the house, and entering the room softly into which Marion had withdrawn, beheld her on her knees before a crucifix: she was praying fervently for the safety of her beloved Wallace.

"May he, O gracious Lord!" cried she, "soon return to his home. But if I am to see him here no more, O may it please thee to grant me to meet him within thy arms in Heaven!"

"Hear her, blessed son of Mary!" ejaculated the old man. She looked round, and rising from her knees; demanded of him in a kind but anxious voice, whether he had left her lord in security.

"In the way to it, my lady!" answered Halbert. He then repeated all that Wallace had said at parting; and afterwards, tried to prevail on her to go to rest. "Sleep cannot visit my eyes this night, my faithful creature;" replied she, "my spirit will follow Wallace in his mountain flight. Go you to your chamber. After you have had repose, that will be time enough to revisit the remains of the poor Earl, and to bring them with the box to the house. I will take a religious charge of both, for the sake of the dear entruster."

Halbert persuaded his lady to lie down on the bed, that her limbs at least might rest after the fatigue of so harrassing a night; and she, little suspecting that he meant to do otherwise than to sleep also, kindly wished him repose, and retired.

Her maids during the late terror had dispersed, and were no where to be found; and the men servants too, after their stout resistance at the gates had all disappeared; some fled, and others were sent away prisoners to Lanerk, while the good Hambleton was conversing with Lady Wallace. Halbert therefore resigned himself to await with patience the rising of the sun, when he hoped some of the scared domestics would return, or he might himself go to the poor cotters who lived in the depths of the glen, and bring them to supply the place of the fugitives.

Thus musing he sat on the stone bench which ran round the hall, watching with anxiety the appearance of that orb, whose setting beams he hoped should light him back with such tidings of Sir William Wallace as would prove the best comforter to the lonely heart of his lady. All was still as death. Nothing was heard but the sighing of the trees as they waved before the western window which opened towards the Lanerk hills. The morning was yet grey; and the fresh air blowing in rather chilly, Halbert rose to close the wooden casement; at that moment his eyes were arrested by a party of armed men slowly proceeding down the opposite declivity. The platform before the house was already filled with English. Alarmed at the sight of such a host, although he expected that a guard would arrive, he was retreating across the apartment towards his lady's room, when the great hall door was burst open by a band of soldiers who rushed forward and seized him.

"Tell me, dotard!" cried their leader, a man of low stature, with grey locks but a fierce countenance; "where is the murderer? Where is Sir William Wallace? speak, or the torture shall force you."

Halbert trembled, but it was for his defenceless lady, not for himself.—"My lord," said he in a faltering voice, "is far from hence."

"Where?"

"I know not."

"Thou shalt be made to know, thou hoary-headed villain!" cried the same violent interrogator. "Where is the assassin's wife? I will confront ye—seek her out."

At that word the soldiers parted right and left; and in a moment afterwards three of them appeared, with shouts, bringing in the unhappy Marion.

"Oh, my lady!" cried Halbert, struggling to approach her, as with terrified apprehension she looked around her. But they held her fast; and he saw her led up to the merciless wretch who had given the orders to have her summoned.

"Woman," cried he, as soon as she stood before him; "I am the governor of Lanerk. You now stand before the representative of the great King Edward: and on your allegiance to him, and on the peril of your life, I command you to answer me three questions. Where is Sir William Wallace, the murderer of my nephew? Who is that old Scot for whom my nephew was slain? He and his whole family shall meet my vengeance! and tell me, where is that box of treasure which your husband stole from Douglas castle? answer me these questions on your life."

Lady Wallace remained silent.

## The Scottish Chiefs

"Speak woman!" demanded the governor; "if fear cannot move you, know that I can reward as well as avenge. I will endow you richly, if you declare the truth. If you persist to refuse, you die."

"Then I die," replied she, scarcely opening her half-closed eyes, as she leaned fainting and motionless against the shoulder of the soldier who held her.

"What?" cried the governor, stifling his rage, in hopes to gain by persuasion on a spirit which he found threats could not intimidate; "can so gentle a lady as yourself, reject the favour of England; large grants in this country; and perhaps a fine English knight for a husband? when you might have all for the trifling service of giving up a traitor to his liege lord, and confessing where his robberies lie concealed!—speak, fair dame; give me this information, and the lands of the wounded chieftain whom Wallace brought here, with the hand of the handsome Sir Gilbert Hambleton, shall be your reward. Rich, and a beauty in Edward's court! lady, can you now refuse to purchase all, by declaring the hiding place of the traitor Wallace?"

"It is easier to die."

"Fool!" cried Heselrigge, driven from his assumed temper by her steady denial: "What? Is it easier for these dainty limbs to be hacked to pieces by my soldiers' axes? Is it easier for that fair bosom to be trodden underfoot by my horses' hoofs? and for that beauteous head of thine to decorate my lance?—Is all this easier than to tell me where to find a murderer and his gold?"

Lady Wallace shuddered; she stretched her hands to Heaven: "Blessed Virgin, to thee I commit myself!"

"Speak once for all!" cried the enraged governor, drawing his sword; "I am no waxen-hearted Hambleton to be cajoled by your beauty.—Declare where Wallace is concealed, or dread my vengeance."

The horrid steel gleamed across the eyes of the unhappy Marion; unable longer to sustain herself, she sunk on the ground.

"Kneel not to me for mercy;" cried the infuriate wretch; "I grant none, unless you confess your husband's hiding place."

A momentary strength darted from the heart of lady Wallace, to her voice.—"I kneel to Heaven alone! and may it ever preserve my Wallace from the fangs of Edward and his tyrants!"

"Blasphemous wretch!" cried Heselrigge, and at that moment he plunged his sword into her defenceless breast. Halbert, who had all this time been held back by the soldiers, awaiting with anxiety his mistress's replies, could not believe that the fierce interlocuter would perpetrate the horrid deed he threatened; but seeing it done, with a giant's strength and a terrible cry, he burst from the hands which held him, and had thrown himself on the bleeding Marion before her murderer could strike his second blow. However it fell, and pierced though the neck of the faithful servant before it reached her heart.—She opened her dying eyes for a moment, and seeing who it was that would have shielded her life, just articulated—"Halbert! my Wallace—to God"—and with the last unfinished sentence, her pure soul took its flight to regions of eternal peace.

The good old man's heart almost burst, when he felt that before heaving bosom now motionless; and groaning with grief and fainting with loss of blood, he sunk senseless on her body.

A terrible stillness was now in the hall. Not a man spoke; all stood looking on each other with a stern horror marking each pale countenance. Heselrigge, dropping his blood-stained sword on the ground, perceived by the behaviour of his men that he had gone too far; and fearful of arousing the indignation of awakened humanity to some act against himself, he addressed the soldiers in an unusual accent of condescension: "My friends," said he, "we will now return to Lanerk.—Tomorrow you may come back; for I reward your services of this night with the plunder of Ellerslie."

"May a curse light on him who first carries a stick from its grounds!" exclaimed a veteran from the farther end of the hall. "Amen!" murmured all the soldiers, with one consent; and falling back, they disappeared one by one out of the great door, leaving Heselrigge alone with the old soldier, who stood, leaning on his sword, looking on the murdered lady.

"Grimsby! why stand you there?" demanded Heselrigge, "follow me."

"Never." returned the soldier.

"What?" exclaimed the governor, momentarily forgetting his panic; "how dare you speak thus to your commanding officer? march on before me this instant, or expect to be treated as a rebel."

"I march at your command no more," replied the veteran, eyeing him resolutely; "the moment you perpetrated this bloody deed, you became unworthy of the name of man; and I should disgrace my own manhood were I ever

## The Scottish Chiefs

again to obey the word of such a monster."

"Villain!" cried the enraged Heselrigge, "you shall die for this!"

"That may be;" answered Grimsby, "by the hands of some tyrant like yourself: but no brave man, not the royal Edward himself, would do otherwise than acquit his soldier for refusing obedience to the murderer of an innocent woman. It was not so he treated the wives and daughters of the slaughtered Saracens, when I followed his banners over the fields of Palestine!"

"Thou canting miscreant!" cried Helesrigge, springing on him suddenly, and darting his dagger into his breast. But the hand of the soldier arrested the weapon at the moment its point entered the skin; and at the same instant closing upon the governor, with a turn of his foot, he threw him to the ground. Heselrigge, as he lay prostrate, his dagger being now in his adversary's hand, with the most dastardly promises, implored for life.

"Monster!" cried the soldier, rising, "I would not pollute my honest hands with such unnatural blood. Neither, though thy hand has been lifted against my life, would I willingly take thine. It is not rebellion against my commander that actuates me, but hatred of the vilest of murderers. I go far from you or your power: But if you forswear your voluntary oath, and attempt to seek me out for vengeance, remember that it is a soldier of the cross you pursue! and a dire retribution shall be demanded by heaven, at a moment you cannot avoid, and with a horror commensurate with your crimes."

There was a solemnity, and a determination in the voice and manner of the soldier, that paralyzed the intimidated soul of the governor; he trembled violently, and repeating his oath of leaving Grimsby unmolested, at last obtained his permission to return to Lanerk. The men, in obedience to the conscience-struck orders of their commander, had mounted their horses, and were now far out of sight; having left Heselrigge's charger fastened in the court yard, where he had dismounted. He was approaching it with haste, when the soldier, with a prudent suspicion, called out; "Stop, Sir! you must walk to Lanerk. The cruel are generally false. I cannot trust your word, should you have the power to break it: leave this horse here: to-morrow you may send for it. I shall then be far away."

Heselrigge saw that remonstrance would be unavailing; and shaking with fear and impotent rage, he turned into the path which, after five weary miles, would lead him once more to his citadel.

The soldier, fully aware, from the moment his manly spirit had dared to deliver its abhorrence of Lady Wallace's murder, that his life would no longer be safe within reach of the machinations of Heselrigge; and determined, alike by detestation of, him, and regard for his own preservation, resolved to take shelter in the mountains till he could have an opportunity of going beyond sea to join his king's troops in the Guienne wars.

Full of these thoughts he returned into the hall.—But as he approached the bleeding group on the floor, he perceived it move; hoping, that perhaps the unhappy lady might not be quite dead, he drew near; but, alas! as he bent to examine, he touched her hand, and found it cold as snow. The blood which had streamed from the now exhausted heart, lay congealed upon her arms and bosom.—Grimsby shuddered.—Again he saw her move; but it was not with her own life, but the recovering senses of her faithful servant. The arms of Halbert still clinging round the body of his mistress, as motion was restored to them, had disturbed the remains of her who would wake no more; and so for an instant had raised an evanescent hope of her life in the breast of the soldier.

On seeing that existence yet struggled in one of these blameless victims, Grimsby did his utmost to revive the old man. He raised him from the ground, and setting him on the nearest bench, poured some strong liquor out of his ammunition-flask into his mouth. Halbert breathed freer; and his kind surgeon, with a rent from the venerable harper's own plaid, bound up the wound in his neck, which the air had already staunched. Halbert opened his eyes: when he fixed them on the rough features and English helmet of the soldier, he closed them again with a deep groan.

"My honest Scot," said Grimsby, perceiving that he thought him an enemy; "trust in me.—!I am a man like yourself; and though a Southron, am no enemy to age and helplessness."

The harper took courage at these words, and raising himself from the bench, he again looked at the soldier; but suddenly recollecting what had past, he turned his eyes towards the body of his mistress, on which the beams of the now rising sun were shining. He started up, and staggering towards it, would have fallen, had not Grimsby supported him.—!"O, what a sight is this!" cried he, wringing his hands, "my lady! my lovely lady! see how low she lies, who was once the delight of all eyes, the comforter of all hearts." The old man's sobs suffocated him. The veteran turned away his face; a tear dropped upon his hand. "Accursed Heselrigge," ejaculated he, "thy fate must

## The Scottish Chiefs

come!"

"If there be a man's heart in all Scotland, it is not far distant!" cried Halbert, "my master lives, and will avenge this night's murder.—!You weep soldier; and you will not betray what has now escaped me?"

"I have fought in Palestine," returned he, "and a soldier of the cross betrays none who trust in him. Saint Mary preserve your master and conduct you safely to him. We must both hasten hence. Heselrigge will surely send in pursuit of me: he is too vile to forgive the truth I have spoken to him; and should I fall into his power I could expect nothing less than death at his hands. Let me assist you to put this poor lady's remains in some decent place; and then my honest Scot, we must separate."

Halbert, at these words, threw himself upon the bosom of his mistress, and wept with loud lamentations over her. In vain he attempted to raise her in his feeble arms. "I have carried thee scores of times in thy blooming infancy;" cried he, "and now must I bear thee to thy grave? I had hoped that my eyes would have been closed by this dear hand."—As he spoke in stifled accents he pressed her cold hand to his lips with such convulsive sobs, that the soldier, fearing he would expire in the agony of his sorrow, took him almost motionless from the dead body, and exhorted him to repress such self-destroying grief for the sake of his master. Halbert gradually revived, and listening to him, cast a wishful look on the lifeless Marion.

"Thy babe, thine unborn babe!" cried he, "there sleeps the pride and hope of Ellerslie, the mother with her child. My widowed, childless master, what will comfort thee!"

The soldier fearing the ill consequence of further delay, again interrupted his lamentations with arguments for flight: and Halbert recollecting the oratory in which Wallace had ordered the body of the dead Lord Mar to be deposited, he named it to Grimsby; who, immediately wrapping Lady Wallace in the white garments which hung about her, raised her in his arms; and was conducted by Halbert to a little chapel, in the heart of a neighbouring cliff.

The still weeping old man removed the altar; and Grimsby, laying the body of Marion upon its marble platform, covered her with the velvet pall which he drew from the holy table, and laid the crucifix upon her bosom. Halbert, when he saw his beloved mistress thus hidden from his sight by this dismal vestment of death, threw himself on his knees beside her, and in the vehement language of grief offered up a prayer for her departed soul.

"Hear me, righteous judge of heaven and earth!" cried he, "as thou didst avenge the blood of innocence shed in Bethlehem, so let the grey hairs of Heselrigge be brought down in blood to the grave, for the murder of this innocent lady!" Halbert kissed the cross; and rising from his knees, went weeping out of the chapel, followed by the soldier.

Having closed the door, and carefully locked it; absorbed in meditation of what would be the agonized transports of his master, when, long before sun set, he should tell him of these grievous tidings, Halbert proceeded in silence, unconscious whither he went, till he and his companion, as they approached the well, were startled by a groan.

"Here is some one!" cried the soldier. "Is it possible he lives?" exclaimed Halbert, bending down to the edge of the well and calling to the Earl with the same inquiry. "Yes;" feebly answered his lordship; "I still exist, but am very faint.— If all be safe above, I pray remove me from this dismal place." Halbert replied that it was indeed necessary he should ascend immediately; and lowering the rope, he told him first to tie the iron box to it, and then himself. This done, with some difficulty, and the assistance of the wondering soldier, who now expected to see the husband of the unfortunate lady Wallace emerge to the knowledge of his loss; they at last effected the Earl's release. For a few seconds he supported himself on his countryman's shoulder, while the fresh morning air gradually revived his exhausted frame. The soldier looked at his grey locks, furrowed forehead, and grisd beard, and marvelled how such appendages of age could belong to the man whose resistless valour had discomfited the fierce determination of Arthur Heselrigge and his myrmidons. However, his doubts of the veteran before him being other than the brave Wallace, were soon removed by the Earl himself, who asked for a draught of the water which trickled down the opposite hill. Halbert went to bring it, and while he was absent, Lord Mar raised his eyes to inquire for Sir William and the Lady Marion. He started when he saw English armour on the man he would have accosted, and rising suddenly from the stone on which he sat, demanded in a stern voice, "Who art thou?"

"An Englishman;" answered the soldier: "one who does not, like the monster Heselrigge, disgrace the name. I would assist you, noble Wallace, to fly this spot; and after that, I shall seek refuge abroad, and there demonstrate

## The Scottish Chiefs

on the fields of Guienne, my fidelity to my king."

Mar looked at him steadily "You mistake; I am not Sir William Wallace."

At that moment Halbert came up with the water. The Earl drank it, though now, from the impulse surprize had given to his blood, he did not require its efficacy; and turning to the venerable bearer, he asked of him whether his master were safe.

"I trust he is;" replied the old man, "but your lordship must hasten hence. This place, this once dear Ellerslie, is now full of horror: a foul murder has been committed here since he left it."

"But where is Lady Wallace?" asked the Earl, "if there be such danger, we must not leave her to meet it."

"She will never meet danger more!" cried the old man, clasping his hands; "she is in the bosom of the virgin, and no second assassin's steel can reach her there!"

"What?" exclaimed the Earl, hardly articulate with horror; "is Lady Wallace murdered?" Halbert answered only by his tears.

"Yes," said the soldier, "and detestation of so unmanly an outrage, provoked me to desert his standard. But we must not lose time in unavailing lamentation; for Heselrigge will certainly return; and if we also would not be sacrificed to his rage, we must hence immediately."

The Earl, struck dumb at this recital, gave the soldier time to recount the particulars. When he had done, Lord Mar seeing the necessity for instant flight, ordered that three horses might be brought from the stables. Though he had fainted while in his concealment, yet the present shock gave such a sudden tension to his nerves, that he found he could now ride without difficulty.

Halbert went as he commanded, and returned with two horses; as he had only amongst rocks and glens to go, he did not bring one for himself; and begging that the good soldier might attend his lordship to Bothwell, he added, "He will guard you and this box, which Sir William Wallace holds as the apple of his eye. What it contains I know not; and none, he says, may dare to search into. But you will take care of it for his sake, till more peaceful times allow him to reclaim his own!"

"Fatal box," cried the soldier, regarding it with an abhorrent eye; "that was the leading cause which brought Heselrigge to Ellerslie."

"How?" inquired the Earl.—!Grimsby then briefly related, that immediately after the return to Lanerk of the detachment sent to Ellerslie under the command of Sir Gilbert Hambledon, an officer arrived from Douglas castle, (the property of which he, with a troop, had been deputed to guard in the king's name;) and he told the governor that Sir William Wallace had that evening taken a quantity of treasure from the castle of Douglas. His report was, that the English soldiers, who stood by the Scottish knight when he mounted at the castle gate, had seen an iron box under his arm; but not suspecting its having belonged to Douglas, they thought not of it till they over-heard Sir John Monteith, as he passed through one of the galleries, muttering something about gold and a box. To intercept the robber, (for so he chose to designate Wallace,) amongst his native glens, he deemed impracticable; and therefore, came immediately to lay the information before the governor of Lanerk. As the scabbard found in the affray with young Arthur had betrayed the victor to have been Sir William Wallace, this intimation of his having been also the instrument of wresting from the grasp of Heselrigge, the spoil he deemed his own, exasperated the governor to the most extravagant degree. Inflamed with the double furies of revenge and avarice, he ordered out a new troop. and placing himself at its head, took the way to Ellerslie; hoping by threats or persuasions, to discover from Lady Wallace, both the retreat of her husband and the concealment of the box. One of the servants, whom some of Hambledon's men had seized for the sake of information, on being threatened with the torture, confessed to Heselrigge, that not only Sir William Wallace was in the house when it was attacked, but that the person whom he rescued in the streets of Lanerk, and who proved to be a wealthy nobleman, was there also. This whetted the eagerness of the governor to reach Ellerslie. And expecting to get a rich booty, without the most distant idea of the horrors he was going to perpetrate, a large detachment of men followed him.

"To extort money from you, my Lord;" continued the soldier, "and to obtain that fatal box, were his main objects. But disappointed in his darling passion of avarice, he forgot he was a man, and the blood of innocence glutted his barbarous vengeance."

"Hateful gold!" cried Lord Mar, spurning the box with his foot; "it cannot be for itself that the noble Wallace so greatly prizes it! it must be a charge."

"I believe it was," returned Halbert, "for he enjoined my lady to preserve it for the sake of his honour. Take

## The Scottish Chiefs

care of it then my Lord for the same sacred reason."

The Englishman made no objection to accompany the Earl; and by a suggestion of his own, changing his English armour for a Scottish bonnet and cloak, which Halbert had brought him from the house; he was putting them on, when the Earl observed that the poor old harper stood near him with a drawn and bloodstained sword in his hand, on which he stedfastly gazed.—!"Whence came that horrid weapon?" cried Lord Mar.

"It is my Lady's blood;" replied Halbert, still looking on it; "I found it where she lay in the hall; and I will carry it to my master. Was not every drop of her blood dear to him? and here are many!" as the old man spoke, he bent his head on the sword, and groaned heavily.

"England shall hear more of this!" cried Mar, as he threw himself across the horse. "Give me that fatal box, I will buckle it to my saddle bow. Inadequate will be my utmost care of it, to repay the vast sorrows its preservation and mine have brought upon the head of my deliverer."

The Englishman in silence mounted his horse; and Halbert opening a backgate that led to the hills which lay between Ellerslie and Bothwell castle, Lord Mar took a golden-trophied bugle from his breast; "Give this to your master; and tell him that by whatever hands he sends it, the sight of it shall always command the services of Donald Mar. I go to Bothwell in expectation that he will join me there. In making it his home he will render me happy; for my friendship is now bound to him by bonds which only death can sever."

Halbert took the horn, and promising faithfully to repeat the Earl's message, he exchanged blessings with the honest soldier; and striking into a deep ravine, which led to the remote solitudes of the glen, pursued his way in dreadful silence. No human face of Scot or English cheered or scared him as he passed along. The tumult of the preceding night, by dispersing the servants of Ellerslie, had so alarmed the poor cottagers, that with one accord they fled towards the hills; there to await, amid those fastnesses of nature, and with their more robust brethren, (who, according to the custom of the country, had previously emigrated to the heights to feed their flocks) till tidings should arrive that all was still in the valley, and that they might return in peace. Halbert looked to the right and left; no smoke curling its grey mist from behind the intersecting rocks, reminded him of the gladsome morning hour, or invited him to take a moment's rest from his grievous journey. All was lonely and desolate; and sighing bitterly over the wide devastation, he concealed the fatal sword under his cloak; and by means of a staff which he broke from a withered tree, he walked resolutely though feebly down the winding way: But many a pointed craig pierced his aged feet as he explored the almost trackless paths which, by their direction, he hoped would lead him towards the deep caves of Corie Lin.

CHAP. IV.

The poor old minstrel of the house of Wallace, after having traversed many a weary rood of, to him, before untrodden ground, exhausted by fatigue sat down on the declivity of a very steep craig. The burning beams of the mid-day sun now beat upon the rocks; the overshadowing foliage afforded him shelter; and a few berries from the brambles which knit themselves over the path he had yet to explore, with a draught of water from the passing brook, were all the food that offered to revive his enfeebled limbs. Insufficient as they appeared, he took them, blessing Heaven for sending even these; and after half an hour's rest, he again grasped his staff to pursue his way.

After breaking a passage through the entangled shrubs which grew across the only possible footing in this solitary wilderness, he went along the side of the burn which now, at every turning of the rocks, increased in depth and violence. The rills from above, and other mountain streams pouring into it from abrupt falls down the craigs, covered him with spray and intercepted his passage. Finding it impracticable to proceed through the rushing torrent of a cataract, whose roarings had intimidated him at some distance, and which now burst upon his sight, he crept on his hands and knees up the opposite acclivity, catching by the fern and other weeds, to stay him from falling back into the raging flood below. Prodigious craggy mountains towered above his head as he ascended; in parts, the rolling clouds which canopied their summits, seemed descending to wrap him in their "fleecy skirts;" and in others, projecting rocks, bending over the waters of the glen, left him only a narrow shelf in the cliff, along which he crept, till it brought him to the mouth of a cavern.

He must either enter it, or return the way he came, or attempt the descent of overhanging precipices, which nothing else could penetrate but the pinion of their native eagles. Above him was the mountain. To re-tread his footsteps until he had seen his beloved master, he was resolved not to do; to perish in these glens would be more tolerable to him, for, while he moved forward, hope, even in the arms of death, would cheer him with the whisper that he was in the path of duty. He therefore entered the cavity, through which he soon perceived an aperture; and emerging on the other side, found himself again on the margin of the river. Having attained a wider bed, it left him a still narrower causeway on which to perform the remainder of his journey.

Huge masses of rock, canopied with a thick umbrage of firs, beech, and the weeping birch, closed over the glen, and almost excluded the light of day. Halbert, now more anxious, as he believed by the increased rapidity of the black stream, that he was approaching the great fall near which his master was concealed, redoubled his speed. But an unlooked for obstacle impeded him. A growing gloom, which he had not observed in the sky-excluded valley, entirely overspread the heavens, and discharged itself, amidst peals of thunder, in sudden and heavy floods of rain.

Fearful of being overwhelmed by the streams which now on all sides crossed his path, he kept upon the edge of the river, to be as far as possible from the influence of their violence. And thus he proceeded, slowly and with trepidation, through numerous defiles, and under the plunge of many a mountain torrent, till the augmented roar of a world of waters dashing from side to side, and boiling up with the noise and fury of the contending elements above, told him he was not far from the fall of Corie Lin.

The spray was spread in so thick a mist over the glen that he knew not how to advance. A step farther might be on the firm earth; but more probably it would be illusive, and dash him into the roaring Lin, where he would be ingulphed at once in its furious whirlpool. He paused and looked around him. The rain had ceased; but the thunder still rolled at a distance, and echoed tremendous from the surrounding rocks. Halbert shook his grey locks streaming with wet; and looking towards the sun, which was now setting, and gilding with its last rays the vast sheets of falling water,

"This is thine hour, my master!" exclaimed the old man, "and surely I am now too near the Lin to be far from thee!"

With these words he raised the pipe that hung at his breast; and blew three strains of the sweet air which in former days he used to play on his harp, to call forth from her bower that fair star of evening, the beauteous Marion, who was now for ever departed into her native heaven.—The notes trembled as his agitated breath breathed them into the instrument; but feeble as they were, and though the roar of the cataract might have prevented their reaching a less attentive ear than that of Wallace, yet he sprung from the innermost recess of the



## The Scottish Chiefs

cave under the fall, and dashing through the rushing waters, was the next instant at the side of Halbert.

"Faithful creature!" cried he, catching him in his arms, and feeling how blissful is that moment which ends the anxious wish to learn tidings of all that is dearest in the world;" how fares my Marion?

"I am weary;" cried the heart-stricken old man, "take me within your sanctuary, and I will tell you all."

Wallace perceived that his time-worn servant was indeed exhausted; and knowing the toils and hazards of the perilous track he must have past over in his way to this fearful solitude; and remembering how, as he sat in his shelter, he had dreaded the effects of the storm upon so aged a traveller; he no longer wondered at the dispirited tone of his greeting, and readily accounted for the pale countenance and tremulous steps which had at first excited his alarm.

Giving him his hand, he led him with caution to the brink of the Lin; and then taking him in his arms, dashed with him through the tumbling water into the cavern he had chosen for his asylum. Halbert sunk against its rocky side; and putting forth his hand to catch some of the water as it fell, drew a few drops to his parched lips and swallowed them.—After this slight refreshment he breathed a little, and turned his eyes wishfully upon his anxious master.

"Are you sufficiently recovered, Halbert? may I now ask how you left my dearest Marion?"

Halbert dreaded to see the animated light which cheered him from the eyes of his master, happy in expectation, overclouded with the cimberian horrors his story was formed to unfold:—he evaded a direct reply.—"I saw your guest in safety, before I left Ellerslie; I saw him and the iron box on their way to Bothwell."

"What," inquired Wallace, "were we mistaken? was not the Earl dead when we looked into the well?"—Halbert replied in the negative; and was proceeding with a circumstantial account of his recovery and departure, when Wallace interrupted him.

"But what of my wife, Halbert; why tell me of others before of her?—surely she remembers me! some message!"

"Yes, my dear Lord;" cried Halbert, throwing himself on his knees in a paroxysm of mental agony; "she remembers you where best her prayers can be heard. She kneels for her beloved Wallace before the throne of God!"

"Halbert!" cried Sir William, in a low and fearful voice, "what do you say? my Marion—speak!—tell me in one word she lives!"

"In heaven."

At this confirmation of a sudden terror, inbibed from the ambiguous words of Halbert, and which, his fond heart would not allow him to acknowledge to himself, he covered his face with his hands, and fell back with a deep groan against the side of the cavern.—The horrid idea of premature maternal pains, occasioned by anguish for him; of her consequent death, involving perhaps that of her infant, struck him to the soul; a mist seemed passing over his eyes, life was receding; and gladly did he believe he felt his spirit on the eve of joining her's.

Halbert, thinking that he had revealed the worst in declaring that the idol of his master's heart no longer existed for him in this world, went on—"her latest breath was spent in prayer for you. My Wallace, were the last words her angel spirit uttered as it issued from her bleeding wounds."

The cry that burst from the heart of Wallace as he started on his feet at this horrible disclosure, seemed to pierce through all the recesses of the glen, and with an instantaneous and dismal return, was re-echoed from rock to rock. Halbert threw his arms round his master's knees. The frantic blaze of his eyes struck him with affright.—"Hear me, my lord! for the sake of your wife, now an angel hovering near you, hear what I have to say!"

Wallace looked around him with a wild countenance—"My Marion near me! Blessed spirit!—Oh, my murdered wife, my unborn babe!—Who made those wounds? Tell me, cried he," throwing himself down on the ground, and seizing Halbert with a tremendous though unconscious grasp; "Tell me, who had the heart to aim a deadly blow at that angel's life?"

"The governor of Lanark." Replied Halbert.

"How? For what?" demanded Wallace, with the terrific glare of madness shooting from his eyes; "my wife, my wife! what had she done?"

"He came at the head of a band of ruffians; and seizing my lady, commanded her on the peril of her life, to declare where you and the Earl of Mar and the box of treasure were concealed. My lady persisted to refuse him

## The Scottish Chiefs

information, and in a deadly rage, before I was aware, he plunged his sword into her breast."—Wallace clenched his hands over his face, and Halbert went on; "before he aimed a second blow, I had broken from the men who held me, and thrown myself on her bosom; but all could not save her; through my neck the villain's sword penetrated her heart."

"Great God!" exclaimed Wallace, again springing on his feet; "dost thou hear this murder?" His hands were stretched towards Heaven; then falling on his knees, with his eyes fixed, and his arms yet extended, "Give me power, Almighty Judge!" cried he, "to assert thy justice.—Let me avenge this angel's blood, and then take me to thyself!"

"My gracious master;" cried Halbert, seeing him rise with a stern composure from his knees; "here is the fatal sword with which the cruel governor killed my lady. The blood on it is sacred, and I brought it to you."

Wallace took it in his hand. He gazed at it, touched it, and kissed it frantically. The blade was hardly yet dry, and the ensanguined hue came off upon the pressure. "Marion! Marion!" cried he, "is it thine!—Does thy blood stain my lip!" he paused for a moment, leaning his burning forehead against the fatal blade; then looking up with a terrific smile,

"Beloved of my soul, never shall this sword leave my hand till it has drunk the life blood of thy murderer"

"What is it you intend, my lord?" cried Halbert, viewing with increased alarm the resolute ferocity which now blazed from every part of his countenance, and seemed to dilate his figure with more than mortal daring, "what can you do? your single arm—"

"I am not single—God is with me—I am his avenger. Now tremble tyranny, I come to hurl thee down!" at the word, he sprang from the cavern's mouth; and had already reached the topmost cliff, when the piteous cries of Halbert penetrated his ear, and caught his attention. They recalled him to recollection: and returning with the same promptitude to his faithful servant, as that with which he had left him, he now tried to sooth his fears; and spoke in a composed though determined tone. "I will lead you from this solitude to the mountains, where the shepherds of Ellerslie are tending their flocks. With them you will find a refuge till you have strength to reach Bothwell castle. Lord Mar will protect you for my sake."

Halbert now remembered the bugle with which the Earl had entrusted him; and putting it into his master's hand with the accompanying message, he asked for some testimony in return, that the Earl might know he had delivered it safely; "even a lock of your precious hair, my beloved master, will be sufficient."

"Thou shalt have it, severed from my head by this accursed steel:" answered Wallace, taking off his bonnet, and letting his long amber locks fall in masses on his shoulders. Halbert burst into a fresh flood of tears; for he remembered how often it had been the delight of Marion to comb these bright tresses, and to twist them round her ivory fingers. Wallace looked up as the old man's sobs became audible, and read his thoughts. "It will never be again Halbert!" cried he, and with a firm grasp of the sword, he cut off a large handful of his hair. The end which he separated from his head was stained red.

"Marion! thy blood hath marked it!" exclaimed he, "and every hair in my head shall be died of the same hue before I sheath this sword upon thy murderers! Here Halbert, "continued he, knotting it together; "take this to the Earl of Mar. It is all, most likely, he will ever see of William Wallace. Should I fall, tell him to look on that, and in my wrongs read the future miseries of Scotland, and remember that God armeth the patriot's hand! Let him act on that conviction, and Scotland may yet be free."

Halbert placed the lock in his bosom, and repeated his entreaties that his master would accompany him to Bothwell castle, where he was sure he would meet with every consolation from the good Earl's friendship.

"If he indeed love me," returned Wallace, "for my sake let him cherish you. My consolations must come from a higher hand. I go where it directs. If I live you shall see me again. But twilight approaches, we must away; the sun must not again rise upon Heselrigge!"

Halbert now followed the rapid steps of Wallace, who, assisting the feeble limbs of his faithful servant, drew him up the precipitous side of the Lin; and then leaping from rock to rock, awaited with impatience the slower advances of the poor old harper as he crept round a circuit of overhanging cliffs, to join him on the summit of the craigs.

Together they struck into the most inaccessible defiles of the mountains, and proceeded, till, by the smoke, whitening with its ascending curls the black sides of the impending rocks, Wallace saw he was near the objects of his search. He sprung on a high cliff which projected over this mountain valley, and blowing his bugle with a few

## The Scottish Chiefs

notes of the well known pibroch of Lanerkshire, was answered by the reverberation of a thousand echoes.

At the loved sounds, which had not dared to visit their ears since the Scottish standard was lowered to Edward, the hills seemed teeming with life.—Men rushed from their fastnesses, and women with their babes, eagerly followed, to see whence sprung a summons so dear to every Scottish heart. Wallace stood on the cliff like the newly-aroused genius of his suffering country. His long plaid floated afar, and his glittering hair streaming on the blast, seemed to mingle with the golden fires which shot from the heavens. Wallace raised his eyes: a clash, as of the tumult of contending armies, filled the sky; and flames and flashing steel, and the horrid red of battle, streamed from the clouds upon the hills.

"Scotsmen!" cried Wallace, waving the fatal sword, which blazed in the glare of these northern lights like a flaming brand, "behold how the heavens cry aloud to you. I come in the name of all ye hold dear, of your lives, your liberties, and of the wives of your bosoms, and the children now in their arms! the poniard of England is unsheathed:—Innocence, age, and infancy, fall before it. With this sword, last night, did Heselrigge, the English tyrant of Lanerk, break into my house and murder my wife!"

The shriek of horror that burst from every mouth interrupted Wallace, "Vengeance! vengeance!" was the cry of the men, while tumultuous lamentations for the "sweet lady of Ellerslie," filled the air from the women.

Wallace sprang from the cliff into the midst of his brave countrymen. "Follow me then to strike the first blow!"

"Lead us forward!" cried a vigorous old man, "I drew this stout claymore last in the battle of Largs. Life and Alexander was then the word of victory: now, ye accursed Southrons, ye shall find that the slogen of Death and Lady Marion! will be a cry to bring angels down to avenge her blood and free the country!"

"Death and Lady Marion!" was now echoed with loud shouts from mouth to mouth. Every sword was drawn. And those hardy peasants who had none, seized the instruments of pasturage; and armed themselves with wolf-spears, pickaxes, forks, and scythes.

Sixty resolute men now arranged themselves around their chief. Wallace, whose widowed heart turned icy cold at the dreadful slogen of his Marion's name, more fiercely grasped his sword, and murmured to himself—"From this hour may Scotland date her liberty, or Wallace return no more!—My faithful friends," cried he, turning to his men, and placing the plumed bonnet on his head; "let the spirits of your fathers inspire your souls! ye go to preserve that freedom for which they died. Before the moon sets, the tyrant of Lanerk shall fall in blood."

"Death and lady Marion!" was the pealing answer that echoed from the hills.

Wallace again sprang on the cliff. His brave peasants followed him; and taking their rapid march by a near cut over the most precipitous heights, and through the hitherto unexplored defiles of Cartlane craigs; leaping chasms, and climbing perpendicular rocks; no obstacles impeded them, as they rushed onward like lions to their prey.

CHAP. V.

The women, and the men who were too aged to engage in so desperate an enterprize, now thronged around Halbert to ask a circumstantial account of the disaster which had filled them with so much horror.

Many were the tears which followed his recital. Not one of his auditors was an indifferent listener; all had individually partaken of the tender Marion's benevolence. Their sick-beds had been comforted by her charity; her voice had often administered consolation to their sorrows; her hand had smoothed their pillows, and placed the crucifix before their dying eyes. Some, had recovered to bless her; and some departed to record her virtues in Heaven.

"Ah! is she gone!" cried a young woman, raising her face covered with tears from the bosom of her infant; "is the loveliest lady that ever the sun shone upon, cold in the grave? Alas, for me! she it was that gave me the roof under which my baby was born. She it was that, when the Southron soldiers slew my father, and drove us from our home in Ayrshire, gave to my old mother, and to my poor wounded husband, the cottages by the burn-side. Ah, well can I spare him to avenge her murder."

The night being far advanced, Halbert retired at the invitation of this young woman, to repose on the hether-bed of her husband, who was now absent with Wallace. The rest of the peasantry withdrew to their coverts; while she and some other women, whose anxieties would not allow them to sleep, sat at the cavern's mouth watching the slowly-moving hours.

The objects of their fond and fervent prayers, Wallace and his little army, were rapidly pursuing their march. It was midnight—all was silent as they hurried through the glen, and ascended with flying footsteps the steep acclivities which intersected the way that led to the cliffs which over-hung the vale of Ellerslie. Wallace must pass along their brow. Beneath was the tomb of his sacrificed Marion! He rushed forward to snatch one look, even at the roof which shrouded her beloved remains.

At the moment before he mounted the intervening height a soldier in English armour crossed the path and was seized by his men. An uplifted axe was levelled at the man's neck. Wallace turned the weapon:—"Hold Scot!" cried he, to the highlander who aimed it; "you are not a Southron, to strike the defenceless. This man has no sword."

The reflection on their enemy, which this plea of mercy contained, reconciled the impetuous Scots to the clemency of their leader. The terrified wretch, who had expected nothing less than immediate death, joyfully recognizing the voice of Wallace, fell on his knees, exclaiming, "Surely it is my lord! it is Sir William Wallace, who has saved my life a second time!"

"Who are you?" asked Wallace;—"That bassinet can cover no friend of mine."

"I am your servant Dugal," returned the man, "he whom your brave arm saved from the battle axe of Arthur Heselrigge."

"I cannot now ask you how you come by that dress; but if you be yet faithful, throw it off, and follow me."

"Not to Ellerslie, my lord!" cried he, "it has been this day sacked, and set in flames by the commands of the governor of Lanerk."

"Then," exclaimed Wallace inwardly, and striking his breast; "are the remains of my beloved Marion for ever ravished from my eyes! Insatiate monster!"

"Too long he lives to curse the earth," cried the veteran of Largs; "forward, my lord, in mercy to mankind!"

Wallace had now mounted the craig which over-looked Ellerslie.—His once happy home had disappeared, and all beneath lay a heap of smoking ashes. He hastened from the sight, and directing the point of his sword with a forceful action towards Lanerk, re-echoed with supernatural strength, "Forward!"

With the rapidity of lightning his little host flew over the hills, reached the cliffs which divided them from the town, and leaped down before the outward trench of the castle of Lanerk. In a moment Wallace sprung so feeble a barrier, and with a shout of death, in which the tremendous slogan of his men now joined, he rushed upon the guard that held the northern gate of the fortress.

Here slept the governor. The few opponents being slain by the first sweep of the Scottish swords, Wallace hastened onward, winged with twofold retribution. The noise of battle was behind him; for the shout of his men

## The Scottish Chiefs

had aroused the garrison, and drawn the soldiers, half naked, to the spot. He had now reached the door of the governor.—The sentinel who stood there, flew before the terrible warrior that presented himself. All the mighty vengeance of Wallace blazed in his face, and seemed to surround his figure with a terrible splendor. With one stroke of his foot, he drove the door from its hinges and rushed into the room.

What a sight for the now awakened and guilty Heselrigge!—It was the husband of the defenceless woman he had murdered, come in the power of justice, with uplifted arm, and vengeance in his eyes! With a terrific scream of despair, and an outcry for the mercy he dared not expect, he fell back into the bed, and sought an unavailing shield beneath its folds.

"Marion! Marion!" cried Wallace, as he threw himself towards the bed—and buried the sword, yet red with her blood, through the coverlid, deep into the heart of her murderer. A fiend like yell from the slain Heselrigge, told him his work was done; and drawing out the sword, he took the streaming blade in his hand—"Vengeance is satisfied."—cried he, "thus, O God! do I henceforth divide self from my heart!" As he spoke, he snapt the sword in twain, and throwing away the pieces—put back with his hand the impending weapons of his brave companions; who, having cleared the passage of their assailants, had hurried forward to assist in ridding their country of so detestable a tyrant.

"'Tis done," cried he. As he spoke he drew down the coverlid, and discovered the body of the governor weltering in blood: the ghastly countenance, on which the agonies of hell seemed imprinted, glared horribly even in death.

Wallace turned away, and the men, exulting in the sight, with a shout of triumph exclaimed—"So fall the enemies of Sir William Wallace!"

"Rather so fall the enemies of Scotland!" cried he; "from this hour, Wallace has neither love nor resentment but for her. Heaven has heard me devote myself to work our country's freedom, or to die. Who will follow me in so just a cause?"

"All!—With Wallace for ever!"

The new clamour which their present resolution excited, intimidated a fresh band of soldiers who were marching across the court-yard to intercept their passage from the governor's apartments; they hastily retreated; and no exertions of their officers could prevail on them to advance again, or even to appear in sight of their resolute enemies, when, soon afterwards, with Wallace at their head, they issued from the great gate. The English commanders, seeing that their men were struck with a panic which they were the less able to surmount, as the way to the gate was strewn with slain, fell back into the shadow of the towers; and by the light of the moon, leisurely viewed the departure of the Scots over the trenches.

CHAP. VI.

The sun was rising from behind the eastern hills, when the victorious groupe entered the mountain glen where their families lay. The cheerful sounds of their bugles, aroused the sleepers from their caves, and many were the joyous gratulations and embraces which welcomed the warriors to affection and repose.

Wallace, while he threw himself along a bed of purple heath, gathered for him by many a busy female hand, listened with a calmed mind to the fond inquiries of Halbert, who, awakened by the first blast of the horn, had started from his shelter, and hastened to hail the safe return of his master.—While his faithful followers retired each to the bosom of his rejoicing family, the fugitive chief of Ellerslie remained alone with the old man; and recounted to him the success of his enterprize, and the double injuries he had avenged.—"The assassin," continued he, "has paid with his life for his inexpiable crime.—He is slain, and with him several of Edward's garrison.—My vengeance may be appeased; but what, O! Halbert, can bring redress to my widowed heart?—all is lost to me; I have then nothing to do with this world, but as I am the instrument of good to others?—the Scottish sword has now been re-drawn against our foes; and with the blessing of heaven, I swear, it shall not be sheathed till Scotland be rid of the tyranny which has slain my happiness!—This night my gallant Scots, have sworn to accomplish my vow; and death or liberty, must be the future fate of Wallace, and his friends."

At these words, tears ran over the cheeks of the venerable harper:—"Alas, my too brave master," exclaimed he, "what is it you would do? why rush upon certain destruction?—for the sake of her memory whom you deplore; in pity to the worthy Earl of Mar, who will arraign himself as the cause of all these calamities, and of your death, should you fall—retract this desperate vow!"

"No, my good Halbert;" returned Wallace, "I am neither desperate nor inefficient; and you, faithful creature, shall have no cause to mourn this night's resolution. Go to Lord Mar, and tell him what are my resolves. I have nothing now that binds me to life but my country; and henceforth she shall be to me as mistress, wife, and child.—Would you deprive me of this tie, Halbert? Would you, by persuading me to resign my interest in her, devote me to a hermit's seclusion amongst these rocks?—for I will never again appear in the tracks of men, if it be not as the defender of her rights."

"But where, my master, shall we find you, should the Earl chuse to join you with his followers?"

"In this wilderness; whence I shall not remove rashly. For my purpose is to save my countrymen, not to sacrifice them in needless dangers."

Halbert, oppressed with sorrow at the images his foreboding heart drew of the direful scenes in which his beloved master had pledged himself to become the leading actor, bowed his head with submission; and leaving Wallace to rest, retired to the mouth of the cavern to weep alone.

It was noon before the chief awaked from the death-like sleep into which kind nature had plunged his long harrassed senses. He opened his eyes languidly; and when the sight of his rocky apartment forced on him the recollection of all his miseries, he uttered a deep groan. —That sad sound, so different from the jocund voice with which Wallace used to issue from his rest, struck the ear of Halbert, who, meanwhile, had prepared a staff and scrip for his journey. He drew near his master, and kissing his hand, begged his permission to set out for Bothwell—"On my knees," added he, "will I implore the Earl to send you succours."

"He needs not prayers for that," returned Wallace;" but depart dear, worthy Halbert: it will comfort me to know you are in safety; and whithersoever you go, you carry my thanks and blessings with you!"

Old age opens the fountain of tears:—Halbert's flowed profusely, and bathed his master's hand.—Could Wallace have wept, it would have been then; but that gentle emollient of grief was denied him; and with a voice of assumed cheerfulness, he renewed his efforts to encourage his desponding servant.—Half persuaded that a superior Being did indeed call his beloved master to some extraordinary exertions for Scotland, he took his leave, first of him, and then of the companions of his destiny. A few of them led him on his way as far as the western declivity of the hills; when bidding them farewell, he took the remainder of his journey alone.

After traversing many a weary mile, which lay between the Cartlane craigs and Bothwell castle, he reached the valley in which that fortress stands; and calling to the warder at its gates, by declaring that he came from Sir William Wallace, he was admitted and conducted into the castle.

## The Scottish Chiefs

Halbert was led by a servant into a superb chamber, where the Earl lay upon a couch.—A lady richly habited, sat at his head; and another, much younger, and of resplendent beauty, clothed in green, with a circlet of diamonds round her brows, knelt at his feet with a salver of medicinal cordials in her hand; near to them stood a young man. On the entrance of Halbert, whom the Earl instantly recognised, he raised himself on his arm, and welcomed him. The young lady rose; and the young man stepped eargerly forward.

The Earl inquired anxiously after Sir William Wallace, and asked if he might expect him soon at Bothwell.

"He cannot yet come, my lord;" replied Halbert, "hard is the task he has laid upon his valiant head: but he is avenged!—he has slain the governor of Lanerk."—A faint exclamation of dismay broke from the lips of the young lady.

"Slain!—how?" demanded the Earl.

Halbert now gave a particular account of the anguish of Wallace when he was told of the sanguinary events which had taken place at Ellerslie.—As the honest harper described in his own ardent language the generous zeal with which the shepherds on the heights took up arms to avenge the wrong done to their chief, the countenance of the young lady and of the youth glowed through their tears; they looked on each other; and Halbert proceeded.

"When my dear master and his valiant troop were pursuing their way to Lanerk, as he approached the cliffs of Ellerslie, he was met by Dugald; the man who, your lordship must remember, rushed into the room to apprise us of the advance of the English forces.—During the confusion of that horrible night, after I had bound up his wounds and left him, I thought, expiring in a corner of the hall, he recovered in the midst of the contention, and creeping away, concealed himself from the soldiers amongst the bushes of the glen. When all was over, he came from his hiding place, and finding the Englishman's bassinet and cloak, which we had made him exchange for a bonnet and plaid, poor Dugald, still fearful of falling in with any stragling party of Heselrigge's, disguised himself in the soldier's clothes. Exhausted with hunger, more than with the pain of his wounds, which were only in the arms, he was venturing towards the house in search of food, when, as he approached, the sight of armed men in the hall made him hastily retreat into his former place of refuge. He did not lie long before his alarm was increased by a redoubled noise from the house; oaths, and horrid bursts of merriment seemed to have turned that once abode of honor and of loveliness, into the clamorous haunts of ribaldry and violence. In the midst of the uproar he was surprized by seeing flames issue from the windows of the house; the soldiers poured from the doors with shouts of triumph; and afterwards watched by the fire the whole day and evening, carrying off the booty, till the interior of the building was consumed, and the rest sunk a heap of smoking ruins.

"The work completed, these horrid ministers of devastation left the vale to its own solitude. Dugald, after waiting a long time to ascertain to himself that they were quite gone, crept from the bushes; and ascending the cliffs, he was speeding to the mountains, when encountering our armed shepherds, who mistook him for an English soldier, they seized him. The men, recognised their former companion, and heard with redoubled indignation the history of the mouldering ashes before them."

"Brave, persecuted Wallace!" exclaimed the Earl, "how dearly was my life purchased! But proceed Halbert, tell me that he returned safe from Lanerk."

Halbert now recounted the dreadful scenes which took place in that town; and that when the governor fell, Wallace made a vow never to mingle with the world again, till Scotland should be free."

"Alas!" cried the Earl, "what miracle is to effect that? Surely he will not bury those noble qualities, that bloom of youth, within the gloom of a cloister!"

"No, my Lord, he has retired to the fastnesses of Cartlane craigs."

"Why?" resumed Mar, "why did he not rather fly to me? This castle is strong; and while one stone of it remains upon another, not all the hosts of England should take him hence."

"It was not your friendship that he doubted;" returned the old man, "Love for his country compels him to reject all comfort in which she does not share. His last words to me were these.—I have nothing now to do but to assert the liberties of Scotland and to rid her of her enemies. Go to Lord Mar, take this lock of my hair, stained with the blood of my wife. It is all most likely he will ever again see of William Wallace. Should I fall, tell him to look on that, and in my wrongs read the future miseries of Scotland, and remember that God armeth the patriot!"

Tears dropped so fast from the young lady's eyes, that she was obliged to walk to a window to conceal them.

"O! my uncle," cried the youth, surely the freedom of Scotland is possible. I feel in my soul that the words of the brave Wallace are prophetic."

## The Scottish Chiefs

The Earl held the lock of hair in his hands; he regarded it lost in meditation. "God armeth the patriot!" He paused again, his before pallid cheek taking a thousand animated hues; then raising the sacred present to his lips, "Yes," cried he, "thy vow shall be performed; and while Donald Mar has an arm to wield a sword, or a man to follow to the field, thou shalt command both him and them!"

"But not as you are, my lord!" cried the elder lady, "your wounds are yet unhealed; your fever is still raging! Would it not be madness to expose your safety at such a crisis?"

"I shall not take arms myself," answered he, "till I can bear them to effect; meanwhile, all of my clan and of my friends that I can raise to guard the life of my deliverer, and to promote the cause, must be summoned. This lock shall be my pennon, and what Scotsman will look on that and start from his colours!—Here, Helen, my child!" cried he, addressing the young lady, "before to-morrow's dawn, have this hair wrought into my banner. It will be a patriot's standard, and let his own irresistible words be the motto,—God armeth me."

Helen advanced with blushing trepidation. Having been told by the Earl, of the generous valour of Wallace, and of the cruel death of his lady, she had conceived an enthusiastic gratitude; and a pity, deeper than language could express, for the man who had lost so much by succouring one so dear to her. She took the lock, waving in yellow light upon her hands; and trembling with a strange emotion, was leaving the room, when she heard her cousin suddenly throw himself on his knees.

"I beseech you, my honoured uncle," cried he, "if you have any love for me, or value for my future fame, that you will allow me to be the bearer of your banner, in the army of Sir William Wallace."

Helen stopped a moment at the threshold to hear the reply.

"You could not, my dear nephew," returned the Earl, "have asked me any favour that I would grant with so much joy. Tomorrow I will collect the peasantry of Bothwell, and with those and my own followers you shall join Wallace the same night.

Helen, who ignorant of the horrors of war, and only alive to the glory of the present cause, sympathized in the ardour of her cousin, with a thrill of delight hurried to her own apartment to commence her task.

Far different were the sentiments of the countess. As soon as Lord Mar had let this declaration escape his lips, alarmed at the effect so much agitation might have on his enfeebled constitution; and fearful of the perilous cause he ventured thus openly to espouse; she desired her nephew to take the now comforted Halbert, (who was pouring forth his gratitude to the Earl for the promptitude of his orders) and see that he was attended with due hospitality.

When the room was left to the Earl and herself, with an uneasy presage of some impending evil, she ventured to remonstrate with him upon the facility with which he had become a party in so treasonable a matter: "Consider, my lord," continued she, "that Scotland is now entirely in the power of the English monarch. His garrisons occupy our towns, and his creatures hold every place of trust in the kingdom!"

"And is such a list of oppressions, my dear lady, to be an argument for longer bearing them? Had I and other Scottish nobles, dared to resist this over-whelming power after the battle of Dunbar; had we, instead of kissing the sword that robbed us of our liberties, kept our own unsheathed within the bulwarks of our mountains, Scotland would now be free; I should not have been assaulted by our English tyrants in the streets of Lanerk; and to save my life, William Wallace would not be now mourning his murdered wife, and without a home to shelter him!"

Lady Mar paused at this observation, but resumed, "That may be true. But the die is cast, Scotland is lost for ever; and by your attempting to assist your friend in this rash essay to recover it, you will only lose yourself also, without preserving him. The project is wild and needless. What would you have? now that the contention between the two kings is past; now that Baliol has surrendered his crown to Edward, is not Scotland at peace?"

"A bloody peace, Joanna," answered the Earl, "witness these wounds. An usurper's peace is more destructive than his open hostilities, plunder and assassination are its concomitants. I have now seen and felt enough of Edward's jurisdiction. It is time I should awake, and like Wallace determine to die for Scotland, or to avenge her."

Lady Mar wept, "Cruel Donald! Is this the reward of all my love and duty? you tear yourself from me, you consign your estates to sequestration, you rob your children of their name, nay, by your infectious example, you stimulate our brother Bothwell's son to head the band that is to join this madman Wallace!"

"Hold Joanna!" cried the Earl, "speak that word again, and you forfeit my love! What is it I hear? you call the hero, who in saving your husband's life, reduced himself to these cruel extremities, a madman! was he mad, because he prevented the Countess of Mar from being left a widow? was he mad because he prevented her children from being fatherless?"



## The Scottish Chiefs

The Countess, overcome by this cutting reproach, threw herself upon her husband's neck, and with a burst of tears intreated his forgiveness. "Alas, my lord," cried she, "all is madness to me, that would plunge you in danger. Think of your own safety, of my innocent twins now in their cradle, should you fall. Think of our brother's feelings, when you send his only son to join one, whom perhaps he will call a rebel in arms!"

"If Earl Bothwell considered himself a vassal of Edward's, he would not now be with Lord Loch-awe. From the moment that gallant Highlander retired to Argyleshire, the King of England regarded all his adherents with a suspicious eye. Bothwell's present visit to Loch-awe, you see is sufficient offence to sanction the plunder of this castle by the peaceful government you approve. You saw the opening of those proceedings, which, had not the death of Arthur Heselrigge prevented from coming to their dreadful issue, where, my dear Joanna, would now be your home, your husband, your children? It was the arm of the brave chief of Ellerslie, which saved them from destruction, and our Helen from a ravisher."

Lady Mar shuddered. "I admit the truth of what you say. But oh, is it not hard, to put my all to the hazard; to see the bloody field on one side of my beloved Donald, and the mortal scaffold on the other?"

"Hush," cried the Earl, "it is justice that beckons me, and victory will receive me to her arms. Let, O, power above!" exclaimed he, hurried away with enthusiasm; "let the victorious field for Scotland be Donald Mar's grave, rather than doom him to live a witness of her miseries!"

"I cannot hear you!" answered the Countess, "I must leave you; I must invoke the virgin to give me courage to be a patriot's wife; at present your words are daggers to me."

As she uttered this, she hastily withdrew, and left the Earl to muse on the past, and to concert plans for the portentous future.

CHAP. VII.

Meanwhile the fair Helen had retired to her own apartments, which were in a distant wing of the castle. Lord Mar's banner being brought to her from the armory, she sat down to weave into its silken texture, the amber locks of the Scottish chief. Wondering at their softness and beauty, while her needle flew, she pictured to herself the fine countenance they had once adorned.

The duller extremities of the hair, which, a sadder liquid than that which now dropped from her eyes, had rendered stiff and difficult to entwine with the warp of the silk, seemed to adhere to her fingers. Helen almost shrunk from the touch. "Unhappy lady!" sighed she to herself; "what a pang must have rent her heart, when the stroke of so cruel a death tore her from such a husband!—and how must he have loved her, when for her sake he thus forswears all future joys, but those which camps and victories may yield!—Ah, what would I give to be my cousin Murray, to bear this pennon at his side! What would I give to reconcile so admirable a being to happiness again;—to weep his griefs or to smile him into comfort!—To be that man's friend, would be a higher honour in my mind, than to be Edward's queen."

While her heart was thus discoursing with itself, a page opened the door, saying that her cousin begged admittance. Helen, having fastened the flowing charge into its azure field, was embroidering the motto, when Murray entered. He led in the venerable harper, who, refreshed by the plentiful repast which the young lord had set before him, now followed with less feeble steps, to repeat to lady Helen all he had been telling his gracious entertainer.

"You know not, my good old man," said the youth to Halbert, as he conducted him across the galleries, "what a noble mind is contained in that lovely young creature. I was brought up with her; and to the sweet contagion of her taste do I owe that love of true glory which carries me to the side of Sir William Wallace. The virtuous only can awaken an interest in her heart; and in these degenerate days, a long sleep it was likely to have slept, had not the history which my uncle recounted of your brave master, aroused her attention, and filled her with admiration responsive to my own. I know she rejoices in my present destination. And to prevent her hearing from your own lips, all you have now told me of the gentle as well as heroic virtues of my intended commander, and of the heroism of his angelic wife, would be depriving her of a mournful pleasure, for which I could find no equivalent."

The grey-haired bard of Ellerslie, who had ever received the dearest rewards for his songs in the smiles of its mistress, did not require persuasion to appear before the fair Lady of Mar; and to recite in her ears a truer legend, of charms which were to be seen no more.

Helen rose as he and her cousin appeared; and shewing them her work, inquired if they thought it were what the Earl had wished.—Murray approved it, and Halbert, with a full heart, took the pennon in his hand.—"Ah! little did my dear lady think," exclaimed he, "that one of these loved locks would ever be suspended on a staff to lead men to battle! what changes have a few days made! she, the gentlest of women, laid in a bloody grave; and he, the most benevolent of human beings, wielding an exterminating sword!"

"You speak of her grave, venerable Halbert," inquired Helen, "had you then an opportunity of performing the rites of sepulture to her remains?"

"No, madam;" replied he, "after the worthy English soldier, now in this castle, assisted me to place her precious body in my lord's oratory, I had no opportunity of returning to give her a more holy grave."

"Alas!" cried Lady Helen, "then her sacred relics have been consumed in the burning house!"

"I hope not," rejoined Halbert, "the place I speak of, is at some distance from the main building. It was excavated in the rock by Sir Ronald Crawford; who, on my master's marriage with the Lady Marion, gave the name of Ellerslie to this estate, in compliment to Sir William's place of birth in Ayrshire; and presented it to him, as the just property of the only surviving son of his dear departed daughter Cecily Crawford, who had married the brave Sir Malcolm Wallace. Both the parents of my honoured master are now dead; and a grievous task will it be to him who is to tell the good old Sir Ronald that the sweet flower of Ellerslie is cut down! That the noblest branch of his own stem is torn from its native soil, and cast far away into the wilderness!"

The tears of the venerable harper bore testimony to his inward resolve, that this messenger of woe should not be himself. Lady Helen, who had unconsciously fallen into a reverie during the latter part of his speech, now

## The Scottish Chiefs

spoke; but it was with timidity.—An idea had struck her, by which she might demonstrate her gratitude for the preservation of her father, and perhaps impart some consolation to the heart of the widowed chief.

"Then, we may hope," asked she, "that the oratory has not only escaped the flames, but perhaps the violation of the English soldiers?—would it not comfort your lord to have his lovely wife entombed according to the rites of the church?"

"Surely, my lady. But how can that be done?—he thinks her remains were lost in the conflagration of Ellerslie; and for fear of precipitating him into the new dangers which might have menaced him had he sought to bring away her body, I did not disprove his mistake."

"But her body shall be brought away," rejoined Lady Helen; "it shall have holy burial."

"To effect this, command my services," exclaimed Murray.

Helen thanked him for an assistance which would render the completion of her design easy.—The English soldier as a guide, and fifty men, she said, must accompany him.

"Alas, my young lord," interposed Halbert, "suppose you should meet the English still loitering there!"

"And what of that my honest Halbert?" would not I and my trusty band soon make them clear the way?—they are not the first wolves I have made fly before my hunting spear. Is it not to give comfort to the deliverer of my uncle, that I seek the glen?—and shall any thing in mortal shape make Andrew Murray turn his back?—no, Halbert, I was not born on Saint Andrew's day for nought; and by his bright cross I swear, either to lay Lady Wallace in the tomb of my ancestors, or to leave my bones to blanch on the grave of hers!"

"Your resolution, my brave cousin, is dear to me, and I cannot but expect a happy issue; for, when we recollect the panic with which the death of Heselrigge must have possessed the English garrison, and that ruined Ellerslie has no longer attractions for rapine;—I think there can be no dread of your meeting any enemy in that now desolate place; so, without farther hesitation, I will ask my father's permission, while you are calling out the men, and Halbert seeks a few hours repose."

The old man respectfully put her hand to his lips. "Good night," continued she; "ere you see me again, I trust the earthly part of the angel now in paradise, will be safe within these towers." Halbert poured a thousand blessings on her head; and as she left the room to execute her beneficent mission, he almost thought that he saw in her one of heaven's fairest inhabitants, sent down to bear away the body as well as the soul of his dear mistress to her divine abode.

On entering her father's apartment, Lady Helen found him alone. She repeated to him the substance of her conversation with Wallace's faithful servant; "and my wish is," continued she, "to have the murdered lady's remains entombed in the cemetery beneath the chapel in this castle."

The Earl approved her request; accompanying his assent with many expressions of satisfaction at the filial affection which so lively a gratitude to his preserver evinced. Let this be entirely your own deed, my dear Helen—choose from among my vassals, whom ever you may think deserving the honour of serving you;—and let them be sent with my nephew, to execute your design."

"May I then, my dear father;" returned she, deeply blushing, "have your permission to pay our debt of gratitude to Sir William Wallace, to the utmost of my power?—For by such means only, can I demonstrate my love for the best of parents, and my homage to that virtue which you first taught me to revere."

"You are at liberty, my noble child, to do as you please—my vassals, my coffers, all are at your command."

Helen kissed his hand;—"may I have what I please from the armory?"—"command even there," said the Earl, "for I know Bothwell would think that too much cannot be done for the defender of his country."

Helen threw her arms about her father's neck, and thanking him tenderly, with a beating heart retired to prosecute her various plans. Murray, who met her in the anti-room, informed her, "that fifty of the sturdiest in the glen awaited her orders; and Helen, telling her cousin of the Earl's approval, took the sacred banner in her hand, and proceeded to the gallery which ran round the hall.

The moment she appeared, a shout of joy bade her welcome—she waved her hand in token of silence; and smiling with a benignity that spoke her angel errand; "My brave friends!" said she, "I thank you for the ardour with which, by this night's enterprize, you assist me to pay the everlasting tribute that is due to the man who has preserved to me the blessing of so good a father."

"And to us, noble lady;" cried they, "the most generous of chiefs!"

"With that spirit, then," returned she, "I address ye with greater confidence. Who amongst you will shrink from

## The Scottish Chiefs

following this standard to the field of glory? who will refuse to make himself the especial guardian of the life of Sir William Wallace? and who, in the moment of peril, will not stand by him to the last?"

"None are here," cried a fine tall youth, advancing before his fellows; "who would not gladly die in his defence."

"We swear it!" burst from every lip at once.

She bowed her head, and said, "Return from Ellerslie to-morrow with the bier of its sainted mistress. I will then bestow upon every man in this band a war-bonnet plumed with my colours.—This banner, with its amber ensign, will lead you to the side of Wallace; and it is my will that ye there remain, a stouter wall than that which divides the two kingdoms, between him and his foes. In the shock of battle, look at this standard; and remember that God not only armeth the patriot's hand, but shieldeth his heart. In this faith, be ye the bucklers which heaven sends to guard the life of Wallace; and so honoured, exult in your station; and expect the future gratitude of Scotland."

"Wallace and Lady Helen! to death or liberty!" was the animated response to this exhortation—and smiling and kissing her hand to them in token of thanks, she retired in the midst of their acclamations into the gallery.—Murray, ready armed for his expedition, met her at the door—restored to his usual vivacity by the spirit-moving emotions which the present scenes awakened in his heart, he forgot the horrors of contention in the glory of victory, and giving her a gay salutation, led her back to her apartments, where the English soldier awaited her commands. Lady Helen, with a gentle grace, acknowledged her obligations to the Southron for this acquiescence.

"Lands in Mar shall be yours;" added she, "or a post of honour in the little army the Earl is now going to raise.—Speak but the word, and you shall find, worthy Englishman, that neither a Scotsman nor his daughter know what it is to be ungrateful."

The blood mounted into the soldier's cheek: "I thank you, sweetest lady, for this generous offer; but as I am an Englishman, I dare not accept it—my arms are due to my own country; and whether I am tied to it by lands and possessions, or have nought but my English blood, and my oath to my king, to bind me; still I should be equally unwarranted in breaking those bonds. England gave me birth; and with no country hostile to her, can I unite myself. I swore fidelity to Edward the first; and with no man adverse to him will I lift my sword. I left Heselrigge, because he dishonoured the name of my country: and for me to forswear her, would be to make myself infamous. Hence, all I ask is, that after I have this night obeyed your ladyship's commands, the Earl of Mar will allow me to seek my way to the sea-side. I mean to embark for the Guienne shores; whither my sovereign is now gone to chastise that rebel province."

Lady Helen replied, that she revered his sentiments too sincerely, to insult them by any persuasions to the contrary. And taking a diamond clasp from her bosom, she put it into his hand. "Wear that in remembrance of your virtue, and of Helen Mar's gratitude." The man kissed it respectfully, and bowing, swore to preserve so distinguishing a gift to the latest hour of his existence.

Helen retired to her chamber to finish her task; and Murray, bidding her good night, repaired to the Earl's apartments to take his final orders, before he and his troop set out for the ruins of Ellerslie.

CHAP. VIII.

Night having passed away over the sleepless heads of the inhabitants of Bothwell-castle; as soon as the sun arose, the Earl of Mar was carried out of his bed-chamber, and laid on the couch in the state apartment. His lady had not yet left the room of her daughter; by whose side she had lain the whole night in hopes of infecting her with the fears which possessed herself.

Helen replied, that she could see no reason for direful apprehensions; if her father, instead of joining Wallace in person, would, when he had sent him succours, retire with his family into the Highlands; and there await the issue of the contest. "It is too late to retreat, my dear mother, continued she, "the first blow against the public enemy was struck in defence of your husband: and would you have my father act so base a part as to abandon his preserver to the wrath his generous assistance has provoked?"

"Alas! my child," answered her ladyship; "what great service will he have done to me or to your father, if he delivers him from one danger, only to plunge him into another? Edward's power in this country is too great to be resisted now. Have not most of our barons sworn fealty to him? And are not the potent families of the Cummin, the Soulis, and the March, all in his interest? You may perhaps say, that most of these are my relations, and that I may turn them which way I will; but if I have no influence with a husband, it would be madness to expect it over more distant kindred. How then, with such a host against him, can your infatuated father venture, without despair, to support the man who breaks the peace with England?"

"Who can despair, my dear madam," returned Helen, "in so just a cause! Let us rather believe with our good King David I. that Honour must hope always; for no real evil can befall the virtuous, either in this world or the next! Were I a man, the justice that leads on the brave Wallace, would nerve my arm with the strength of a host. Besides, my too anxious mother, look at our country:—God's gift of freedom is stamped upon it.—Our mountains are his seal.—Plains are the proper territories of tyranny; there the armies of an usurper may extend themselves with ease; leaving no corner un-occupied, in which patriotism might shelter, or treason hide. But mountains, glens, morasses, and lakes, set bounds to conquest; and amidst these is the impregnable seat of liberty. To such a fortress, to the deep defiles of Loch Catherine; or to the cloud-piercing heights of Corry-arrack; I would have my father retire: and there watch the footsteps of our mountain-goddess, till led by her immortal champion, she plants her standard for ever upon the summit of Scotland's proudest hill!"

The complexion of the animated Helen shone with a radiant glow. Her heart panted with a foretaste of the delight she should feel when all her generous wishes would be fulfilled; and pressing the now completed banner to her breast, with an enthusiasm she believed prophetic; her lips moved, though her voice did not utter the inexpressible rapture of her heart.

Lady Mar looked at her. "It is well for me, romantic girl, that you were not a boy. In such a case, I do not guess wrong in believing that your mad-headed disobedience would have made me rue the day I became your father's wife."

"Sex, madam," returned Helen, "could not have altered my sense of duty. Whether man or woman, I would obey you in all things consistent with my duty to a higher power; but when it commands, then by the ordinance of Heaven, we must leave father and mother and cleave unto it."

"And what, O! foolish Helen, do you call a higher duty than that of a child to a parent, or a husband to his wife?"

"Duty of any kind cannot be transgressed with innocence.—Nor would it be any relinquishing of duty to you should my father leave you, to take up arms in the assertion of his country's rights. Her rights are your safety; and therefore, in defending them, a husband or a son best shews his sense of domestic as well as of public duty."

"Who taught you this sophistry, Helen?—Not you heart, for it would start at the idea of your father's blood."

Helen turned pale.—"Perhaps madam, had not the preservation of my father's blood occasioned such malignity from England, that nothing but an armed force can deliver his preserver, I too, might have been content to see Scotland in slavery. But now to wish my father to shrink behind the excuse of far-strained family duties, and to abandon Sir William Wallace to the blood-hounds who hunt his life; would be to devote the name of Mar to infamy, and deservedly bring a curse upon his offspring."

## The Scottish Chiefs

"Then it is only to preserve Sir William Wallace that you are thus anxious! your spirit of freedom is now disallowed; and all this mighty rout is made for him. My husband, his vassals, your cousin, and in short, the sequestration of the estates of Mar and Bothwell, are all to be put to the hazard on account of a frantic outlaw; to whom, at this period, since the loss of his wife, I should suppose death would be preferable to any gratitude we can pay him."

Lady Helen, at this ungrateful language, inwardly thanked Heaven that the sentiments proceeded from a step-mother; and that she inherited no part of the blood which animated so kindless a heart.—"That he is an outlaw, Lady Mar, springs from us. That death is the preferable comforter of his sorrows, also he owes to us; for was it not for my father's sake that his wife fell, and that he himself was driven into the wilds? I do not then blush for making his preservation my first prayer; and that he may achieve the freedom of Scotland, is my second."

"We shall see whose prayers will first be answered!" returned Lady Mar, rising coldly from her seat; "my saints are perhaps nearer than yours; and before twenty-four hours are over your head you will have reason to repent such extravagant opinions. I do not understand them."

"Till now, you never disapproved them."

"I allowed them in your infancy," replied the Countess, "because I thought they went no farther than a minstrel's song; but since they are become so dangerous, I rue the day in which I complied with the intreaties of Sir Richard Maitland, and permitted you and your sister to remain so long at Thirlestane, to imbibe the ideas of his romantic kinsman, the wizard of Ercildown. Had not Sir Richard been your own mother's father, I should not have been so easily prevailed on; and thus am I rewarded for my indulgence!"

"I hope, my dear Madam," said Helen, wishing to soften the displeasure of her step-mother, "I hope you will never be ill-rewarded for that indulgence, either by my grandfather, my sister, or myself. Isabella, in the quiet of Thirlestane, has no chance of giving you the offence that I do; and I am forced to offend you, because I cannot disobey my conscience." A tear stood in the eye of Lady Helen; "Cannot you, dear Lady Mar," continued she, forcing a smile; pardon the daughter of your early friend, my mother, who loved you as a sister; cannot you forgive your Helen for revering justice even more than your favour?"

The Countess, more influenced by the sweet humility of her daughter-in-law, than by the ingenuous manner with which she maintained her sentiments, or with the appeal to the memory of the first Lady Mar; relaxed from the frigid air she had assumed, and kissing her, with many renewed injunctions to bless the hand that might put a final stop to the ruinous enthusiasm which had seized her family, she quitted the room.

As soon as Helen was alone, she forgot the narrow-minded arguments of the Countess; and calling to recollection the generous permission with which her father had endowed her the night before, she wrapped herself in her mantle, and attended by her page, proceeded to the armoury. The armourer was already there, having just given out arms for three hundred men, who, by the Earl's orders, were to assemble on Bothwell Moor; and there wait till young Murray and the subordinate leaders should join them.

Helen told the man that she came for the best suit of armour in his custody: "it must be of excellent proof."

He drew from an oaken chest a coat of black mail studded with gold.—Helen admired its strength and beauty. "It is the richest in all Scotland;" answered he; "and it was worn by our great King William the Lion in all his victories."

"Then it is worthy its destination. Bring it with its helmet, target, and sword, to my apartment."

The armourer took it up; and accompanied by the page carrying the lighter parts, followed her into the western tower.

When Helen was again alone, as it was yet very early in the morning, she employed herself in pluming the casque, and in forming the scarf which she meant should adorn her present.—Thus, time flew with her, till the sand-glass told her it was the eighth hour. But in a short time afterwards she was aroused from the profound stillness in which that part of the castle lay, by the doleful lament of the troop returning from Ellerslie.

She dropt the half formed scarf from her hand; and listened, without daring to draw her breath, to the deep-toned lamentations, as they came on the breeze. She thought that she had never before heard the dirge of her country so piercing, so thrillingly awful.—Her head fell on the armour and scarf. "Sweet lady!" sighed she to herself, "who is it that dares thus invade thy duties!—But my gratitude—gratitude to thy once loved lord, will not offend thy pure spirit!" Again the mournful wailings rose on the air; and with a convulsion of feelings she could not restrain, she threw herself on her knees, and leaning her head on the newly adorned helmet, wept profusely.

## The Scottish Chiefs

Murray entered the room unobserved. "Helen! my sweet cousin!" cried he, surprized at her attitude, and at the armour which lay at her feet. Helen started, and rising, apologized for her tears by owning the truth. He now told her that the body of the deceased lady was deposited in the chapel of the castle; and that the priests from the adjacent priory, only awaited her presence, to consign it, with all the church's rites, to its tomb.

Helen retired for a few minutes to recover herself; and then re-entering covered with a long black veil, was led by her cousin to the awful scene.

The bier lay before the altar. The prior of Saint Fillan, in his holy vestments, stood at its head; a band of monks were ranged on each side. The maids of Lady Helen, in mourning garments, met their mistress at the portal. They had wrapped the beautiful corpse in the shroud prepared for it: and now having laid it, strewed with flowers, back on the bier, they advanced to their trembling lady, expecting her to approve their services. Helen drew near—she bowed to the priests: one of her women put her hand on the pall to uncover the once lovely face of the murdered Marion. Lady Helen hastily resisted the woman's motion, by laying her hand also upon the pall. The chill of death struck through the velvet to her fingers. She turned pale; and waving her hand to the prior to begin, the bier was lowered by the priests into the tomb beneath. As it descended, Helen sunk upon her knees, and the anthem for departed souls was raised. The pealing notes, as they rose and swelled, seemed to bear up the spirit of the sainted Marion to its native heaven; and the tears which now flowed from the eyes of Helen, as they mingled with her pious aspirations, seemed the very balm of paradise, descending upon her soul.

When all was over, the venerable Halbert, who had concealed his overwhelming sorrow behind a pillar, threw himself on the cold stone which for ever closed the last chamber of his beloved mistress. With faint cries, he gave way to the woe which shook his aged bosom, and called on death to lay him low with her. The women of Lady Helen again chanted forth their melancholy wailings for the dead; and her ladyship, unable longer to bear the scene, threw herself into the arms of her cousin, and was carried in an almost insensible state to her apartment. He consigned her to the care of the maids who had followed from the chapel; and having seen her revive, left her, to rejoin the Earl.

## CHAP IX.

Murray, as soon as he returned from Ellerslie, having rewarded his trusty followers with their promised war-bonnets from the hand of Helen, and dispatched them onward to the foot of Cartlane craigs, there to await his arrival with the larger levy; now went to Lord Mar, to inform him how far he had executed his command; and to hear what would be his future orders. He found the veteran Earl surrounded by arms and armed men: fifty brave Scots, who were to officer the three hundred now on the Bothwell moor, were receiving their bows and arrows, spears, and swords, and other weapons, from the hands of their lord.

"Bear these stoutly, my gallant countrymen;" cried he, "and remember, that although the dragon of England has burnt up your harvest, and laid your houses in ashes;—yet there is a lion in Scotland that withers his power, and will glut you with the spoil of your foe!"

He had scarcely uttered these words, when the double doors of the apartment were thrown open; and his eyes were blasted by the sudden sight of Lord Soulis, the sworn partizan of Edward: he was accompanied by a man in splendid English armour, and a train of Southron soldiers. The Earl started from his couch.—"My lord, what is the occasion of this unapprised visit?"

"The ensign of the liege lord of Scotland is my warrant;" replied Soulis; "you are my prisoner; and in the name of King Edward of England, I take possession of this castle."

"Never," cried the indignant Earl, "while there is a man's arm within it."

"Men or women," returned Lord Soulis, "they must surrender to Edward; for an army of three thousand English have seized three hundred of your men—at—arms on Bothwell moor. The castle is surrounded; resistance is impossible.—Throw down your arms, also, ye mutinous villains!" cried he, turning to the Scots who were present; "or be hanged for rebellion against your lawful sovereign!"

"Our lawful sovereign," returned a young man who stood near him, "must be the enemy of Edward; and to none else will we yield our swords!"

"Traitor!" cried the English commander, and with a sudden and dreadful stroke of his battle-axe, he laid the body of the generous Scot a headless corps at his feet. A cry of revenge proceeded from his enraged comrades. Every sword was drawn; and before the bewildered and soul-struck Earl could utter a word, the furies blew their most horrible blast through the chamber; and the half frantic Mar beheld his brave Scots at one moment victorious, and in the next the floor strewn with their dead bodies. A new succession of blood-hounds rushed in at every door; and before the exterminating sword was allowed to rest, the whole of his faithful troops lay around him, wounded and dying. Several had fallen across his body; having warded with their lives the strokes which they thought were levelled at his. In vain his voice had called upon his men to surrender; in vain he had implored the iron-hearted Soulis and his coadjuter Aymer de Valence, to stop the havoc of death. All now lay in blood: and the room, thronged by the victors, became so intolerable, that De Valence, for his own sake, ordered the Earl to be removed into another apartment.

Meanwhile, Helen, unconscious of what was passing, had laid down on her bed, to seek a few minutes repose; having watched the whole of the foregoing night, she now sank into a profound and refreshing sleep.

Murray, who was present at the abrupt entrance of the enemy, no sooner heard them declare that the castle was surrounded by a comparatively large army, than he knew that without some stratagem all would be lost. And before the dreadful signal of carnage was given in the fall of the young Scot, he slid behind the canopy of his uncle's couch, and lifting the arras, by a back-door which led to some private rooms, hastily made his way to the chamber of his cousin. As he hurried along, he heard a fearful shout. He paused for a moment, but thinking it best, whatever might have happened, to secure the safety of Helen, without the usual ceremony of demanding admittance, he flew past her maids and entered her room. She lay upon the bed in a deep sleep. "Awake! Helen, awake!" cried he; he laid his hand upon her arm—"for your life, awake!"

She opened her eyes, and looked at him with surprise; but he, without allowing her time to speak, hastily added: "The castle is full of armed men led hither by the English commander Aymer de Valence and the execrable Soulis. Unless you fly through the vaulted passage you will be their prisoner."

Helen gazed at him full of terror: "What, leave my father? I cannot."



## The Scottish Chiefs

"Hesitate not, my dear cousin! fly in pity to your father. What will be his anguish should you fall into the hands of the man whose love you have rejected; and when it will no longer be in the power of even a parent to preserve your person from the outrages of his eager and avengeful passion. If you had seen Soulis' merciless eyes—" He was interrupted by a clamour in the opposite gallery, and the shrieks of women. Helen grasped his arm: "Alas, my poor damsels! I will go with you—lead me whither you will, to be far from him."

As Murray threw his arm about her waist to support her almost failing steps, his eyes fell on the banner and the suit of armour. Helen had ordered the latter to be buckled in a large plaid, ready to be sent away with the armed clan when they should begin their march. It was meant as a tribute of gratitude to the deliverer of her father.

"This banner shall still be mine," exclaimed Murray, seizing it: "but what is to be done with that armour? I guess you intended it for the brave Wallace."

"I did," faintly replied Helen.

"Then it shall be his yet," was the rapid response of Murray; and giving her the banner, as it was a light thing to carry, he threw the plaid and its contents on his shoulder, and still making Helen hold by him, he hastened with her down the secret stairs which led from the western watch-tower, to the vaults beneath the castle. On entering the first cellar, to which a dim light was admitted through a small grating near the top, he looked around for the arch-way of the vault that contained the avenue of their release. Having descried it, he hastened into it, and raising one of the large flags which paved the floor, assisted his affrighted cousin down a short flight of steps into the secret passage: "This," whispered he, "will carry us in a direct line to the cell of the prior of St. Fillan. It was constructed in old times, for religious as well as warlike purposes. The prior is a Murray, and with him you will be safe."

"But what will become of my father and Lady Mar? This flight from them—I fear to complete it!"

"Rather fear the libertine Soulis," returned Murray, "he can only make them prisoners; and even that injury will be of short duration; for I shall soon join the brave Wallace, and then, my sweet cousin, hey for liberty and a happy meeting!"

"Alas, his venerable harper!" cried she, suddenly recollecting Halbert, and stopping her cousin as he was hurrying her forward; "should he be discovered to have belonged to Wallace, he will be put to death by these merciless men."

Murray set down his load. "Have you courage to remain in this darkness alone? If so, I will seek him, and he shall accompany us."

Helen feared not for herself, but for the dangers Murray might encounter by returning into the castle, but the generous youth entered too fully into her apprehensions concerning the old man, to be withheld. "Should I be delayed in coming back," said he, recollecting the possibility of himself being attacked and slain, "go forward to the end of this passage, it will lead you to a flight of stairs; ascend them, and by drawing the bolt of a door, you will find that it will immediately admit you to the prior's cell."

"Talk not of delay," replied Helen, "return quickly, and I will await you at the entrance of the passage." So saying, she swiftly retraced with him her steps to the bottom of the stone stairs by which they had descended. He re-raised the flag, sprung out of the aperture, and closing it down, left her in solitude and darkness.

Murray passed through the first cellar, and was proceeding to the second (amongst the catacombs of which lay the concealed entrance to the private stairs) when he saw the great gates of the cellar open, and a large party of English soldiers enter: they were conducted by the butler of the castle; who seemed to perform his office very unwillingly, as they crowded in, uttering many jovial threats against the juice of the vineyard.

Murray, at the first glance of these plunderers, aware how unequal his single arm would be to contend with such numbers, retreated behind a heap of empty casks in a remote corner. While the trembling butler was loading a dozen of the men with flasks for the refreshment of their masters, the rest were helping themselves from the adjacent catacombs, some leaving the cellars with their booty, and others remaining to drink it on the spot. Bothwell's old servant, glad to escape the insatiable demands of the soldiers, who lay wallowing in the wine they were pouring over themselves, left the cellar with the last company that bore flaggons to their comrades above.

Murray at this time listened anxiously, in hopes of hearing from his garrulous neighbours some intimation of the fate of his uncle and aunt. He hearkened in vain, for nothing was uttered by these intoxicated banditti, but loud boastings of the number each had slain in the Earl's apartment, execrations against the Scots for their obstinate resistance; and a thousand sanguinary wishes that the nation had but one neck, that they might destroy it with a

## The Scottish Chiefs

single blow.

How often during this conversation, was Murray tempted to rush out amongst them and seize a desperate revenge. But the thought of his poor cousin now awaiting his return, and perhaps already suffering dreadful alarms from such extraordinary uproar, restrained him; and unable to move from his hiding place without precipitating himself into instant death, he remained nearly an hour in the most painful anxiety; watching the dropping to sleep of this horrid crew, one by one.

When all seemed hushed; not a voice, even in a whisper, startling his ear, he ventured forth with a stealing step to the side of the slumbering group. Like his brave ancestor, Gaul, the son of Morna, he disdained to stab a sleeping foe! He must pass them to reach the private stairs. He paused and listened. Silence still reigned, and not even a hand moved, so deeply were they sunk in the fumes of wine. He took courage, and flew with the lightness of air to the secret door: as he laid his hand on it, it was opened from without, and two persons appeared. By the few rays which gleamed from the expiring torches of the sleepers, he could see that the first wore English armour. Murray believed himself lost; but determining to sell his life dearly, he made a spring to catch the man by the throat, and was aiming a stroke at him with his dirk, when some one seized his arm, exclaiming—"Stop my Lord Murray! It is the faithful Grimsby you would kill!" Murray let go his hold, glad to find that both his English friend, and the venerable object of his solicitude were thus providentially brought to meet him; but fearing that the violence of his action, and Halbert's exclamation, might have alarmed the sleeping soldiers, (who, drunk as they were, were too numerous to be resisted) he laid his finger on the lip of Grimsby in token of silence, and motioned to the astonished pair to follow him.

Halbert, as he drew near the group on the ground, started on seeing they were English, and allowed an ejaculation of terror to escape him. Murray listened with redoubled alarm to the sound as it echoed round the vaults. The old man seemed rooted to the spot, while one of the soldiers moved as if disturbed. Murray seeing that no time could be lost, held his sword over the sleeping wretch, ready to plunge it into his heart should he attempt to rise; at the same moment he beckoned to his companions to proceed, inwardly trembling with fear that the indiscretion of Halbert had betrayed them to their enemies.

Being advanced to the flag, he drew it up, and eager to haven his double charge from the peril that threatened them, he thrust them together down the stairs. At that moment a loud shriek from Helen, who discovered by the gleam of light which then burst into the vault, a man descending in English armour, resounded through the cellars. Two of the soldiers jumped upon their feet, and with brandished swords, rushed upon Murray. He had let the flag drop behind him, but still remaining by it in case of an opportunity to escape he received the strokes of their weapons upon his target, and returned them with redoubled violence. One assailant in a few seconds lay gasping at his feet. But the clashing of arms, and the cries of the survivor, had already awakened the whole crew; who with horrid menaces throwing themselves towards the young Scot, would certainly have cut him to pieces, had he not snatched the only remaining torch out of the hand of a staggering soldier, and extinguished it under his foot. Bewildered where to find their prey, with threats and imprecations they groped in darkness, slashing the air with their swords, and not unfrequently wounding each other in the vain search.

Murray was now far from their pursuit. He had no sooner put out the light, than he pulled up the flag, and leaping down, drew it after him, and found himself in perfect safety. Desperate as was the contest, it had been short, for he yet heard the footsteps of the panic-struck Helen, flying along the passage. The Englishman and Halbert, on the first falling of the flag, not knowing its spring, had unsuccessfully tried to re-raise it, that they might assist Murray in the tumult they heard above. On his appearing again so unexpectedly, the soldier declared his joy; but the young lord, impatient to calm the apprehensions of his cousin, returned no other answer than, "Follow me!" while he darted forward. But terror gave her wings; and unable to hear the low sounds of Murray's voice, which he durst not raise to a higher pitch for fear of being overheard by the enemy above, he did not come up with her till she fell breathless against the stairs at the extremity of the vault.

As soon as he found her within his arms, he turned to the soldier, and requested him to go a few paces back into the passage, and bring a bundle of armour he would find lying against the wall. Grimsby retreated to execute this commission, and Halbert advancing, inquired whether it were indeed Lady Helen's voice he had heard?

"It was hers," replied Murray, "but she is now so cold, that I much fear I shall never hear it again!" As he spoke, he carried her up the steps, and drew the bolt of the door: it sprung open, and discovered a large monastic cell, into which the light of the sun streamed through one long narrow window. A straw pallet, an altar, and a

## The Scottish Chiefs

marble bason, were the furniture. The cell was solitary, the holy occupier being then at high mass in the chapel of the monastery. Murray took his insensible burthen and laid it on the monk's bed. He then ventured (believing, as it was to restore so pure a being to life, that it was no sacrilege) to throw some of the holy water upon the face of Helen, and by means of a little chalice which stood upon the altar, he poured some into her mouth. At last opening her eyes, she recognized the figure of her cousin leaning over her. The almost paralyzed Halbert stood at her feet. "Blessed virgin! am I yet safe, and with my dear Andrew! Oh! I feared you were slain!" cried she, bursting into a flood of tears.

"Thank God, we are both safe;" answered he, "comfort yourself my beloved cousin! you are now on holy ground; this is the cell of the prior of St. Fillans. None but the hand of an infidel durst tear you from this sanctuary."

"But my father, my mother; what may have become of them?"

"Your mother, my gracious lady," answered Halbert, "since you could not be found in the castle, is allowed to accompany your father to Dumbarton castle: they are to be treated with every respect until De Valence receives further orders from King Edward."

"Wallace! Wallace!" cried she, "where then are the succours we were to have sent to thee?—And without succours, how canst thou rescue my dear father from this tyranny!"

"Do not despair:" replied Murray, "look but at the banner you held fast even while insensible; your own hands have engraven my answer—God armeth the patriot!—Convinced of that, can you still fear for your father? No; I will join Wallace tomorrow; your own fifty warriors await me at the bottom of Cartlane craigs; and if any treachery should be meditated against my uncle, that moment we will raze the towers of Dumbarton to their foundation."

Helen's reply was a deep sigh. She thought it might be Heaven's will that her father, like the good Lord Douglas, should fall a victim to royal revenge; and so sad were her forebodings, that she hardly dared to hope what the sanguine disposition of her cousin promised.—Grimsby now appeared with his charge over his shoulder; he laid it down, and at the same time unloosing an iron box that was swung under his arm, put it into the hands of lord Murray.

"This fatal treasure," said he, "was committed to my care by the Earl your uncle, to deliver to the prior of St. Fillans or to you."

"What does it contain?" demanded Murray; "I never saw it before."

"I know not its contents;" returned the soldier, "it belongs to Sir William Wallace."

Indeed!" ejaculated Helen; "if it be treasure, why was it not rather sent to him?—But how, honest soldier, could you escape with it through these possessed walls?"

He replied, that he was obliged to have recourse to stratagem:—As soon as the English and their Scottish partizans under Lord Soulis, had surprized the castle, he saw that his only chance of safety was to throw off the bonnet and plaid, and to mix amongst the numerous soldiers who took possession of the gates. His armour and his language shewed he was their countryman; and they easily believed that he had joined the plunderers, as a volunteer from the army which at a greater distance beleaguered the castle. The story of his desertion from the Lanerk garrison, had not yet reached those of Glasgow and Dumbarton; and one or two men who had known him in former expeditions, readily reported that he had been drafted into the present one. Their recognition warranted his truth; and he had no difficulty, after the carnage in the state apartment, to make his way to the bed chamber where Lord Aymer de Valence had ordered Lord Mar to be carried. He found the Earl alone, and lost in grief. He knew not but that his nephew, and the lady Helen, and the Countess, had fallen beneath the impetuous swords of the enemy. Astonished at seeing the soldier walking at large, he expressed his surprise with some suspicions. But Grimsby told him of the stratagem he had used, and then satisfied his anxiety that Lord Andrew Murray had not been seen since the onset. This information inspired him with a hope that he had escaped: and when the soldier also said that he had seen the Countess led by Lord Soulis across the hall towards his daughter's apartments, and had overheard him promising them every respect; the Earl seemed comforted. "But how, (inquired he of Grimsby) has this hard fate befallen us? Have you learnt how De Valence knew that I meant to take up arms for my country?"

When the soldier was relating this part of the conference, Murray interrupted him with the same demand.

"On that head I cannot fully satisfy your lordship;" replied he, "I could only gather from the soldiers, that a

## The Scottish Chiefs

sealed packet had been delivered to Lord Aymer de Valence, late last night at Dumbarton castle. Soulis was then with him: he immediately set off to Glasgow, for the followers he had left there; and early this morning he joined De Valence and his legions on Bothwell moor. The consequences there you know; but they do not end at Bothwell: the gallant Wallace."—

At that name, so mentioned, the heart of Helen grew cold—

"What of him?" exclaimed Murray.

"They have killed my dear master!" cried Halbert; "oh! soldier, why did you not tell me this before? I might have staid, and found a stop to these heavy miseries on their bloody swords!"

"Be not alarmed!" replied Grimsby, "no personal harm has happened to Sir William Wallace; but I understand that in the same moment De Valence gave orders to his troops to march to Bothwell, he sent others to intercept that persecuted knight's escape from the Cartlane craigs."

"That damned sealed packet," cried Murray, "has been the traitor! some villain in Bothwell—castle must have written it; whence else could have come the information? and if so," added he with tremendous emphasis, "may the curse of slavery ever pursue him and his posterity!"

Helen shuddered, as the amen to this frightful malediction was echoed by the voices of Halbert and the soldier. The latter continued:

"When I had informed Lord Mar, of the measures of these enemies of Wallace, he expressed his hope that your first detachment to his assistance, might with you perhaps at its head, elude their vigilance and join his friend. This discourse reminded him of the iron box. It is in that closet; (said he, pointing to an opposite door) you will find it beneath the little altar before which I pay my daily duties to the all-wise dispenser of the fates of men: take it thence, and buckle it to your side.

"I obeyed; and he then proceeded:— There are two passages in this house which lead to sanctuary: The one nearest to us will be the safest for you. A stair-case from the closet you have just left, will conduct you directly into the chapel. When there, you will see the image of the virgin. Slip aside the marble tablet on the back of the pedestal: it will admit you to a flight of steps; descend them, and at the bottom you will find a door.—Open it with this key: It will convey you into a range of cellars; and lifting up the largest flag stone in the second, and again descending, you will be conducted through a dark vault to an iron door; draw the bolt, and remain in the cell it will open to you, till the master enters. He is the prior of St. Fillans; give him this golden cross, which he well knows is a mark that you come from me; and say it is my request that he will assist you to gain the sea-shore. As for the iron-box; tell him to preserve it for me as he would his life: and never give it up to any one but to myself, my children, or to Sir William Wallace its rightful owner."

"Alas!" cried Halbert, "that he had never been its owner! that he had never brought it to Ellerslie, to draw down misery on his own head!—ill-omened box! whatever it contains, its presence carries blood and sorrow in its train. Where ever it has been deposited, war and murder have followed:—I trust, my dear master will never see it more!"

"He may indeed, never see it more!" murmured Helen, in a low voice; "oh! how am I bereaved!—where are now my gay anticipations of freedom to Scotland? alas, Andrew," said she, taking his hand, and weeping over it; "I have been too presumptuous!—to punish me, my father is a prisoner, and Sir William Wallace lost!"

"Cease, my dear Helen;" cried he, "cease thus to distress yourself! these are merely the vicissitudes of the great contention we are engaged in; we must expect occasional disappointments, or look for miracles every day. Such disasters are sent as lessons, to teach us precaution, promptitude, and patience—these are the soldier's graces, my sweet cousin, and depend on it I will pay them due obedience."

"But why," said Helen, taking comfort from the unsubdued spirits of her cousin, "why my good soldier, did not my dear father take advantage of this sanctuary?"

"I urged the Earl to accompany me;" returned Grimsby, "but he declared his inability, from the weakness attendant on his wounds. And besides, were I capable, said he, how could I leave my wife and children in unprotected captivity; and perhaps implicate the good brothers of Saint Fillan in my calamities? No; I will await my fate; for the God of those who trust in him knows that I do not fear!"

"Having received such peremptory orders from the Earl, I took my leave of him; and entering the chapel by the way he directed, was agreeably surprized to find the worthy Halbert; whom, never having seen him the funeral obsequies, I supposed had fallen during the carnage in the state chamber. He was still kneeling by the tomb of his

## The Scottish Chiefs

buried mistress. I did not take long to warn him of his danger; and desiring him to follow me, we descended beneath the holy statue; and were just emerging into the cellars, when you, dear sir, met us at the entrance.

"It was while we were yet in the chapel that I heard De Valence and Soulis at high words in the court-yard. The former, in a loud voice, gave orders, that as Lady Helen Mar could no where be found, the Earl and Countess with their two infant children, should not be separated, but conveyed as his prisoners to Dumbarton castle."

"That is a comfort;" cried Helen, "my father will then be consoled by the presence of his wife."

"But very different would have been the case, madam, had you appeared;" rejoined the soldier; "one of Lord de Valence's men told me that Lord Soulis would have taken you and the Countess to Dun-glass castle, near Glasgow, while the sick Earl was to have been carried alone to Dumbarton and detained in solitary confinement. Lord Soulis was in so dreadful a rage when you could not be found, that he almost quarrelled with the English commander; accusing him of having leagued with Lady Mar to deceive him. In the midst of this contention, we descended into the vaults."

Helen shuddered as she thought how near she was to falling into the hands of so fierce a spirit. In his character, he united every quality which could render power formidable. Combining prodigious bodily strength with cruelty, dissimulation, and treachery, he was regarded by the common people as a sorcerer, and by those of his own rank, as the enemy of all public virtue, and the violator of every private tie. Helen Mar had twice refused his hand: first, during the contest of Baliol and Bruce, when he declared his pretensions to the crown: She was then a mere child, hardly more than fourteen; but she rejected him with abhorrence:—Though stung to the quick by two such disappointments; being denied the object of his love and his ambition at the same moment; he hesitated not, at another period, to renew his offers to her: At the fall of Dunbar, when he again sounded his uprising on the ruins of his country; as soon as he had repeated his oaths of eternal fidelity to Edward, he hastened to Thirlestane to throw himself a second time at the feet of Lady Helen:—Her ripened judgment confirmed her dislike of his ruffian qualities, and again he was rejected.

"By the powers of hell," exclaimed he, when the project of surprising Bothwell was imparted to him; "if I once get that proud minion into my grasp, she shall kneel as unpitied by me, as I have knelt to her.—She shall be mine as I will; and learn to beg for even a look, from the man who has humbled her!"

Helen knew not half the afflictions with which his resentful heart had meditated to subdue and torture her; and therefore, though she shrunk at the sound of a name so generally infamous, yet not aware of all the evils she had escaped, she replied with languor, though with gratitude, to the almost rapturous congratulations of her cousin on her timely flight.

Murray having replaced the altar, which the opening of the iron door had pushed into the middle of the apartment, all things were arranged in their usual order, when the door of the cell opened, and the prior entered from the cloisters.— He started on seeing his room filled with strangers; Murray took off his helmet and approached him. On recognizing him, the prior inquired his commands, and expressed some surprize that such a company, and above all, a lady, could have passed the convent gate without his previous notice.

Murray pointed to the recess behind the altar; and then explained to the good priest the necessity which had compelled them to seek the protection of Saint Fillan. "Lady Helen," continued he, "must share your care, until heaven empowers the Earl of Mar to reclaim his daughter, and adequately to reward this holy church."

The soldier then presented the cross, with the iron-box, repeating along with them, the message that confided them to his keeping.

The prior listened to these recitals with sorrowful attention: he had heard the noise of armed men advancing to the castle; but knowing that the Earl was making warlike preparations, he had no suspicions that these were other than the Bothwell soldiers. He took the box, and laying it on the altar, pressed the cross to his lips.—"The Earl of Mar shall find that fidelity here, which his faith in the church merits.—That mysterious chest, to which you tell me so terrible a denunciation is annexed, shall be preserved as sacredly as the relics of Saint Fillan."

Halbert groaned heavily at these words, but he did not speak. The prior looked at him attentively, and then proceeded: "And for you, virtuous Southron, I will give you a pilgrim's habit. Travel in that privileged garb to Montrose; and there a brother of the church, the sub-prior of Aberbrothick will, by a letter from me, convey you in a vessel to Normandy; whence you can safely find your way to Guienne."

The soldier, perfectly satisfied with this arrangement; bowed his head: and the priest turning to Lady Helen, told her, "that a cell should be appointed for her, and some pious woman brought from the adjoining hamlet, to

## The Scottish Chiefs

pay her due attendance."

"As for this venerable old man," continued he; "his silver hairs already proclaim his spirit to be near its heavenly flight! he had best put on the cowl of the holy brotherhood; and in the arms of religion repose securely, till he passes through the sleep of death to wake in everlasting life."

Tears started into the eyes of Halbert, "I thank you, reverend father; I have indeed drawn near the end of my pilgrimage—too old to serve my dear Sir William in fields of blood and hardship, I will at least devote my last hours in uniting my prayers with his, and all good souls, for the repose of his lady—I accept your invitation with gratitude; and considering it a call from heaven to give me rest, I shall welcome the day that invests the poor harper of Ellerslie with the sacred tonsure."

The sounding of approaching trumpets; and soon after, the clattering of horses' hoofs and the clang of armour, made an instantaneous silence in the cell.—Helen looked fearfully at her cousin, and grasped his hand; Murray clasped his sword with a firmer hold—"I will protect you with my life." he spoke in a low tone, but the prior heard him: "there is no cause of alarm;" rejoined the holy man; "Lord de Valence is only marching by in his way to Dumbarton."

"Alas, my poor father!" cried Helen, covering her face with her hands.

The venerable prior, pitying her affliction, knelt down by her: "my daughter, be comforted;" said he, "they dare not commit any violence on the Earl. King Edward too well understands his own interest to allow even a long imprisonment of so popular a nobleman." This assurance, with other arguments kindly suggested by the prior, and assisted by the consolations of a firm trust in God, at length raised her head with a sweet smile. He continued to speak of the impregnable hopes of the christian who founds his confidence in omnipotence; and while his words spread a serenity through her soul, that seemed the ministration of a descended saint, she closed her hands over her breast, and silently invoked the protection of the Almighty Jehovah for her suffering parents.

The prior seeing her composed, recommended leaving Lady Helen to seek a few hours' rest. As sleep had not visited her eye-lids for a long lapse of time, she allowed them to depart; and the prior led Murray and his companions into the convent library.

## CHAP. X.

Since, by the march of De Valence from the castle, the suspicion of any of its late inhabitants being still in the neighbourhood seemed to have subsided; Grimsby thought he might depart in safety; and accordingly, next morning, he begged permission of the prior immediately to commence his journey.—"I am anxious to quit a land," said he, "where my countrymen are committing violences which make me blush at the name of Englishman."

Murray put a purse of gold into the soldier's hand, as the prior covered his armour with a pilgrim's gown. Grimsby, with a respectful bow, returned the gift: "I cannot take money from you, my lord.—Bestow on me the sword that is at your side, and I will preserve it for ever."

Murray took it off and gave it to the soldier. "Let us exchange, my brave friend!" said he, "give me yours; and I will regard it as a memorial of having found virtue in an Englishman."

Grimsby complied with his wish; and as he put the iron hilt into his hand, a tear stood in his eye: "When you raise this sword against my countrymen, think on Grimsby, and spare the blood of all who ask for mercy."

Murray smiled a gracious assent, for the tear of mercy was infectious; without speaking, he gave the good soldier a parting grasp of the hand; and with regret, that prior claims called so brave a man from his side, he saw him leave the monastery.

The mourner banquets on memory; making that which seems the poison of life, its aliment. During the hours of regret we recal the images of departed joys; and in weeping over each tender remembrance, tears so softly shed embalm the wounds of grief. To be denied the privilege of pouring forth our love and our lamentations over the grave of one who in life was our happiness, is to shut up the soul of the survivor in a solitary tomb, where the bereaved heart pines in secret till it breaks with the fullness of uncommunicated sorrow:—But listen to the mourner; give his feelings way, and, like the river rolling from the hills into the valley, they will flow with a gradually gentler stream, till they become lost in time's wide ocean.

So Murray judged, when the poor old harper, finding himself alone with him, again gave loose to his often recapitulated griefs. He wept like an infant; and recounting the afflictions of his master, and the disasters at Bothwell, implored Murray to go without delay to support the now almost friendless Wallace. Murray was consoling him with the assurance that he would set off for the mountains that very evening, when the prior returned to conduct Halbert to a cell appointed for his noviciate. The good man had placed there one of the oldest fathers in the convent, to administer both temporal and spiritual cordials to his enfeebled state.

The sorrowing domestic of Wallace being thus disposed of, the prior and Murray remained together, consulting on the safest means of passing through the country to the Cartlane hills. A lay brother whom the prior, by the young lord's desire, had sent in pursuit of Helen's fifty warriors to apprise them of the English being in the craigs, at this moment entered the library. He informed the father that secure in his religious garb, he had penetrated many of the Cartlane defiles, but could neither see nor hear any thing of the troop.—Every glen or height was occupied by the English: and from a very communicative woman, of whom he had begged a draught of milk, he learnt how closely the mountains were invested by the enemy. The English commander, in his zeal to prevent provisions being conveyed to Wallace and his famishing garrison, had the day before stopped a procession of monks who were bearing a dead youth to be buried in the cave of Saint Columba.—He would not allow them to ascend the heights until he had examined whether the bier really bore the body, or was a vehicle to carry food to the beleaguered Scots.

The woman also informed the friar that the men taken at Bothwell were marched prisoners to Glasgow; that Lord and Lady Mar had been conveyed to Dumbarton; and that De Valence had left a large detachment at Bothwell castle, to guard the plunder which he had seized in the King's name.

In the midst of this conference they were startled by a sudden shout, and a cry of "Hang the traitor!"

"Our brave Englishman has fallen into their hands," cried Murray, hastening towards the door.

"What would you do?" interrupted the prior, catching hold of him; "your single arm could not save the soldier.—The cross will have more power: I will seek these violent men:—Meanwhile stay here, as you value the lives of all in the convent."

## The Scottish Chiefs

Murray had now recollected himself, and acquiesced. The prior took the crucifix from the altar, hastened across the cloisters; and ordering the porter to throw open the great doors, (near which the incessant shouting seemed to proceed) in a moment he appeared before a turbulent band of soldiers who were dragging a man along, fast bound with their leathern belts. His blood, trickling from his face, fell on the hands of the ruthless wretches who, with horrid yells, were threatening him with instant death.

The prior, raising the cross, rushed in amongst them; and in the name of the blessed Son who died on that tree, bade them stop! the soldiers trembled before the holy majesty of his figure, and at his awful adjuration. The prior looked on the prisoner, but he saw not the dark locks of the Englishman: it was the yellow hair of Scotland that mingled with the blood on his forehead.

"Whither do you hurry that wounded man?"

"To his death," answered a surly fellow.

"What is his offence?"

"He is a traitor."

"How has he proved it?"

"He is a Scot; and he belongs to the disloyal Lord of Mar.—This bugle with its crowned Falcon, proves it." Added he, holding up the very bugle which the Earl had sent by Halbert to Wallace, and which was ornamented with the crest of Mar wrought in gold.

"That this has been Lord Mar's," replied the prior, "there is no doubt; but may not this man have found it?—Or may it not have been given to him by the Earl, before that chief incurred the displeasure of King Edward? Which of you would think it just to be made to die because your friend was condemned to the scaffold? Unless you substantiate your charge of treason against this man, by a better proof than finding this bugle on him, his death would be a murder which the Lord of life will requite, at the perdition of your souls. As the prior spoke, he again elevated the cross: The men who held the stranger turned pale.

"I am a minister of Christ," continued he, "and must be the friend of justice. Release therefore that wounded man to me. Before the altar of the searcher of all hearts, he shall confess himself; and if I find that he is guilty unto death, I promise you by the holy St. Fillan, to release him to your commanding officer, and to let justice take its course. But if he prove innocent, I am the soldier of Christ; and no monarch on earth shall wrest his children from the protection of the church."

While he spake, the men who held the prisoner had let go their hold; and the prior, stretching out his hand to him, gave him to a party of monks to conduct into the convent. To convince the soldiers that he meant to be disinterested, that it was the man's life he sought to save, and not the spoil, the prior returned the golden bugle, and bade them depart in peace.

Awed by the holy father's address, and satisfied with the money and arms of which they had rifled the stranger, the marauders (who were only a straggling band, led by no officer) quietly retreated; determining to say nothing of the matter to the lieutenant in the castle, lest he should demand the horn, which they resolved to break up and divide with the rest of the spoil, amongst themselves. Elated with their present booty, they marched off to pursue their plundering excursion; and bursting into yeomen's houses, and peasant's huts; stripping all of their substance who did, or did not swear fealty to Edward; robbing from the latter, and exacting contributions from the former; while vain prayers for mercy, and unanswered cries for redress, echoed dolefully through the vale of Bothwell, they sped gaily on, as if murder were pastime and rapine honour.

The prior on returning into the convent ordered the gates to be bolted. When he entered the chapter-house, finding the monks had already bound up the wounds of the stranger, he made a sign for the brethren to withdraw; and then approaching the young man—"My son," said he, in a mild tone, "you heard what was my declaration to the men from whom I took you!—answer me with truth; and you will find that virtue, or repentance, have alike a refuge in the arms of the church. As I am its servant, no man needs fear to confide in me.—Speak with candour!—How came you by that bugle?"

The stranger looked stedfastly on the prior:—"A minister of the all-righteous God, cannot mean to deceive. You have saved my life; and I should be less than man could I doubt the evidence of that deed. I received that bugle from a brave Scot who dwells amongst the Eastern mountains, and who gave it to me to convince the Earl of Mar that I came from him."

The prior now apprehended that it was of Wallace he spoke: "you come to request a military aid from the Earl



## The Scottish Chiefs

of Mar!" rejoined the father, willing to sound him before he committed Murray, by calling him to the conference.

The stranger replied: "If, reverend Sir, you are in the confidence of the good Earl, pronounce but the christian name of the man who charged me with the bugle, and allow me then, for his sake, to ask you what has happened to the Earl, that I was seized by foes when I expected to meet with friends only?—Reply to this, and I shall then speak freely:—But at present, though I would confide all of myself to your sacred character, yet the confidence of others is not mine to bestow."

The prior, by this caution, being convinced that he was speaking with some messenger of Wallace, made no hesitation to answer—"Your master is a knight; and a braver never drew breath since the time of his royal name—sake William the Lion!"

The man rose hastily from his seat, and falling on his knee before the prior, put his garment to his lips:—"Father, I now know that I am indeed with a friend of my persecuted master! allow me then, thou venerable saint, instantly to return to him; for since the situation of Lord Mar precludes all assistance from him, the noble Wallace is penned within the heart of those hills without any hopes of escape. Suffer me then to go that I may at least die with my friend!"

"Hope for a better destiny," returned the prior; "I am a servant, and not to be worshipped: turn to that altar, and kneel to him who can alone truly send the succour you need."

The good man thinking it was now time to call the young lord of Bothwell, by a side-door from the chapter-house entered the library where Murray was anxiously waiting his return. On his entrance, the impatient youth eagerly exclaimed "have you rescued him?"

"I have rescued some one," answered he, "but not Grimsby: he, I hope, is far and safely on his journey. The man those murderers were dragging to death is in the chapter house. Follow me, and he will give you news of Wallace."

Murray gladly obeyed.

At sight of a Scottish knight in armour, the messenger of Wallace thought his prayers were answered, and that he saw before him the leader of the host which was to march to the preservation of his brave commander. Murray told him who he was; and learnt from him in return, that Wallace now considered himself in a state of siege; that the women, children, and old men, were on the point of starvation; having nothing to feed on but wild strawberries, and the birds' eggs which they found in the hollows of the rocks. "To relieve them from such hard quarters," continued the narrator, "is his first wish; but that cannot be effected by so small a body of forces, who, to do it, must cut their way through a strong barrier of English soldiers. However, this he proposed to accomplish by a stratagem could his means be strengthened by succours from the Earl of Mar."

"My father's means," replied Murray, "are for a time cut off; but mine shall be exerted to the utmost. Did you not meet in your way hither a company of Scots to the number of fifty, whom I sent off yesterday morning to the support of our gallant friend?"

"No;" rejoined the young man, "I fear they have been taken by the enemy; for in my way to Sir William Wallace, not knowing the English were so close to his sanctuary, I was nearly seized myself.—I had not the honour of being under the command of Sir William when he struck the first blow for Scotland in the citadel of Lanerk; but as soon as I heard the terrible tale of his wrongs, and that he had retired in arms towards the Cartlane craigs, I determined to follow his fortunes. We had been school-fellows in our boyish days, and friends ever after. He had saved my life once in a swimming party; and now that a formidable nation menaced his life, I vowed to make mine his bulwark. For this purpose a few nights ago I left my guardian's house by stealth, and habited as a shepherd, sought my way to the banks of the Mouse. To my astonishment I found them occupied by the English: but still pursuing my course, by creeping among the thickets, and exploring the most intricate passages, I at last gained the bottom of the precipice on the top of which Wallace was encamped; and as I lay watching an opportunity to ascend, I perceived two English soldiers through the bushes; they were in discourse, and from them I learnt, that besides Heselrigge himself, nearly two hundred of his garrison had fallen by the hand of Wallace's men in the contention at the castle. Sir Gilbert Hambleton bore the tidings to Sir Richard Arnulff, the deputy-governor of Ayr; and there some words passing between them, the former retired in disgust to England, and the latter sent a thousand men to surround Cartlane craigs. Spies had already given notice that they were Sir William's strong holds; and the orders were, that he should be taken dead or alive, and his adherents, men and women, receive no quarter.

## The Scottish Chiefs

"Such was the information I brought to my gallant friend, when in the dead of night I mounted the rock, and calling to the Scottish centinel in gaelic, gave him my name, and was allowed to enter that sacred spot. Wallace welcomed his faithful Ker, and unfolded to me his distress and his hopes. He told me of the famine that threatened his little garrison, of the constant watching day and night that was necessary to prevent a surprize, and that their present unremitted employment, was to dash the assailing English down the precipice, with showers of stones, as they attempted to ascend. In this extremity, he observed that one defile was but thinly guarded by the enemy, because, as it lay at the bottom of a perpendicular angle of the rock, they thought it unattainable by Wallace. To this point however my dauntless friend turned his eyes. He would attempt it, could he procure a sufficient number of fresh men to cover the retreat of his exhausted few. For this purpose, as I had so lately explored the most hidden paths of the craigs, I volunteered to visit the Lord Mar, and to conduct in safety any succours he might send, to my commander. At the entrance of the defile, is a cavern open at each extremity, the one end to the perpendicular side of the rock, and the other to the passage amongst the craigs. By this unguarded avenue I meant to have brought the Earl's men, who, by springing unawares upon the English stationed there, might have easily mastered them, and formed an effectual screen for the poor inhabitants of the rock, while letting themselves down by the bushes to the cave's mouth through which they were to escape. Wallace and Lord Mar's band would have then followed, blocking up the mouth of the cavern to prevent pursuit.

"This," continued Ker, "was the errand on which I came to the Earl. Think then what was my horror, when in my journey I found redoubled legions hemming in the hills; and on advancing towards Bothwell castle, I was seized by a party of English, rifled, and declared an accomplice with that nobleman, who was, they said, condemned to lose his head!"

"Not so bad as that neither, my good Ker," said Murray, a glow of indignation passing over his cheek, "many a bull's head shall make groan the Southron ables in this land, before my uncle's head gluts their thirsty axes!—No true Scottish heart, I trust, will ever bleed on their scaffolds; for while we have arms to wield a sword, and legs to carry us to the field, he must be a fool that leaves it on any other terms than Freedom or Death. We have cast our lives on the die; and Wallace's camp or the narrow house must be our prize!"

"Brave youth!" exclaimed the prior, "may the innocence which gives animation to your courage, continue its moving soul! They only are invincible who are as ready to die as to live: and no one can be firm in that principle whose exemplary life is not a happy preparation for the awful change."

Murray bowed modestly to this pious encomium, and turning to Ker, informed him, that since he must abandon all hope of hearing any more of the fifty brave men his cousin Helen had sent to the craigs, he had bethought him of applying to his uncle Sir John Murray, who dwelt hard by on his estate at Drumshargard. "It is small," said he, "and cannot afford many men; but still he may spare us sufficient to effect the escape of our commander, and that for the present, will be enough."

To accomplish his design without delay, for promptitude he regarded as the earnest of success, and to avoid a surprize from the lieutenant at Bothwell, (who, hearing of the rencontre before the castle, might choose to demand his men's prisoner of the Prior,) Murray determined to take Ker along with him; and disguised as peasants, as soon as darkness should shroud their movements, proceed to Drumshargard.

CHAP. XI.

While these transactions of Murray and his friends occupied the whole of the morning, Lady Helen (who the night before, had been removed by the prior to the cell appointed for her) slept long and sweetly. Her exhausted frame had found renovation in a deep and lengthened repose; and she awoke with a heavenly calm at her heart. A cheering vision had visited her sleeping thoughts: and a trance of happy feelings still absorbed her senses, while her hardly disengaged spirit hovered over its fading images.

She had seen in her dream, a young knight in beautiful armour enter her cell, with her father in his arms. He laid the Earl down at her feet; but as she stooped to embrace him, the knight took her by the hand, and leading her to the window of the apartment, (which now seemed extended to an immense size) he smiled and said,—“Look out, and see how I have performed my vow!” she obeyed, and saw crowds of rejoicing people, who, at the sight of the young warrior raised such a shout of joy, that Helen awoke. She started—she looked around—she was still in the narrow cell and alone; but the rapture of beholding her father yet fluttered at her heart, and the touch of the warrior's hand seemed still warm upon her's.

“Angels of rest,” cried she, “I thank you for this blest vision!”

The prior of St. Fillan might have read his own just sentiment in the heart of Lady Helen. She, though the gentlest of human beings, was an evidence that an ardent and pious mind contains the true principles of heroism: its hopes tread down impossibilities, and regardless of impediments or dangers, rush forward to seize the prize; in the midst of hosts it feels a conqueror's power, or where it is weak, sees, by the eye of faith, legions of watching angels to fill the deficiency. Lady Helen knew that the cause was just which had put the sword into the hand of Wallace; that it was virtue which had prompted her father to second him: and where justice is, there are the wings of the Most High stretched out as a shield!

This dream seemed prophetic; “Yes,” cried she, “though thousands of Edward's soldiers surrounded my father and his friend, I should not despair. Thy life, O, noble Wallace, was not given to be extinguished in an hour! thy morn has hardly risen;—the perfect day must come that is to develop thy greatness;—that is to prove thee; and, Oh! gracious God, grant my prayer! the glory of Scotland!”

Owing to the fervor of her apostrophe, she did not observe the door of the cell open; and she was not wrested from the enchantment of her feelings till the prior stood before her. After expressing his pleasure at the healthful renovation that shewed itself in her countenance, he informed her of the departure of the English soldier, and of the alarm which he and Murray had sustained for his safety, by the adventure which had thrown a stranger from the crags into their protection. At the mention of that now momentous spot she blushed; the golden-haired warrior of her dream seemed ready to rise before her, and with a beating heart she prepared to hear some true but miraculous account of her father's rescue.

The prior unconscious of what was passing in her young and eager mind, proceeded calmly to relate all that Ker had said of the dangerous extremity to which Wallace was reduced; and then closed his intelligence by mentioning the attempt which her cousin meditated to make, to save him. The heightened colour gradually faded from the face of Helen, and low sighs were all the replies she made to his observations on the difficulty of the enterprize. But when his pity for the brave men engaged in the cause, compelled him unthinkingly to express his fears that the patriotic zeal of Wallace would only make him and them a sacrifice, Helen smiled; there was inspiration on her lips and in her eyes. “Father,” said she, “hast thou not taught me that God shieldeth the patriot as well as armeth him?”

“True,” returned he with an answering smile, “steadily believe this, and where will be the sighs you have just been breathing?”

“Nature will shrink,” replied she, “but the Christian's hope checks her ere she falls. Pardon me then, holy father, that I sometimes weep; but they are often tears of trust and consolation.”

“Daughter of Heaven,” replied the good prior, “you might teach devotion to age, and cause youth to be enamoured of the graces of religion! Be ever thus and you may look with indifference on the wreck of worlds.”

Helen having meekly replied to this burst from the heart of the holy man, begged to see her cousin before he set off on his expedition. The prior withdrew on the embassy, and in an hour Murray, habited for his visit to his

## The Scottish Chiefs

uncle, entered the apartment. Their conversation was long, and their parting full of an interest that dissolved them both into tears.

"When I see you again, my brave cousin, tell me that my father is free and his preserver safe. Your own life, dear Andrew," added she, as he pressed his cheek to hers, "must always be precious to me."

Murray hastily withdrew, and Helen was again left alone.

Having no method of conveying baggage, the armour intended for Wallace was left with the iron box in the care of the prior; and Murray and Ker, putting peasants' cloaks over their own armour, took leave of the prior; and having received a thousand blessings from Halbert to be delivered to his master, they bade adieu to him; and proceeded under cover of the night through the obscurest paths of the wood which divided Bothwell from Drumshargard.

Sir John Murray was gone to rest when his nephew arrived; but Lord Andrew's voice being well known by the porter, he was admitted into the house, and leaving his companion in the dining-hall, he went to the apartment of Sir John. The old knight was soon aroused; and he welcomed his nephew with open arms, for he had feared from the accounts brought by the fugitive tenants of Bothwell, that he also had been carried away prisoner.

Murray now unfolded his errand:— First to obtain a band of Sir John's trustiest people, to assist in rescuing the preserver of the Earl's life from immediate destruction; and secondly, if a commission for Lord Mar's release did not arrive from Edward, to aid him to free his uncle and the Countess from Dumbarton castle.

Sir John listened with growing anxiety to his nephew's details:—when he heard of lady Helen's continuing in the convent, he highly approved it, "That is well," said he, "to have taken her to any private protection, would have been to spread calamity. She might have been traced, and her protector put in danger: none but the church can with safety to itself, grant an asylum to the daughter of a state prisoner."

"Then I doubly rejoice she is there," replied Murray, "and there she will remain, till your generous assistance empowers me to rescue her father."

"Lord Mar has been very rash, nephew," returned Drumshargard. "what occasion was there for him to volunteer sending men to support Sir William Wallace? and how durst he bring ruin on Bothwell castle, by collecting, unauthorised by my brother, its vassals for such a dangerous experiment?"

Murray started at these unexpected observations. He knew his uncle was timid, but he had never suspected him of meanness: however, in consideration of the respect he owed to him as his father's brother, he smothered his disgust, and gave him a mild answer. But the old man could not approve of a nobleman of his rank, running himself, his fortune, and his friends into peril, to pay any debt of gratitude; and as to patriotic sentiments being a stimulus, he treated the idea with contempt. "Trust me Andrew," said he, "no body profits by these notions but thieves, and desperate fellows who are ready to become thieves!"

"I do not understand you, sir!"

"Not understand me?" replied the knight, rather impatiently, "who suffers in these contests for liberty, as you chuse to call them, but such men as Lord Mar and your father? Betrayed by artful declamation, they rush into conspiracies against the existing government—are detected—ruined—and perhaps, finally lose their lives!—who gains by rebellion, but a few penniless wretches, who embrace these vaunted principles from the urgency of their necessities? they acquire plunder under the mask of extraordinary disinterestedness; and hazarding nothing of themselves but their worthless lives, they would make tools of the first men in the realm; and throw the whole country into flames, that they may catch a few brands from the fire!"

Young Murray felt his anger rise with this speech.—"You do not speak to my point, Sir!—I do not come here to dispute the general evil of revolt, but to ask your assistance to snatch two of the bravest men in Scotland from the fangs of the tyrant who has made you a slave!"

"Nephew!" cried the knight, starting from his couch, and darting a fierce look at him, "If any man but one of my own blood had uttered that word, this hour should have been his last."

"Every man, Sir," continued Murray, "who acts upon your principles, must know himself to be a slave:—And to resent being called so, is to affront his own conscience. A name is nothing; the fact ought to knock upon your heart, and there arouse the indignation of a Scot and a Murray. See you not the villages of your country burning around you? The castles of your chieftains razed to the ground? Did not the plains of Dunbar reek with the blood of your kinsmen; and even now, do you not see them led away in chains to the strong holds of the tyrant? Are not your stoutest vassals pressed from your service, and sent into foreign wars? And yet you exclaim, I see no

## The Scottish Chiefs

injury—I spurn at the name of slave!"

Murray rose from his seat as he ended, and walking the room in agitation, did not perceive the confusion of his uncle; who, at once overcome with conviction and with fear, again ventured to speak; "It is too sure, you speak truth, Andrew! But what am I, or any other private individual, that we should make ourselves a forlorn hope for the whole nation? Will Baliol, who was the first to bow to the usurper, will he thank us for losing our heads in resentment of his indignity? Bruce himself, the rightful heir of the crown, leaves us to our fates, and has become a courtier in England! For whom then should I adventure my grey hairs, and the quiet of my home, to seek an uncertain liberty, and to meet an almost certain death?"

"For Scotland! uncle;" replied he; "Liberty is her right. You are her son: and if you do not make one in the grand attempt to rescue her from the blood-hounds which tear her vitals, the guilt of paricide will be on your soul! Think not, Sir, to preserve your home or even your grey hairs, by hugging the chains by which you are bound. You are a Scot; and that is sufficient to arm the enemy against your property and life. Remember the fate of Lord Monteith! At the very time he was beset by the parasites of Edward, and persuaded by their flatteries to be altogether as an Englishman; in that very hour, when he had taken a niece of Cressingham's to his arms, by her hands the vengeance of Edward reached him.—He fell!" Murray saw that his uncle was struck, and that he trembled.

"But I am too insignificant, Andrew!"

"You are the brother of Lord Bothwell!" answered Murray, with all the dignity of his father rising in his countenance; "His large possessions made him a traitor in the eyes of the tyrant's representatives. Cressingham, as treasurer for the crew, has already sent his lieutenant to lord it in our paternal castle; and do not deceive yourself in believing, that some one of his officers will not require the fertile fields of Drumshargard as a reward for his services! No; cheat not yourself with the idea that the brother of Lord Bothwell will be too insignificant to share in the honour of bearing a part in the confiscations of his country! Trust me, my uncle, the forbearance of tyrants is not that of mercy, but of convenience. When they need your wealth or your lands, your submission is forgotten, and a prison or the axe, ready to give them quiet possession."

Sir John Murray, though a timid and narrow-sighted man, now fully comprehended his nephew's reasoning; and his fears taking a different turn, he hastily declared his determination to set off immediately for the Highlands. "In the morning, by day-break," said he, "I will commence my journey, and join my brother at Loch-awe; for I cannot believe myself safe a moment, while so near the garrisons of the enemy."

Murray approved this plan; and after obtaining his hard-wrung leave, to take thirty men from his vassals, to follow him to the mountains; he returned to the hall to make the selection, and to inform Ker of the success of his mission. It was not necessary, neither would it have been agreeable to his pride, to relate the arguments which had been required, to obtain this small assistance; and in the course of an hour he had brought together the appointed number of the bravest men on the estate. When equipped in their garments of mingled greens, (that they might the better escape detection in creeping through the underwood on the rocks) he led them into the hall to receive their last commands from their feudal lord.

On seeing them armed, with every man his drawn dirk in his hand, Sir John turned pale. Murray, with the unfolded banner of Mar in his hand, and Ker by his side, stood at their head.

"Young men," said the old knight, striving to speak in a firm tone; "in this expedition you are to consider yourselves as the followers of my nephew: He is brave and honourable, therefore I commit you to his command. But as it is at his earnest petition, I am not answerable to any man for the enterprizes to which he may lead you."

"Be they all on my head!" cried Murray, blushing at his uncle's pusillanimity, and drawing out his sword with an impatient jerk of his arm that made the old knight start back;—"We now have your permission to depart, Sir?"

Sir John gave a ready assent: He was anxious to get so hot-headed a youth out of his house, and to collect his gold and servants, that he might commence his own flight by break of day.

It was still dark as midnight when Murray and his little company passed over the heights above Drumshargard, and took their rapid, though silent march, towards the cliffs which would conduct them to the more dangerous passes of the Cartlane craigs.

## CHAP. XII.

Two days past drearily away to Helen. She could not expect tidings from her cousin in so short a time. No more happy dreams cheered her lonely hours; and anxiety to learn what might be the condition of the Earl and Countess, so possessed her, that visions of affright now disturbed both her waking and sleeping senses. Fancy shewed them in irons and in a dungeon; and sometimes she started in horror, thinking that perhaps at that moment the assassin's steel was raised against the life of her father.

On the morning of the third day, when she was chiding herself for the rebellious despondence to which she had given way, the female who waited on her, came into the cell to inform her that the prior had sent a friar to conduct her to his library, where messengers from Dumbarton awaited, to deliver a letter to her from Lady Mar. Helen lingered not a moment, but giving her hand to the good father, was led by him into the apartment where the prior was standing between two men in military habits. The one was dressed in English armour with his visor closed, the other as a knight, but in tartans. The Scot presented her with a signet set in gold. Helen looked on it, and immediately recognised it to be the same that her step-mother always used.

The Scottish knight was preparing to address her, when the prior interrupted him, and taking Lady Helen by the hand, made her seat herself.—"Compose yourself for a few minutes," said he, "this transitory life hourly brings forward events to teach us to be calm, and to resign our wishes and our wills to the Lord of all things."

Helen looked fearfully in his face:—"Some evil tidings are to be told me."—The blood left her lips; it seemed leaving her heart also. The prior full of compassion, hesitated to speak. The Scot abruptly answered her; "Be not alarmed, lady, your parents have fallen into humane hands. I am sent under the command of this noble Southorn knight to conduct you to them."

"Then my father lives! They are safe," cried she, in a transport of joy, and bursting into tears.

"He yet lives," returned the officer, "but his wounds opening afresh, and the fatigues of his journey, have so exhausted him, that Lord Aymer de Valence has granted the prayers of the Countess, and we come to take you to receive his last blessing."

A cry of anguish burst from the heart of Lady Helen; and falling into the arms of the prior, she found refuge from woe, in a merciful insensibility. The pitying exertions of the venerable father, who poured restoratives into her mouth, at last recalled her to recollection and to sorrow. She rose from the bench on which he had laid her, and begging permission to retire for a few minutes; tears choked her further utterance; and being led out by the friar, she once more re-entered her cell.

Lady Helen passed the moments she had requested, in those duties which alone can give comfort to the afflicted, even when all that is visible bids it despair: and rising from her knees with that holy fortitude which none but the devout can know, she took her mantle and veil, and throwing them over her, sent her attendant to the prior to say that she was ready to set out on her journey, and wished to receive his parting benediction. The venerable father, followed by Halbert, obeyed her summons. On seeing the poor old harper, Helen's heart lost some of its newly acquired composure. She held out her hand to him; he pressed it respectfully to his lips:—"Farewel, sweetest lady! may the prayers of the dear saint, to whose remains your pious care gave a holy grave, draw down upon your own head, in this your great extremity, consolation and peace." The old man sobbed; and the tears of Lady Helen, as he bent upon her hand, dropped upon his silver hair: "May Heaven hear you, good Halbert!—And cease not, venerable old man, to pray for me; for I go in the hour of trial."

"All that dwell in this house, my daughter," rejoined the prior, "shall put up orisons for your comfort, and for the soul of the departing Earl." Observing that her grief augmented at these words, he proceeded in a yet more soothing voice; "Regret not that he goes before you; for what is death but entrance into life? It is the narrow gate which shuts us from this dark world, to usher us into another of everlasting light and happiness. —Weep not then, sweet child of the church, that your earthly parents precede you to the heavenly father; rather say with the virgin, Saint Bride; "How long, O Lord, am I to be banished thy presence? How long endure the prison of my body, before I am admitted to the freedom of paradise; to the bliss of thy saints?"

Helen raised her eyes, yet shining in tears, and, with a divine smile pressing the crucifix to her breast; "You do indeed arm me, my father!—This is my strength!"

## The Scottish Chiefs

"And one that will never fail thee!" exclaimed he.—She dropped upon one knee before him. He crossed his hands over her head—he looked up to heaven—his bosom heaved—his lips moved—then pausing a moment, "Go in peace," said he, "and may the angels which guard innocence, minister to your sorrows, and lead you into all joy!"

Helen bowed; and breathing inwardly a devout response to this blessing, she rose and followed the prior out of the cell. At the end of the cloister she again bade farewell to Halbert: and, led by the prior, bent her steps towards the grand entrance of the monastery. At the gates stood the knights, with their attendants. She once more kissed the crucifix held by the prior, and giving her hand to the Scot, was placed by him on a horse superbly caparisoned. He sprung on another himself; and the English officer who was already mounted, drawing up to her, she pulled down her veil; and all bowing to the holy brotherhood at the porch, rode off at a gentle pace.

A long stretch of woods which spread before the monastery, and screened the back of Bothwell castle from being discernible on that side of the Clyde, lay before them. Through this path they pursued their way till they had crossed the river.

"Time wears!" exclaimed the Scot to his companion; "we must push on." The English knight nodded, and set his spurs into his steed. The whole troop now fell into a rapid trot; and winding along the sequestered banks of the Aven, which opened into a hundred beautiful seclusions intersecting the deep sides of the river with umbrageous shades and green hillocks, the road seemed lengthening as they went.—Helen in vain looked for the distant towers of Dumbarton Castle marking the horizon: no horizon appeared, but a range of rocks and wooded precipices.

A sweet breeze played through the valley, and revived the harrassed frame of Helen. She put aside her veil to enjoy its freshness, and saw that the knights turned their horses' heads into one of the obscurest mountain defiles. She started at its depth, and at the gloom which involved the extremity in total darkness. "It is our nearest path," said the Scot; Helen made no reply, but turning her steed, followed him, there being room for one only to ride along the narrow margin of the river that flowed at its base. The Englishman, whose voice she had never yet heard, and the attendants followed her. It was with difficulty the horses could make their way through the thickets that interlaced the path—way, which was so confined that it rather seemed a cleft made by an earthquake in some huge mountain, than a road that was meant for man.

When they had been employed for an hour in breaking their way through this trackless place, they came at last to a wider space, where other ravines, broader than this, opened themselves. The Scot, taking one to the right, raised his bugle, and blew so sudden and loud a blast, that the horse on which Lady Helen sat took fright, and began to plunge and rear, to the evident hazard of throwing her into the stream. Some of the dismounted men seeing her danger, seized the horse by the bridle, while the English knight extricated her from the saddle, and carrying her in his arms through some clustering bushes which were held back for him by the Scot, he entered a cave, and laid her at the feet of an armed man who stood in the midst.

Terrified at this extraordinary action, she started up with a piercing shriek, but was at that moment enveloped in the arms of the stranger; and a loud and brutal shout of exultation was uttered by one of the men who had brought her in. It was echoed from without, and accompanied by a burst of boisterous laughter. There was horror in every sound.—"Mighty God, protect me!" cried she, frantically striving to break away from the man who held her; "Where am I?" cried she, looking wildly at the two men who had brought her; "Why am I not taken to my father?"

"We leave our lord to tell you," answered the Scot; and so saying, both he and the Englishman left the place. The stranger still held her locked in a grasp that seemed of iron. In vain she struggled, in vain she shrieked, in vain she called on earth and heaven for assistance; she was held, and still he kept silence. Exhausted with terror and her fruitless attempts for release, she put her hands together, and in a calmer tone exclaimed: "If you have honour or humanity in your heart, you will release me! I am an unprotected woman praying for your mercy, withhold it not for the sake of Heaven and your own soul!"

"Kneel to me then, thou syren!" cried the warrior, with fierceness. As he spoke he threw the tender knees of Lady Helen upon the rocky floor. His voice echoed terrible in her ears; but obeying him, "Free me," cried she, "for the sake of my dying father!"

"Never, till I have had my revenge!"

At this dreadful denunciation she shuddered to the soul, but yet she spoke: "Surely I am mistaken for some one else! —O, how can I have offended any man to incur so cruel an outrage!"

## The Scottish Chiefs

The warrior burst into a satanic laugh, and throwing up his visor: "Behold me, Helen!" cried he, grasping her clasped hands with a horrible force; "My hour is come!"

At sight of the dreadful face of Soulis she comprehended all her danger, and with a supernatural strength wresting her hands from his hold, she burst through the bushes out of the cave. Her two first enemies stood at the entrance, and catching her in their arms, brought her back to their lord. But it was an insensible from they now laid down before him: Overcome with horror at being again dragged into the power of a ravisher, her senses fled. However, short was her suspension from misery: water was thrown on her face, and she awoke to recollection, lying on the bosom of her enemy.—Again she struggled, again her cries echoed from side to side of the cavern.—"Peace!" cried the monster; "you cannot escape—you are mine by a force that shall compel you to submit when and where I will. How often have I knelt at your feet, begging for that mercy on my passion which you denied! Twice you refused to be my wife!—you dared to despise my love and my power:—now you shall feel my hatred and my revenge!" "Kill me!" cried the distracted Helen, "kill me, and I will bless you!"

"That would be a poor vengeance," cried he, "you must be humbled, proud minion,—you must learn to fawn on me for a smile; to woo as my slave, for one of those embraces which you spurned to receive as my wife. I will make you feel the tyger in my love! and then, if she will, the dishonoured and despised Lady Helen may die!" As he spoke he strained her to his breast, with the contending expressions of passion and revenge glaring in his eyes. Helen shrieked at the pollution of his lips; and as he more fiercely held her, and declared that she should be his for ever, her hand struck against the hilt of his dagger. In a moment she drew it out, and armed with the strength of outraged innocence, unwitting of whether it gave death or not, only hoping it would release her, she struck it into his side.—All was the action of an instant. And as instantaneously he caught her wrist; and exclaiming, "Damnable traitress, thou shalt fare the worse for this!" dashed her from him, and struck her stunned and motionless to the ground.

The weapon had not penetrated far. But the sight of his own blood, drawn by the hand of a woman, so incensed the now raging Soulis, that had not insensibility been her security, perhaps the violence of his unmanly indignation would have repeated the blow, and at once have rid her of life and his indignities. He called aloud on Macgregor. The two men, who yet stood without the cave, hastily entered; but they started when they saw a dagger in his hand, and the lady lying pale and apparently lifeless, with blood sprinkled on her garments.

Macgregor, who had personated the Scottish knight, spoke first; and in a tremulous voice, asked why he had killed the lady?

Soulis frowned: "Here!" said he, throwing open his vest, "this wound, that beautiful fiend, whom you so piteously looked upon, aimed at my life!—I only sought to force her to my wishes; and thus did she requite an honour, which many of her proud sex sigh after in vain."

"My Lord," said the other man, "I expected different treatment for the Earl of Mar's daughter."

"Base Scot!" returned Soulis, "when you brought a woman into these wilds to my arms, you had no right to expect that I should use her otherwise than as a wanton, and you as the servile minister of my pleasures. From this hour, dare but to pass a judgment on my actions, and your infamy shall be published as widely as my trumpets can blow the tale."

"This language, Lord Soulis!" rejoined the man, much agitated; "but you mistook me.—I meant not to reproach."

"'Tis well you did not." and turning from him with contempt, he listened to Macgregor, who stooping towards the inanimate Helen, took her hand, and observed that the pulse beat—"Fools!" returned Soulis, "did you think I would so rashly throw away what I have been at such pains to gain? Call your wife, Macgregor: she knows how to bring women out of these fits; and she will teach her to know the wisdom of submission to my will."

The man obeyed; and while his companion by the command of Soulis bound a fillet round the bleeding forehead of Helen, which was cut by the pointed flints; the chief himself brought two chains, and fastening one to her wrists, and the other on her ancles, he exclaimed with brutal triumph as he locked them on: "There, my haughty damsel! flatter not thyself that the arms of Soulis shall be thine only fetters. These chains shall bind thee to my feet; and no more daggers shall be near to thwart my revenge!"

Macgregor's wife entered. "Here Margery," said he, "take this lady under your care. Recover her from this swoon, and while I go to have the litter prepared for her reception, counsel her to behave, with more gratitude to so true a lover."



## The Scottish Chiefs

Margery promised to obey; but expressing surprise at the sight of the chains, Soulis said her duty was obedience, not remark; and withdrawing, followed by his vassal, the woman was left alone with the breathless body of Helen. Water, and a few drops which Margery poured into her mouth, restored the unhappy lady to her senses. On opening her eyes the sight of one of her own sex inspired her with hope; but stretching out her hands in the act of supplication, she was horror-struck at finding them fastened, and at the clink of the chains as they shook against each other. "Why am I thus?" demanded she of the woman; but suddenly recollecting having attempted to pierce Soulis with his own dagger, and now supposing she had slain him, she added, "Is Lord Soulis killed?"

"No, my lady," replied she, "my husband says he is but slightly hurt, and surely your fair face belies your heart, when you could attempt the life of so brave and loving a lord!"

"You then belong to him?" cried the wretched Helen, wringing her hands; "alas, how am I beset!—what will be my unhappy fate!—O, Virgin of Heaven, take me to thyself!"

"Heaven forbid!" cried the woman, "that you should pray against being the favourite lady of our noble chief! Many are the scores round Hermitage Castle who would come hither on their hands and knees to arrive at the happiness which you reject."

"Happiness!" cried Lady Helen, in anguish of spirit, "Oh it can visit me no more till I am restored to my father,—till I am released from the power of Soulis! Give me liberty," continued she, wildly grasping the arm of the woman, "assist me to escape, and half the wealth of the Earl of Mar shall be your reward!"

"I would sooner throw myself into a boiling cauldron," returned the woman; "My lord would burn me on the spot, and murder my husband, did he think I even listened to such a project. No, lady, you never will see your father: for none who enter my lord's Hermitage once, are ever desirous to come out again."

"The Hermitage!" cried Helen, starting from the ground, but in the action the chains entangling her feet, she stumbled and fell against Margery: "Father of the desolate," exclaimed she, bursting into tears, "have mercy upon me! O never let me live to enter those accursed walls!"

"They are frightful enough, to be sure," returned the woman, "but not so to you.—My lord told me, when he brought me to these wilds to attend on your ladyship, that you shall reign in Hermitage just as if you were his lawful wife; and that for your sake he will send away all the other young damsels, who now, in losing their master's love, may indeed curse the walls that witnessed their ruin. But you, gentle lady, will be princess there; and in all things commanding the kingly heart of its lord, have rather cause to bless than to curse the castle of Soulis."

"Himself and all that bears his name, is accursed to me;" returned Helen, "his love is my abomination and his hatred my dread. Pity me, kind creature; and if you have a daughter whose honour is dear to your prayers, think you see her in me, and have compassion on me. My life is in your hands, for I swear before the throne of Almighty Purity, that Soulis shall see me die, rather than be dishonoured!"

"Poor young soul!" cried the woman, looking at her frantic gestures with commiseration, "I would pity you if I durst, but I repeat, my life, and my husband's, and my children, who are now near Hermitage, would all be sacrificed to the rage of Lord Soulis. You must be content to submit to his will." Helen closed her hands over her breast in mute despair, and the woman went on,— "and as for the matter of your making such lamentations about not reaching your father, if he be as little your friend as your mother is, you have not much cause to break your heart on that score."

Helen started aghast. "My mother! what of her?—speak, tell me?—It was her signet that betrayed me into these horrors. She cannot have consented— O! no!—some villains—speak, tell me what you would say of my mother?"

The woman, regardless of the terrible emotion which now shook the frame of her auditor, coolly replied, that she had heard from her husband, who was the confidential servant of Lord Soulis, that it was to Lady Mar he owed the knowledge of Helen's being at Bothwell. The Countess had written a letter to her cousin Lord Buchan, who being a sworn friend of England, was then passing some time with Lord De Valence at Dumbarton. In this epistle she intimated her wish that Lord Buchan would devise a plan to surprise Bothwell castle the ensuing day; but added, he must not give cause to Lord Mar to suspect that she was privy to the affair: His present misled mind might blame that interference which was impelled by anxiety for the safeties of her husband and Lady Helen, as well as from a zeal which she avowed had its source in her sense of duty to Edward, the royal friend of her nearest

## The Scottish Chiefs

kinsmen. The Countess then proceeded to relate, that the Earl of Mar had been over-persuaded to engage in some preparations to send armed men to the support of the unfortunate outlaw, Sir William Wallace, who was then with a small troop lurking about the caverns of Cartlane craigs.

When this letter arrived, Lord Soulis was at dinner with the other Lords; and Buchan laying it before De Valence, (whom he knew to be in the confidence of King Edward) they all consulted what was best to be done. Lady Mar begged her cousin not to appear in the affair himself, that she might escape the suspicions of her husband, who, she strongly declared, was not arming his vassals from any disloyal disposition towards the King of England, but only at the instigations of Wallace, to whom he romantically considered himself bound by the ties of gratitude. As she gave this information she hoped that no attainder would fall upon Lord Mar, which this disclosure was intended to prevent; and to keep the transaction as close as possible, she proposed that the Lord Soulis, who she understood was then at Dumbarton, should take the command of two or three thousand troops, and marching to Bothwell next morning, seize the few hundred armed Scots, who were ready to proceed to the mountains. Her ladyship ended by saying, that her daughter was at the castle, which she hoped would be an inducement to Soulis to ensure the Earl's safety for the sake of her love, and to obtain her hand as his reward.

The greatest part of Lady Mar's injunctions could not be attended to, as Lord De Valence as well as Soulis, was made privy to the secret. The English nobleman declared that he should not do his duty to his king, if he did not head the force that went to quell so dangerous a conspiracy; and Soulis, eager to go at any rate, joyfully accepted the honour of being his companion. It was concerted amongst the three, that De Valence should send the Lord Mar prisoner to Dumbarton castle, there to await the award of Edward on his crime. Lord Buchan was easily persuaded to the seizure of Mar's person, as he hoped the King would endow him with the Mar estates, which must now be confiscated. Helen groaned at the latter part of this narration, but the woman, without noticing it, proceeded to relate how, when the party had executed their design at Bothwell castle, the Countess and Helen were to have been sent to Soulis's castle of Dun-glass, near Glasgow: but on that wily Scot not finding her, he conceived the suspicion that Lord De Valence had prevailed on the Countess to give her up to him. He observed that the woman who could be prevailed on to betray her daughter to one man, would easily be bribed to repeat the crime to another; and under this impression he accused the English nobleman of treachery; his Lordship denied it vehemently; a quarrel ensued; and Soulis departed with a few of his own followers, giving out that he was retiring in high indignation to Dun-glass. But the fact was, he lurked about in Bothwell wood, and from its recesses saw Cressingham's lieutenant march by, to take possession of the castle in the King's name. A deserter from his troops, a few hours afterwards fell in with Lord Soulis's company, and flying to him for protection, a long private conversation took place between them; but it was interrupted by one of the spies who had been sent by the chief in quest of news, and who now returned with a woman, a tenant of the convent of St. Fillans, whom he had seduced away on finding her pretty and talkative. She told him all he wanted to know; and to assure his Lord that he spoke truth, and to gain the promised reward, he brought her to confirm his intelligence, that a beautiful young lady, who could be no other than Lady Helen Mar, was concealed in that convent.

On this information, the delighted Lord Soulis conversed a long time with the stranger from Cressingham's detachment. And determining on taking Helen immediately to Hermitage, that the distance of Teviot dale might render a rescue less probable, he laid his plan accordingly; and sent for Macgregor's wife and a litter from Dun-glass, that she might be ready to attend his beautiful prey. "Meanwhile," continued the woman, "my husband and the stranger, the one habited as a Scottish and the other as an English knight, (for my lord being ever on some wild prank, has always a chest of strange dresses with him;) set out for St. Fillans, taking with them the signet which your mother had sent with her letter to the Earl her cousin. They hoped such a pledge would ensure them belief both with the prior and you. You know the tale they invented; and its success proves that my lord is no bad contriver."

CHAP. XIII

Helen, who listened with astonishment and grief to this too probable story of her step-mother's ill-judged tenderness, or cruel treachery, remembered the threats which had escaped that lady in their last conversation; and not seeing reason to doubt what so clearly explained the before inexplicable seizure of her father, the betraying of Wallace, and her own present calamity, she made no reply; but inwardly prayed Heaven to traverse by its almighty power the wide mischief which had thus been wrought by the rashness of Lady Mar.

"You do not answer me," rejoined the woman "but if you doubt my account, Lord Soulis himself will assure you that all I have said is true."

"Alas, no!" returned Helen, profoundly sighing; "I believe it too well. I see the depth of the misery into which I am plunged. And yet," cried she, suddenly recollecting the imposition the men had put upon her; "yet, I shall not be wholly so, if my father lives, and was not in the extremity they told me of!"

"If that thought gives you comfort, retain it," returned the woman; "the whole story of the Earl's illness, was an invention to bring you at so short notice from the protection of the prior."

"I thank thee, gracious Providence for this comfort!" exclaimed Helen; "it inspires me with redoubled trust in thee."

Margery shook her head. "Ah, poor victim, (thought she,) how vain is thy devotion!" But she had not time to say so, for her husband and the deserter from Cressingham re-entered the cave. Helen, afraid that it was Soulis, started up. The stranger made a motion to lift her in his arms, she struggled, and by the suddenness of her motion his beaver fell down and discovered a pale and stern countenance with a large scar across his jaw; this mark of contest, and the gloomy scowl of his eyes made Helen shudder and rush towards the woman for protection. The man hastily put up his beaver, and speaking through the closed steel, she, for the first time, heard his voice, which sounded hollow and decisive;—he bade her prepare to accompany Lord Soulis in a journey southward.

Helen looked at her shackled arms, and despairing of effecting her escape by any effort of her own, she thought that gaining time was some advantage; and allowing the man to take her hand, while Macgregor supported her on the other side, they led her out of the cave. She observed the latter smile and wink at his wife.—"O, I am cajoled again!" cried Helen, taking a sudden fright, "to what am I to be betrayed!— Unhand me—leave me!" Almost fainting with the dread of some new horrors, she leaned against the arm of the stranger.

The thunder now pealed over her head, and the lightning shot across the top of the mountains. She looked up: "O!" cried she, in a voice of deep horror; "is there no bolt for me!"—At that moment Soulis, mounted on his steed, approached, and ordered her to be put into the litter. Incapable of contending with the numbers which surrounded her, she allowed them to execute their master's commands, and to draw the curtains around her. Margery was set on a pillion behind her husband; and Soulis giving the word, they all marched on at a rapid pace. In a few hours they cleared the shady valleys of the Clyde, and entered on the barren tracks of the Leadhill moors; a dismal hue was thrown over the country.

The thunder yet roared in distant peals; and the lightning came down in such vast sheets, that the carriers were often obliged to set down their burthen, and cover their eyes with their hands to recover their scathed sight. A shrill wind pierced the slight covering of the litter, and blowing it aside at intervals, discovered the rough outlines of the distant hills, just visible through their misty veil, and the gleaming waves of some wandering water as it glided along through the cheerless waste.

"All is desolation, like myself!" thought Helen, but neither the cold wind, nor the rain which was now falling and drifting into her vehicle, occasioned her any sensation. It is only when the mind is at ease that the body is delicate: all within was too expectant of mental horrors, to notice the casual inconveniences of season or situation.

The cavalcade with difficulty mounted the steeps of a stupendous mountain where the storm raged so turbulently that the men, stopping, told their lord that it would be impossible to proceed in the approaching darkness with safety. "Look!" cried they, "look at the perpendicular rocks, rendered indeterminate by the thick clouds of gathering mist;— feel the overwhelming gusts of the tempest, and judge whether we dare venture with this litter on the dangerous pathway made slippery by descending rain!"

To pause, to halt in such a spot, seemed to Soulis as perilous as to proceed.—"We shall not be better off,"

## The Scottish Chiefs

answered he, "should we attempt to return; precipices lie on either side: and to stand still would be equally perilous: the increasing torrents from the heights are so violent, that there is every chance of our being swept away should we remain exposed to the swelling stream."

Helen looked at these sublime cascades with a calm welcome, as they poured from the hills and dashed their spray upon the roof of her vehicle. She hailed her release in the death they menaced; and far from being intimidated at the prospect, cast a resigned, and even wistful glance, into the swelling lake beneath, under whose waves she expected soon to sleep.

The men, on the remonstrance of their master, resumed their pace; and after hard contention with the storm, they gained the summit of the west side of the mountain; and were descending its eastern brow, when the shades of night closed in upon them. Looking down into the black chaos before them, they once more protested that they could not, on peril of their lives, advance a foot until the dawn of morning should light them on their way.

At this declaration, which Soulis saw could not now be disputed, he ordered the troop to halt under the shelter of a vast projecting rock which overhung the narrow ledge that formed the road, while a deep gulph at its feet, by the roaring of waters, proclaimed itself the receptacle of those tremendous cataracts which rush in torrents from the ever-streaming Pentland hills.

Soulis dismounted. The men set down the litter, and removed to a distance as he approached. He opened one of the curtains, and throwing himself along the couch on which lay the exhausted, but watchful Helen, he clasped his arms roughly about her, and exclaimed—"Sweet minion. I must pillow on your bosom, till the morn awakes!" His brutal lips were again rivetted to her cheek. Ten thousand strengths seemed then to heave him from her heart; and struggling with a power that amazed even herself, she threw him from her; and holding him off with her shackled arms, her shrieks again pierced the heavens.

"Scream thy strength away, poor fool!" exclaimed Soulis, seizing her fiercely in his arms; "for thou art now so surely mine that Heaven itself cannot preserve thee."

"Death! death!" was the faint cry of the now desperate Helen; and making another powerful effort to extricate herself from the monster who triumphed in her agonies, she released her right hand, in which she grasped a small golden knife that had been the gift of her father, and which, since the dagger had been wrested from her, she had concealed in her bodice as a last refuge; raising the hand that contained it to plunge it into her own breast, she was arrested in the stroke by a loud noise at the side of her couch;—and the moment afterwards, she was covered with the blood of Soulis. A stroke from an unseen arm had cut through the shoulder of the ravisher; and though it did not injure his life, yet the red stream gushed from the wound, and starting on his feet, a fearful battle of swords took place over the prostrate Helen.

Two men, out of the numbers who came up to assist Soulis, fell dead on her body; and the chieftain himself, covered with wounds, and breathing revenge and blasphemy, was forced off by the survivors. "Where do you carry me, villains?" cried he, "Separate me not from the vengeance I will yet hurl on that night-demon who has robbed me of my victim, or ye shall die a death more horrible than hell itself can inflict?" He raved; but more unheeded than the tempest: terrified that the spirits of darkness were indeed at their backs, in spite of his reiterated threats the men carried him off to a hollow in the rock, where they laid him down, now nearly insensible by the loss of blood. One or two of the boldest of them cautiously returned to see what was become of Lady Helen; well aware, that if they could regain possession of her, their master would load them with favours: But on the reverse, should she be finally lost, the whole troop knew their fate would be some merciless punishment.

Macgregor and the deserter of Cressingham were the first who reached the spot where the lady had been left, and with the greatest horror they found the litter but not herself. She was gone. But whether carried off by the mysterious arm which had felled their lord, or she had thrown herself into the foaming gulph beneath, they could not determine. The latter, however, they decided should be their report to Soulis; knowing that he would rather hear that the object of his passions had perished, than that she had escaped his toils.

Almost stupified with consternation, they returned to repeat to their furious lord (who on having his wounds staunch, had recovered from his swoon,) their cunningly devised tale. On hearing that the beautiful creature he had so lately believed his own beyond the power of fate; that his property as he called her, the devoted slave of his will, the mistress of his destiny, was lost to him for ever, swallowed up in the whelming wave, he became frantic. There was desperation in every word. He raved; tore up the earth like a wild beast; and foaming at the mouth, dashed Margery from him, as she approached with fresh balsam for his wounds. "Off, scum of a damned sex!"

## The Scottish Chiefs

cried he, "Where is she whom I entrusted to thy care?"

"My lord," answered the affrighted woman, "you know best. You terrified the poor young creature. You forced your self into her litter, and can you wonder—"

"That I should force you to hell!—Execrable witch," cried he, "that knew no better how to prepare a slave to receive her lord!" As he spoke, he struck her again; but it was with his gauntlet hand, and the eyes of the unfortunate Margery opened no more. The blow fell on her temple; the steel cut the artery; and a motionless corpse lay before him.

"My wife!" cried the poor Macgregor, putting his trembling arms about her neck; "Oh, my lord, how have I deserved this? You have slain her!"

"Humph! suppose I have!" returned the chieftain with a cold scorn, touching her body with his foot; "She was old and ugly: and could you recover Helen, who was more to me than fifty thousand wives, you should cull Hermitage for a substitute for this parting beldame."

Macgregor made no reply, but feeling in his heart that he who sows the wind will reap the whirlwind; that such were the rewards of villainy to its vile instruments; he could not but say to himself, "I have deserved it of my God, but not from thee!"—and sobbing over the remains of his equally criminal wife, by the assistance of his comrades, he removed her from the now hated presence of his lord.

CHAP. XIV.

Meanwhile, the Lady Helen, hardly rational from the contending emotions of horror and hope that agitated her heart, the moment Soulis disappeared, had extricated herself from the weight of dead bodies which lay upon her; and manacled as she was, in her eagerness to escape, she would certainly have fallen over the precipice, had not the same gallant arm which had covered her ravisher with wounds, caught her as she sprang from the couch. "Fear not, madam," exclaimed a gentle voice, "you are under the protection of a Scottish knight."

There was a kindness in the sound, that seemed to proclaim the speaker to be of her own kindred; she felt as if suddenly rescued by a brother, and dropping her head on his bosom, a shower of grateful tears relieved her surcharged heart and prevented her from fainting. Aware that no time was to be lost; that the enemy rallying, would soon be on him again, he clasped her close in his arms; and with the activity of a mountain deer, leaping from rock to rock, crossed two rushing streams, even under the foam of their pouring flood; and then treading with a light and steady step an alpine bridge of one single tree which alone arched the cataract roaring below; he ordered a man who now approached, to spread his plaid upon the rock. He laid the trembling Helen upon it; and again conjuring her to confide in him, called to his men, severally by their names—in a moment he was surrounded by a number, whose swords gleaming in the faint light cast by a few unclouded stars, would have reawakened the alarm of Helen, had she not still heard his voice.—There was graciousness, and balm—distilling sweetness in every tone, and she listened in calm expectation.

He directed the men to take their axes and cut away on their side of the fall, the tree which clasped it to the other. He thought that the villain whom he had just assailed, should he not be killed, might, with his followers, have sufficient strength to follow him; and therefore, he thought it prudent to demolish the bridge.

The men obeyed; and in five minutes, the hardly breathing Helen heard the loud splash of the falling beam into the water. On this being done, the warrior returned to his fair charge. It was raining fast; and fearful of farther exposing her to the inclemencies of the night, he wished to propose leading her to shelter. "There is a hermit's cell on the nothern side of this mountain.—I will conduct you thither in the morning, as the securest asylum; but meanwhile you must allow me to seek you a refuge from this pityless night."

"Any where, Sir, with honour my guide," answered Helen timidly.

"You are as safe with me, lady," returned he, "as in the arms of the virgin. I am a man who can now have no joy in womankind, but when as a brother I protect them.—Whoever you are, confide in me, and you shall not be betrayed."

At these words, Helen confidently gave him her hand, and strove to rise; but at the first attempt the shackles pierced her ancles, and she sunk again to the ground.—The cold iron on her wrists, touched the hand of her preserver. He now recollected his surprize on hearing the clank of chains as he carried her over the bridge:—"Who," inquired he, "could do this unmanly deed?"

"The wretch from whom you rescued me, to prevent my escape from a captivity worse than death."

While she spoke, he wrenched open the clasps round her wrists and ancles, and releasing her, threw the chains over the cliff into the torrent beneath.—As she heard them dash into the stream, it seemed a pledge of her deliverer's truth; and while an almost unutterable gratitude filled her heart, she again resigned to him her hand to lead her forward; and turning to him, with all the earnestness of the sentiment she felt, "O, Sir," said she, "if you have wife or sister—should they (for in these terrific times who is secure?) ever fall into the like peril with mine; may heaven reward your bravery, by sending them such a preserver!"

The stranger sighed deeply:—"Sweet lady," returned he, "I have no wife, no sister.—But my kindred is nevertheless very numerous, and I thank thee for thy prayer." The hero sighed profoundly again; and led her silently down the windings of the declivity. Having proceeded with caution, they descended into a little wooded dell where stood a hut.

"This," said the knight, leading her into it, "was, three days ago, the habitation of a good old shepherd who fed his flock on these mountains; but a marauding band of Southron soldiers forced his only daughter from him; and plundering his little abode, drove him out upon the waste. He perished the same night by grief and the inclemencies of the weather.—And his son, a brave youth, who was left for dead by his sister's ravishers, I to-day

## The Scottish Chiefs

found, sitting in this dreary solitude, wounded and in despair.—Indeed lady, when I heard your shrieks from the opposite side of the chasm, I thought they might proceed from this poor boy's sister, and that I should have the satisfaction of restoring them to each other."

Helen shuddered as he related the simple story which so nearly resembled her own; and at his closing words, she said, "Unhappy girl, that did not find so generous a protector!—And I, ah, Sir, how can I express my gratitude to heaven and you?"—As she spoke, she trembled so with weakness, and the remembrances which, crowding on her mind, painted what might now have been her fate, had she not been rescued by this gallant stranger, that unable longer to stand, she sunk down upon a turf seat. The chief still held her hand: it was chill as death. He did not reply to the agitated speech she last made, but alarmed for her state, took notice how cold she was; and calling to his men, ordered them to seek fuel to make a fire. The night was so utterly dark, that his messengers despaired of success; but while they were exploring the crannies of the rocks for dried leaves or sticks, Helen, totally exhausted, leaned almost motionless against the rough wall of the hut. The knight, finding by her shortening breath that she was fainting, took her in his arms, and supporting her on his breast, chafed her cold hands and forehead. His efforts were vain: she seemed to have ceased to breathe; hardly a pulse moved her heart.—Alarmed at such signs of death, he again called to the man who remained in the outward chamber.

"Blair," cried he to the first that entered, "have you no cordials amongst you, with which I might revive this suffering lady?"

The man answered by putting a flask into his master's hand. The knight poured some into her mouth, and much more upon the streaming locks, which touched his reclining cheek. "Poor lady!" sighed he; "she will perish in these forlorn regions, where neither warmth nor nourishment can be found!"

"Ah, Sir," returned Blair, "had not those ruthless Southrons brought their besom of desolation even to sweep away the comforts of the Poor, honest Hay would now have been alive, and ministering both food and a cheering fire to this dying lady.—Alas, what a change! It is they who have rendered these once smiling hills, forlorn regions and wastes for men to perish in!"

Before the knight could reply to these remarks of his servant, several of the men re-entered with a quantity of broken branches from some withered trees which they had found under a projecting rock at a little distance. With these a fire was soon kindled; and its blaze diffusing comfort through the chamber, he had the satisfaction of hearing a reviving sigh steal from the breast of his charge. She lay on the ground, on which he had caused several plaids to be spread to make her a couch; and her head still leaned on his bosom, when she opened her eyes. The light shone full on her face.

"Sweet lady," said he, "are you revived?"

Her delicacy started at making a pillow of the breast even of her deliverer; and raising herself, though feebly, she thanked him, and requested a little water to drink. It was given to her. She drank some, and looking up, met the fixed and compassionate gaze of the knight; but weakness had cast such a film before her eyes, that she hardly discerned that his face was turned towards her; and being still languid, she leaned her head back on the turf seat.—Her long hair, having lost its veil, lay in dishevelled tresses over her neck and shoulders. Her face was pale as marble, and her thick auburn locks saturated with wet, by their darkness, made her look of a more deadly hue.

"Death! how lovely canst thou be!" sighed the knight to himself—he even groaned. Helen started, and looked round her with alarm.—"Fear not," said he, "I only dreaded your pale looks: but you revive, and will yet bless all that are dear to you; suffer me, sweet lady, to drain the wet from these tresses?—he took hold of them as he spoke; "the effects of such terrible cold may be dangerous." She saw the water running from her hair over his hands, and allowing him to wring out the rain, he continued wiping her glossy locks with his scarf, till exhausted by fatigue, she gradually sank into a profound sleep.

The dawn of morning had penetrated through the broken lattices of the cottage before Lady Helen awoke. But when she did she was refreshed; and opening her eyes—hardly conscious where she was, or whether all that seemed to float before her memory were not the departing vapours of a frightful dream—she started, and fixed them upon the figure of the knight seated near her. His noble air, and the serene expression of his fine features, struck like a spell upon her gathering recollections; she at once remembered all she had suffered, all that she owed to him. Agitated by a few anxious thoughts that grasped the future, she moved.—Her preserver turned his eyes towards her: seeing she was awake, he rose from the side of the dying embers he had sedulously kept alive during her slumber, and expressing his hopes that she felt revived, she returned him a few words in the affirmative,

## The Scottish Chiefs

mingling with them thanks for his care; and soon after he quitted her to rouse his men for their journey to the hermit's cell.

When he re-entered, he found Helen seated on the bench, braiding up the fine hair which the rain had so lately reduced to a streaming mass. At his approach, she threw back her long ringlets, and would have risen, but he seated himself on a stone at her feet. "We shall be detained here a few minutes longer," said he, "I have ordered my men to make a carriage of crossed branches, to bear you on their shoulders; and as they are not very experienced workmen, it may employ them some time. For you to walk, lady," added he, "is impossible.—Your delicate limbs would not be equal to the toil of descending these heights to the glen of stones.—The holy man who inhabits there will protect you, until, by your directions, he can summon your family or your friends to receive his charge."

At these words, which Helen thought were meant to reprove her for not having revealed herself, she blushed:—But fearful that the breathing of a name under the interdict of the English governors, and which had already spread such devastation over all with whom it had been connected; fearful of involving her preserver's safety by making him aware of the outlawed creature he had rescued; she paused for a moment; and then the colour heightening on her cheeks, she replied. "For your humanity, brave Sir, shewn this night to a friendless woman, I must be ever grateful: But not even to the hermit can I reveal my name; it is fraught with danger to every honest Scot who should know that he protects any who bears it; and therefore, least of all, noble stranger, would I breathe it to you." She averted her face to conceal emotions she could not subdue.

The knight looked at her intently, and profoundly sighed. Half her unbraided locks lay upon her bosom, which now heaved with suppressed feelings; and the fast-falling tears gliding through her long eye-lashes, trembled on her cheeks, and dropped upon his hand—he started, and tore his eyes from her countenance. "I ask not, madam, to know what you think proper to conceal. But danger has no alarms for me, when by incurring it I can serve those who need a protector."

She looked up in his face: "Ah!" thought she, "are there then two men in Scotland who will speak thus!" The plumes his bonnet shaded his features; but they were paler than she had noticed them on his entrance, and a strange expression of distraction disturbed their before composed lines. His eyes were bent to the ground as he proceeded.

"I am the servant of my fellow-creatures—command me, and my few faithful followers; and if it be in the power of such small means to succour you or yours, I am ready to answer for their obedience. If the villain from whom I had the happiness to release you, be yet more deeply implicated in your sorrows, tell me how they can be relieved, and I will attempt it. I shall make no new enemies by the deed, for the Southrons and I are at eternal enmity."

Helen could not withdraw her eyes from his varying countenance which from underneath his dark plumes seemed, like a portentous cloud, at intervals to emit the rays of the cheering sun, or the lightning of threatening thunder. "Alas!" replied she, "ill should I repay such nobleness were I to involve it in the calamities of my house.—No, generous stranger, I must remain unknown. Leave me with the hermit; and from his cell I will send to a near relation of mine, who has not yet been ingulphed in the misfortunes of my family. He will take me thence, and reward the holy man for his care."

"I urge you no more, gentle lady," replied the knight, rising, "were I at the head of an army, instead of a handful of men, I might then have a better argument for offering my services; but as it is, I feel my weakness and seek to know no further."

Helen trembled with an unaccountable emotion: "Were you at the head of an army, I might then indeed reveal to you the full weight of my anxieties; but Heaven has already been sufficiently gracious to me by your hands, in redeeming me from my cruellest enemy: and for the rest, I must put my trust in the same over-ruling Providence."

A man at this moment entered and told the knight that the vehicle was finished, and that the morning being fine, his men were assembled ready to march. He turned again towards Helen: "May I conduct you to the rude carriage we have prepared?"

Helen gathered her mantle about her, and the knight throwing his scarf over her head, as it had no other covering, she gave him her hand, and he led her out of the hut to the side of the bier. It was over-laid with the men's plaids, and made a comfortable vehicle. The knight placed her on it, and the men raising it on their



## The Scottish Chiefs

shoulders, her deliverer spoke the word, and leading the way, they took their course down the mountain.

CHAP. XV.

They proceeded in silence through the curvings of the dell, till it opened into a most hazardous path along the top of a far-extending cliff which overhung and clasped in the western side of a deep loch. As they mounted the pending wall of this immense amphitheatre, Helen watched the sublime uprise of the king of light issuing from behind the opposite citadel of rocks and borne aloft on a throne of clouds that streaked the whole horizon with floating gold. The herbage on the cliffs glittered with liquid emeralds as his beams kissed their summits; and the lake beneath sparkled like a sea of molten diamonds. All nature seemed to rejoice at the presence of this magnificent emblem of the Most High. Her heart swelled with devotion, and a prompt thanksgiving to God breathed from her lips.

"Such," thought she, "O Sun, art thou!—The resplendent image of the Giver of All Good. Thy cheering beams, like His All-cheering Spirit, pervade the very soul, and drive thence the despondency of cold and darkness. But, bright as thou art, how does the similitude fade before god-like man, the true image of his Maker! How far do his protecting arms extend over the desolate! How mighty is the power of his benevolence to dispense succour, and to administer consolation!"

As she thus mused, her eyes fell on the noble mien of the knight, who, wrapped in his dark mantle of mingled greens, his spear in his hand, led the way with a graceful but rapid step along the shelving declivity. Turning suddenly to the left, he struck into a broad defile between two prodigious craggy mountains, whose brown cheeks trickling with ten thousand rills from the recent rains, seemed to weep over the deep gloom of the valley beneath. Scattered fragments of rock from the cliffs above covered with their huge and almost impassable masses the surface of the ground. Not a herb was to be seen; all was black, barren, and terrific. On entering this horrid pass, where no trace of human footstep was to be seen, Helen would have shuddered had she not placed implicit confidence in her conductor.

As they advanced, the vale gradually narrowed, and at last shut them in between two beetling rocks that seemed just separated a-top to admit a few rays of the sun. A small river flowed at the bottom, amid which the bases of the mountains shewed their union by the mingling of many a rugged cliff projecting upwards in a variety of strange and hideous forms. Amongst this chaos of nature the men who carried Helen with some difficulty found a safe footing. However, after frequent stops and unremitted caution, they at last extricated themselves from the most intricate path, and more lightly followed their chief into a less gloomy part of this valley of stones. The knight stopped, and approaching the bier, told Helen they had arrived at the end of their journey.

"In the heart of that cliff," said he, "is the hermit's cell;—a desolate shelter, but a safe one. Old age and poverty yield no temptations to the enemies of Scotland."

As he spoke, the venerable man, who had heard voices beneath, appeared on the rock; and while his tall and majestic figure clad in grey, moved forward, and his long silver beard flowed from his saintly countenance and streamed upon the air, he seemed the bard of Morven issuing from his cave of shells to bid a hero's welcome to the young and warlike Oscar.

"Bless thee, my son," cried he as he descended, "what good or evil accident hath returned thee so soon to these solitudes?"

The knight briefly replied, "After I left you yesternight, and had again gained the heights over Hay's cottage, I was leading my men along their brow, when I heard a woman scream. I listened for a moment; the shrieks were redoubled. The sound proceeded from the other side of the chasm; I remembered having in the morning seen a felled tree over it, and now rushing across, by Heaven's assistance freed this lady from a ravisher; and I bring her to you for protection."

Helen stepped off the bier; the hermit took her by the hand, and graciously promised her every service in his power. He then preceded the knight, whose firmer arm supported her up the rock, to the outer apartment of the cell.

A holy awe struck her as she entered this place, dedicated wholly to God. A stone altar stood before her, supporting a wooden crucifix, and a superb illuminated missal which lay open upon it. In a basin cut in the rock, was the consecrated water, with which every night and morn this pious man, in emblem of the purifying blood of

## The Scottish Chiefs

Christ (the Living Fountain of Salvation) was accustomed, with mingled tears of penitence, to wash away the sins of the day. Helen bowed and crossed herself as she entered. And the hermit observing her devotion, blessed her, and bade her welcome to the abode of peace.

"Here daughter," said he, "has one son of persecuted Scotland found a refuge. There is nought alluring in these wilds to attract the spoiler. The green herb is all the food they afford, and the limpid water the best beverage."

"Ah!" returned Helen, with grateful animation, "I would to Heaven that all who love the freedom of Scotland were now within this glen! The herb and the stream would be to them the sweetest luxuries, when tasted in liberty and hope. My father, his friend,—" she stopped, suddenly recollecting that she had almost betrayed the secrecy she meant to maintain, and looking down, remained in confused silence. The knight gazed at her; and much wished to penetrate what she concealed: but delicacy forbade him to urge her again. He spoke not: but the hermit being ignorant of her reluctance to reveal her family, resumed.

"I do not express wonder, gentle lady, that you speak in terms which tell me that even your tender sex feels the galling chain of Edward. Who is there in Scotland that does not? The whole country groans beneath the weight of his oppressions; and the cruelty of his agents make its rivulets run with blood. Six months ago I was abbot of Scone; and because I refused to betray my trust, and resign the archives of this kingdom, lodged there by our devout King David, Edward, the rebel anointed—of—the—Lord, the profaner of the sanctuary, sent his emissaries to sack the convent; to tear the holy pillar of Jacob from its shrine, and to wrest from my grasp records I refused to deliver. All was done as the usurper commanded. I and my brethren were turned out upon the waste. We retired to the monastery of Cambus—Kenneth:—but there the tyrant found us. Cressingham, his treasurer, having seized on other religious houses, determined to make the plunder of this convent swell the hoards of his spoil. In the dead of night his men attacked it: the brethren fled, but not until the ferocious wolves, though glutted with useless slaughter, had slain several, even at the very foot of the altar. All being dispersed, I knew not whither to go. But determined to fly far from the tracks of men, I took my course over the hills, discovered the valley of stones; and finding it fit for my purpose, have for two months lived alone in this wilderness."

"Unhappy Scotland!" ejaculated Helen. Her eyes had followed the chief, who, during this narrative leaned against the open entrance of the cave. His eyes were cast upwards with an expression that made her heart vibrate with the exclamation which had just escaped her. The knight turned towards her, and approached. "You hear from the lips of my venerable friend," said he, "a direful story; happy then am I, gentle lady, that you and he have a shelter, though a rough one. The hours wear away, and I must tear myself from this tranquillity to scenes better befitting a younger son of the country he deplures. To you, my good father," continued he, addressing the hermit in a lowered voice; "I commit this sacred charge; Heaven sent me to be her temporary guardian; and since she allows me to serve her no farther, I confide her to you."

Helen felt unable to answer. But the Abbot spoke; "Then am I not to see you any more?"

"That is as Heaven wills;" replied he, "but as it is not likely on this side the grave, my best pledge of friendship is this lady. To you she may reveal what she has withheld from me; but in either case she is secure in your goodness."

"Rely on my faith, my son: and may the Almighty's shield hang on your steps!"

The knight kissed the reverend man's hand; and turning to Helen, "Farewel sweet lady!" said he. She trembled at the words, and hardly conscious of what she did, held out her hand to him. He took it, and drew it towards his lips, but checking himself, he only pressed it; and in a mournful voice added—"In your prayers, sometimes remember the most desolate of men!"

A mist seemed to pass over the eyes of Lady Helen. She felt as if on the point of losing something most precious to her: "My prayers for my own preserver, and for my father's," hardly articulated she, "shall ever be mingled. And, if ever it be safe to remember me—should Heaven indeed arm the patriot's hand, then my father may be proud to know and thank the brave deliverer of his child."

The knight paused, and looked with animation upon her; "Then your father is in arms, and against the tyrant!—Tell me where? and you see before you a man who, with his few followers, is ready to join him, and lay down his life in the just cause!"

At this vehement declaration, Lady Helen's full heart gave way, and she burst into tears. He drew towards her and in a moderated voice continued: "My men, though few, are brave. They are devoted to their country; and are willing for her sake to follow me into victory or death. As I am a knight, I am sworn to defend the cause of right;

## The Scottish Chiefs

and where shall I so justly find it, as on the side of bleeding, wasted Scotland? How shall I so well begin my career, as in the defence of her injured sons?—Speak, gentle lady! trust me with your noble father's name, and he shall not have cause to blame the confidence you repose in a true, though wandering Scot!"

"My father," replied Helen, weeping afresh; "is not where your generous services can reach him. Two brave chiefs, one a kinsman of my own, and the other his friend, are now collocated to free him. If they fail my whole house falls in blood! and to add another victim to the destiny which in that case will overwhelm me—the thought is beyond my strength—" Faint with agitation and the fears which now awakened, struck her with consternation, she stopped; and then added in a suppressed voice—"Farewel!"

"Not till you hear me further:" replied he; "I repeat, I have now a scanty number of followers; but I leave these mountains to gather more. Tell me then where I may join these chiefs you speak of; give me a pledge to them that I come from you; and, who ever may be your father, be he but a true Scot, I will compass his release or die in the attempt."

"Alas! generous stranger," cried she, "to what would you persuade me? You have kindred you say! What right have I to dispose of a life that must be so dear to them?—Alas! you know not the peril that you ask!"

"Nothing is perilous to me," replied he, with a heroic smile, "that is to serve my country. I have no interest, no joy but in her. Give me then the only happiness of which I am now capable, and send me to serve her by freeing one of her defenders!"

Helen hesitated. The tumult of her mind dried her tears. She looked up with all these inward agitations painted on her cheeks. His beaming eyes were full of patriotic ardour, while his fine countenance, composed into a heavenly calmness by the sublime sentiments of unselfed bravery which occupied his soul, made him appear to her not as a man, but as a god.

"Fear not, lady," said the hermit, "that you plunge your deliverer into any extraordinary danger, by involving him in what you might call a rebellion against the usurper. He is already outlawed by Edward's representative; and knowing that, fear not to confide your father's fate to him."

"He too, outlawed!" exclaimed she, "wretched indeed is my country when her noblest spirits are denied the right to live! Unhappy are her children, when every step they take to regain what has been torn from them, only involves them in deeper ruin!"

"No country is wretched, sweet lady," returned the knight, "till by a dastardly acquiescence it consents to its own slavery. Bonds and death are the utmost of our enemy's malice; the one is beyond their power to inflict, when a man is determined to die or to live free; and for the other, which of us will think that ruin which leads us into the blessed freedom of paradise?"

Helen looked on the chief as she used to look on her cousin, when expressions of virtuous enthusiasm burst from his lips; but now it was rather with the gaze of admiring awe, than the exultation of one youthful mind sympathizing with another:—"You would teach confidence to despair herself;" returned she, "again I hope—for God does not create in vain! you shall know my father; but first, generous stranger, let me apprise you of every danger with which that knowledge is surrounded. He is hemmed in by enemies:—Alas, how closely are they connected with him!—not the English only are leagued against him, but the most powerful of his own countrymen join in the confederation. My unhappy self is the victim of a horrid coalition between a Southron chief and two rebel Scots; rebels to their country! for they sold my father to captivity and perhaps death; and I, wretched I, was the price. To free him, the noblest of Scottish knights is now engaged; but such hosts impede him, that hope hardly dares hover over his tremendous path."

"Then," cried the stranger, "send me to him. Let my arm be second to his in the great achievement. My heart yearns to meet a brother in arms who feels for Scotland what I do; and with such a coadjutor as you speak of, I dare promise your father liberty, and that the power of England shall be shaken."

Helen's heart beat violently at these words. "I would not refuse the union of two such minds—go then to the remotest point in Cartlane crags. But alas! how can I direct you?" cried she, hastily interrupting herself, "the passes are beset with English; and heaven knows, whether at this moment the bravé Wallace survives, to be again the deliverer of my father!"

Helen paused. The recollection of all that Wallace had suffered for the sake of her father, and the extremity to which he was driven when his messenger left him, rose like a horrid train of apparitions before her. In one instant she seemed to see his murdered wife extended on the bier in Bothwell castle, and in the next, the brave chief,

## The Scottish Chiefs

lying on the ground, with his golden locks dyed a horrid red and dropping gore. A pale horror overspread her countenance, and lost in these recollections, she did not remark the surprise which was manifested in the sudden start and rushing colour of the knight as she pronounced the name of Wallace.

"If Wallace ever had the happiness of serving any that belonged to you," returned the knight, "he has at least one source of pleasure in the remembrance. Tell me what he can farther do? Only say where is that father whom you say he once preserved, and I will hasten to yield my feeble aid to repeat the service!"

"Alas!" replied Helen, "I cannot but repeat my fears, that the bravest of men no longer blesses the earth with his existence. Two days before I was betrayed into the hands of the traitor from whom you rescued me, I saw a messenger from the gallant Wallace, and he informed me that his master was surrounded in the mountains, and that if my father did not send forces to relieve him, he must inevitably perish. No forces could my father send: he was then made a prisoner by the English; his retainers shared the same fate, and none but my cousin escaped to accompany the honest Scot back to his master. My cousin set forth with a few followers to join him; a few against thousands."

"They are in arms for their country, lady," returned the knight, "and a thousand invisible angels guard them: fear not for them! I leave Wallace and your cousin to their own valour and your prayers. But for your father, if I guess aright, he is one of the Scots dearest to his country? name to me the place of his confinement, and as I have not the besiegers of Cartlane crags to encounter, I engage, with God's help and the arms of my men, who never yet shrunk from sword or spear, to set the brave Earl free!"

"How!" exclaimed Helen, remembering that she had not yet mentioned her father's rank, and gazing at him with astonishment, "do you know his name— is the misfortune of my father already so far spread?"

"Rather say his virtue, noble lady," answered the knight, "no man who watches over the destiny of our devoted country, can be ignorant of who are her friends, or of the sufferings of them who are afflicted for her sake. I know that the Earl of Mar has made himself a generous sacrifice, but I do not know the circumstances; therefore I am yet to learn them from you, that I may know where to seek the accomplishment of my vow, to set him at liberty or to die."

"Thou brother in heart to the generous Wallace!" exclaimed Lady Helen, "my voice is feeble to thank thee." A few tears of grateful agitation fell from her eyes; and the good hermit, who had sat by the altar all this time, in suspense of how this conversation would terminate, now advanced to her side, and giving her a cup of water and a little fruit, conjured her to refresh herself before she satisfied the inquiries of the knight. She put the cup to her lips to gratify the benevolence of her host, but her anxious spirit was too much occupied in the concerns dearest to her heart, to feel the wants of the body; and turning to the knight, she briefly related the design of her father to send succours under the command of his nephew, Lord Andrew Murray, to Sir William Wallace; also she described the seizure of Bothwell castle by Aymer De Valence and the Lord Soulis. "The English lord," continued she, "carried my father and all his family to Dumbarton castle, while the Scottish one, by a base stratagem, drew me into these wilds."

She then related what had been the embassy of Ker to Lord Mar; and of her cousin intending to apply to his uncle, Sir John Murray, for a few men to lead to the rescue of Wallace. "Proceed then to Dumbarton castle," continued she, "if Heaven have yet spared the lives of these two dear friends, you will meet them before those walls. Meanwhile, I shall seek the protection of Lady Ruthven, my father's sister; and from her castle of Alloa near the Forth, send a courier to Dumbarton to inform my Father where I am: I shall then be in safety. Therefore, noble stranger, one bond I must lay upon you, should you come up with my cousin, do not discover that you have met with me. He is precipitate in his resentment; and his hatred is so hot against Soulis, that should he know the outrage I have sustained, he would, I fear, run himself and the general cause into great danger, by seeking an immediate vengeance."

The stranger readily passed his word to Helen, that he would never mention her name to any of her family, until she herself gave him liberty. "But when your father is restored to his rights," continued he, "in his presence I hope to claim my acquaintance with his lovely daughter."

Helen blushed at this compliment. It was not more than any man in his situation might have said, but it confused her, and hardly knowing what she said, she answered; "Heaven alone knows when that will be, for where will my outlawed parent find a refuge? none will dare yield rights to him, who lies under the interdict of Edward."

## The Scottish Chiefs

"Fear not, lady!" replied he, "the sword is now raised in Scotland that cannot be laid down till it be broken or has conquered. All have suffered by Edward; the powerful, banished into other countries or assassinated at home, that their wealth might reward foreign mercenaries; the poor, driven into the waste, that the meanest Southron might share the spoil. Such has been the wide devastation. Where all have suffered, all must be ready to revenge. And when a whole people take up arms in defence of their rights, and of all that is dear to fathers, sons, and husbands, what force of their violators can repel them?"

"So I felt," returned Helen, feeling the glow of enthusiasm rekindling in her breast; "while I had not yet seen the horrors of the contest. While my father commanded in Bothwell castle, and was calling out his men by hundreds to send as auxiliaries to the patriot chief, who struck the first blow for Scotland; I too felt nothing but the inspiration which led them on, and saw nothing but the victory which must crown determined valour in a just cause. But now, when all who my father commanded are slain or carried away by the enemy; when he is himself a prisoner, and awaiting the sentence of the tyrant he has opposed; when the gallant Wallace, instead of being able to hasten to his rescue, is hemmed in between unnumbered hosts;—hope almost dies within me, and I fear that whoever may be fated to free Scotland, my beloved father, and those belonging to him, are first to be made a sacrifice."

She turned pale as she spoke; and the stranger, compassionating the emotion which she prevented flowing from her eyes, resumed; "No, lady; if there be that virtue in Scotland, which can alone deserve freedom, it will be achieved: I am an inconsiderable man: but relying on the God of justice, I promise you your father's liberty! and let his freedom be a pledge to you for that of your country. I now go to rouse a few brave spirits to arms.—Remember, the battle is not to the strong, nor victory with a multitude of hosts! the banner of Saint Andrew was once held out from the heavens over a little army of Scots while they discomfited thousands.—The same holy arm leads me:—and if need be, I despair not to see it again, like the pillar of fire before the Israelites, consuming the enemies of liberty even in the fullness of their might."

While he yet spoke the hermit re-entered from the inner cell, leading in a youth, who, apparently weak, leaned on him for support. On sight of the knight, who held out his hand to him, he dropped on his knees and kissing it, burst into tears. "Do you then leave me?" cried he, in a hardly articulate voice; "am I not to serve my preserver?"

Helen rose in undescribable agitation: there was something in the feelings of the boy that was infectious; and while her own heart beat violently, she looked first on his emaciated figure, and then at the noble contour of the knight, where every God had seemed to have set his seal to form a perfect image of his own divinity. His beaming eyes seemed the very fountains of consolation; his cheek was bright with generous emotions; and turning his look from the suppliant boy to Helen, she advanced a few paces towards him.

"Rise," said he to the youth, "and behold in this lady the object of the service to which I appoint you.—You will soon, I hope, be sufficiently recovered to attend upon her wishes as you would upon mine.—Be her servant and her guard.— And when we meet again, as she will then be under the protection of her father, if you do not prefer so gentle a service before the rougher one of war, I will resume you to myself."

The young man who had obeyed the knight and risen, bowing respectfully, acquiesced in his new commission; and Helen uttering some incoherent words of thanks, to hide her increasing agitation, turned away. The hermit exclaimed; "again, my son, I beseech Heaven to bless thee!"—"and may its guardian care protect all here!" returned the knight. Helen looked up to bid him a last farewell—but he was gone. The hermit had left the cell with him, and she found herself alone; for the youth had also disappeared into the inner cave. She threw herself down before the altar, and giving way to a burst of tears, folded her hands over her breast, and inwardly implored heaven to protect the knight's life; and to grant by his means, safety to Wallace, and freedom to her father.

As she prayed, her agitation subsided; and a holy confidence elevating her mind, she remained in an ecstasy of hope and heavenly assurance, till a solemn voice from behind, aroused her from this happy trance.

"Blessed are they which put their trust in God!"

She started up, and perceived the hermit, who on entering had observed her devout position, and a spontaneous benediction broke from his lips.—"Daughter," said he, leading her to a seat; "this hero will prevail; for the power before whose altar you have just knelt, has declared, my might is with them who obey my laws and put their trust in me! You speak highly of the young and valiant Sir William Wallace, but I cannot conceive that he can be better formed for great and heroic deeds than this chief. Suppose them then to be equal; when they have met, with two such leaders, what may not a few patriotic hearts effect!"

## The Scottish Chiefs

Helen sympathised with the cheering prognostications of the hermit; and wishing to learn who this rival of the character of Wallace was; a character she had contemplated with admiration, and almost believed it to be unparalleled; she asked with a blush, not doubting the hermit could inform her, the name of the knight who had undertaken so hazardous an enterprize for her.

CHAP. XVI.

"I know not;" returned the hermit, "I never saw your gallant deliverer before yesterday morning. At the hour of my matin orisons I was adoring the Giver of Light at the entrance of my cell, when of a sudden I heard a noise, and the moment after saw a deer rush down the precipice and fall headlong. As he lay struggling amongst the stones, I had just observed that an arrow stuck in his side, when a shout issued from the rocks above, and looking up, I beheld a young warrior with his bow in his hand, leaping from cliff to cliff, till springing from a high projection on the right, he lit at once at the head of the wounded deer.

"Seeing by his bonnet and flowing plaid that he was a Scot, I emerged from the recess that concealed me, and addressed him with the benediction of the morning. Soon after, his followers, who were not so agile as their leader, appeared, and with a few strokes of their broad swords slew the panting animal.—The chief left them to dress it for their own refreshment; and on my invitation entered the cell to share with me a hermit's fare."

"I told him who I was, and what had driven me to this seclusion. In return, I learnt from him that it was his design to stimulate the surrounding chiefs to some exertions for their suffering country; but his name he declined revealing to me; it was necessary, he said, to conceal it for the sake of those to whom he should apply, and who might fear to take up arms: By his remaining unknown, they would escape the suspicion of having even been asked. His zeal for Scotland had already made himself an outlaw. When he told me these particulars, I imparted to him my doubts of the possibility of any single individual being able to arouse the slumbering courage of his country; but his language soon filled me with other thoughts. The arguments he meant to use were few and conclusive. He set before me the perfidy of King Edward, who, being the son of our late monarch Alexander's sworn brother, the good Henry, and deemed a prince of high honour, was chosen umpire in the cause of Bruce and Baliol. Edward accepted the task in the character of a friend to Scotland; but no sooner was he advanced into the heart of our kingdom at the head of a large army, which he had treacherously introduced as a mere appendage of state, than he declared the act of judgment was his right as liege Lord of the realm. This falsehood, which the testimony of men and our records disproved at the outset, was not his only baseness: he bought the conscience of Baliol, and adjudged to him the throne. That recreant prince acknowledged him for his master; and in the degrading ceremony of homage he was followed by almost all the Scottish lords then on the borders. But this vile yielding did not purchase them peace: Edward demanded oppressive services from the King; and the castles of the nobility to be resigned to English governors. These requisitions being remonstrated against by a few of our boldest chiefs, among whom your illustrious father, gentle lady, stood the most conspicuous; the tyrant repeated them with additional demands, and prepared to resent the appeal on the whole nation.

"Three months have hardly elapsed since the fatal battle of Dunbar: our nobles, indignant at the accumulated outrages committed on their passive monarch, arose to assert their rights; but being defeated on that desperately-fought field, Baliol was taken, and themselves obliged again to swear fealty to their enemy. Then came the seizure of the treasures of our monasteries, the burning of the national records, the sequestration of our property, the banishment of our chiefs, the violation of our women, and the slavery or murder of the poor people groaning under the yoke. "The storm of desolation thus raging over our country, how (cried the young warrior to me) can any of her sons shrink from the glory of again attempting her restoration!" He then informed me that Earl de Warenne, whom Edward had left Lord Warden of Scotland, was ill, and had retired to London; leaving Aymer de Valence as his deputy in the kingdom. To this new tyrant, De Warenne has lately sent a host of mercenaries, drawn from Wales and the continental provinces, to hold the south of Scotland in subjection; and to reinforce Cressingham and Ormsby, who command northwards from Stirling to the extremest point of Sutherland.

"With these representations of the conduct of our oppressors, the brave knight demonstrated the facility with which invaders drunk with power, and gorged with rapine, could be vanquished by a resolute and hardy people. The absence of Edward, who is now in Flanders, increases the probability of success. The knight's design is to infuse his own spirit into the bosoms of the chiefs of the numerous clans in this part of the kingdom. By their assistance to seize the fortresses in the lowlands; and so form a strong chain of repulsion against the admission of fresh troops from England. Then, while other chiefs (to whom he also means to apply) rise in the highlands, the Southron garrisons there, being unsupported by supplies, must become an easy prey, and would yield men of



## The Scottish Chiefs

consequence to be exchanged for our countrymen who are now prisoners in England. He wished to be furnished at present with troops merely enough to take some castle of power sufficient to give confidence to his friends. On his becoming master of such a place, it should be the signal for all to declare themselves; and rising at once, overwhelm Edward's garrisons in every part of Scotland.

"This is the knight's plan; and I hope for your sake, as well as for that of the cause, that the first fortress he gains may be that of Dumbarton: It has always been considered the key of the country."

"May heaven grant it! holy father;" returned Helen, "and, whoever this knight may be, may the blessed Saint Andrew at all times guide his arms!"

"I dare not guess who he is," replied the hermit, "as he thinks fit to conceal himself; but if I dare breathe a thought on the subject, it is that that noble brow was formed some day to wear a crown,"

"What," said Helen, starting, "you think that this knight is the royal Bruce?"

"I am at a loss what to think:" replied the hermit, "he has a most princely air; and there is such an overflowing of soul towards his country when he speaks of it, that such love can alone spring from the royal heart which was created to foster and to bless it."

"But is he not too young," inquired Helen, "to be either of the Bruces? I have heard my father say that Bruce, Lord of Annandale, the opponent of Baliol for the crown, was much his senior; and that his son the Earl of Carrick, must be now fifty years of age. This knight, if I am any judge of looks, cannot be twenty five."

"True," answered the hermit; "and yet he may be a Bruce.—For, it is neither of the two you have mentioned that I mean; but the grandson of the one, and the son of the other. You may see by this silver beard, lady, that the winter of my life is far spent. The elder Bruce, Robert Lord of Annandale, was my contemporary: we were boys together and educated at the same college in Icolmkill. He was brave, and passed his manhood in visiting different courts; and at last marrying a lady of the princely house of Clare, took her to France, and there left his only son to be brought up under the eye of the renowned Saint Lewis.—Young Robert took the cross while quite a youth; and carrying the banner of the holy King of France to the plains of Palestine, covered himself with immortal glory. One day, in scaling the walls of a Saracen fortress, by an extraordinary act of valour, he rescued the person of Prince Edward of England. The horrible tyrant who now tramples on all laws human and divine, was then in the bloom of youth, defending the cause of christianity. Think on that, sweet lady, and marvel at the changing power of ambition!"

"From that hour a strict friendship subsisted between the two young crusaders; and when Edward returned to England and mounted the throne, as he was then the ally of Scotland, the Earl of Annandale, to please his wife and his son, took up his residence at the English court. When the male issue of David failed in the untimely death of our Alexander III. then came the contention between Bruce and Baliol for the vacant crown. Our most venerable chiefs, the guardians of our laws, and the witnesses of the parliamentary settlement which had been made on the house of Bruce during the reign of the late King, all declared for Lord Annandale. He was not only the nearest male heir in propinquity of blood, but his experienced years, and his known virtues, made all eager to place him on the throne.

"Meanwhile Edward, forgetting friendship to his friend, and fidelity to a faithful ally, was undermining the interest of Bruce and the peace of the kingdom. Inferior rivals to our favourite prince were soon discountenanced; but by covert ways, with bribes and promises, the King of England raised such an opposition on the side of Baliol as seemed to threaten a civil war. Bruce, secure in his right, and averse to plunge his country in blood, easily fell in with a proposal that was insidiously hinted to him by one of Edward's creatures; to require that monarch to be umpire between him and Baliol. Then it was that Edward, after receiving the requisition as an honour conferred on him, declared it to be his right as supreme Lord of Scotland. The Earl of Annandale refused to acknowledge this assumption. Baliol bowed to it;—and for such obedience the unrighteous judge gave him the crown. On this base decision, Bruce absolutely refused to acknowledge its justice; and leaving the scene of action to avoid the power of the King who had betrayed his rights, and the jealousy of the other who had usurped them, he went over seas to join his son, who happened then to be at Paris. But alas, even that comfort was denied him, for he died on the road of a broken heart.

"When his son Robert, (who was Earl of Carrick in right of his wife) returned to Britain, he, like his father, disdained to acknowledge Baliol as King: and being more incensed at his successful rival, than at the treachery of his false friend Edward, he believed his glossing speeches; and by what infatuation I cannot tell, established his

## The Scottish Chiefs

residence at that monarch's court. This forgetfulness of his royal blood and of the independency of Scotland, has nearly obliterated him from every Scottish heart; for, when we look at Bruce the courtier, we cease to remember Bruce the descendant of Saint David, Bruce the valiant knight of the cross, who bled for true liberty before the walls of Jerusalem.

"His eldest son may be now about the age of the young knight who has just left us. And when I look on his royal port, and listen to the patriotic fervours of his soul, I cannot but think that the spirit of his noble grandfather has revived in his breast; and that leaving his indolent father to the vassal luxuries of Edward's palace, he is come hither in secret, to arouse Scotland and to assert his claim."

"It is very likely;" rejoined Helen, deeply sighing; "and may heaven reward his virtue with the crown of his ancestors!"

"Amen!" replied the hermit; "and to that end shall my hands be lifted up in prayer day and night.—May I, oh, gracious power!" cried he, looking upwards and pressing the cross to his breast; "live but to see that hero victorious, and Scotland free; and then let thy servant depart in peace, since mine eyes will have seen her salvation!"

"Her salvation, father?" said Helen timidly; "is not that too sacred a word to apply to any thing, however dear, that relates to earth?"

She blushed as she spoke, and casting her eyes to the ground, fearful of having too daringly objected, awaited with anxiety his answer. The hermit observed her attentively, and with a smile of holy benignity, replied; "Earth and heaven are the work of one creator.—He careth alike for angel and for man; and therefore, nothing that he has made is too mean to be objects of his salvation. The word is comprehensive: in one sense it may signify our redemption from sin and death by the coming of the Lord of Life into this world; and in an other, it intimates the different means by which Providence decrees the ultimate happiness of men. Happiness can only be found in virtue; and virtue cannot exist without liberty. Hence, when Scotland is again made free, the bonds of the tyrant who corrupts her principles with temptations, or compels her to iniquity by threats, are broken. Again the honest peasant may cultivate his lands in security; the liberal hand feed the hungry; and industry spread smiling plenty through all ranks. Every man to whom his maker hath given talents, let them be one or five, may apply them to their use; and by eating the bread of peaceful labour, rear numerous families to virtuous action and the true worship of God. The nobles, meanwhile, looking alone to the legislation of Heaven and to the laws of Scotland, which alike demand justice and mercy from all, will live the fathers of their country, teaching her brave sons that the only homage which does not debase a man, is that which he pays to virtue.

"This it is to be free, this it is to be virtuous, this it is to be happy, this it is to live the life of righteousness, and to die in the hope of immortal glory! say then, dear daughter, if, in praying for the liberty of Scotland, I said too much in calling it her salvation?"

"Forgive me, father!" cried Helen, overcome with shame at having questioned him.

"Forgive you what?" returned he, "you have not offended me. I rather love the holy zeal which is jealous of allowing objects, dear even to your wishes, to encroach on the sanctuary of Heaven. Be ever thus, meek child of the church, and no human idol, not even a King at your feet, will be able to usurp that part of your virgin heart which belongs to God."

Helen blushed:—"My heart, reverend father," returned she, "has but one wish; the liberty of Scotland; and with that, the safety of my father and his brave deliverers."

"Sir William Wallace, I never have seen;" rejoined the hermit, "but when he was quite a youth, I heard of his graceful victories in the mimic war of the jousts which were celebrated at Berwick in honour of Edward, when that tyrant first marched into this country under the mask of friendship. From what you have said, I do not doubt his being a worthy coadjutor of Bruce. However, dear daughter, as it is only a suspicion of ours that the knight is this young prince, we must not, for his safety and for the sake of the cause, let the name escape our lips. No, not even to your relations when you rejoin them, nor to the youth whom his humanity put under my protection. Till he reveals his own secret, for us to divulge it would be folly and dishonour."

Helen bowed acquiescence to this; and the hermit proceeded to inform her who the youth was who the stranger left to be her page. "After the knight and his men quitted me," continued he, "he fell in with this poor boy, lying wounded amongst the weeds near his ravaged cot. The child's tender years, not being, as you see, fifteen, had no effect on the obdurate hearts of our enemies. He only lifted his arm to defend his sister from their violence, and

## The Scottish Chiefs

they laid him senseless at their feet. When he awoke to recollection, the hut was stripped of its humble furniture, and his sister carried off. He crawled out of the door in quest of his wounded parent, but weakness prevented him going further. There he lay under the dews of night; and most probably would have perished from cold and famine, had not Heaven sent the knight to his assistance. Our young warrior immediately retraced his steps and brought the youth to me; promising to call at my cell on his return from his present enterprize, and take my charge with him to be his page. He then left us: but soon he appeared with you,— shewing, in the strongest language, that he who in spite of every danger, succours the sons and daughters of violated Scotland, is proclaimed by the spirit of Heaven, to be her future deliverer and King."

As he ended speaking, he rose, and taking Helen by the hand, led her into a small recess, formed by an inner excavation in the rock, where a bed of dried leaves, covered with a grey coverlid, lay on the ground. "Here, gentle lady," said he, "I leave you to repose. In the evening I expect a lay brother from St. Oran's monastery, who generally comes every sabbath eve to commune with me; he, you may send on any embassy to Alloa, and before he returns, I hope that Walter Hay will be sufficiently restored to accompany you to your friends. At present may gentlest seraphs guard your slumbers!"

Helen, fatigued in spirit and in body, thanked the good hermit for his carefulness, and bowing to her blessing, he quitted the apartment, and left her to repose.

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.

The Scottish Chiefs

**VOL. II.**

CHAP. I.

Murray, guided by Ker, having led on his thirty followers by the remotest windings of the wooded defiles which intersect the Lanerik hills, avoided even the sight of a Southron soldier.

Cheered by so favourable a commencement of their expedition, they felt no dismay, when at the glooming of the evening, Ker descried at a distance a body of armed men sitting round a fire. They were stationed at the foot of a projecting rock which guards the western entrance to the Cartlane craigs. Murray ordered his men to fall back amongst the bushes, and making the sign, concerted in case of such a dilemma, they struck their iron crowns into the interstices of the cliff, and catching at the branches which grew out of its precipitous side, with much labour, and in perfect silence, gained the summit. That effected, they pursued their way with the same stilly caution, till after a long and watchful march, without encountering a human being, they came to the base of the huge rock which Wallace had made his fortress.

Ker, who expected to see it surrounded by an English army, was amazed to find a death-like solitude. In a low voice, he said to Murray, "The place is deserted! my brave friend has either miraculously escaped; or, what is too probable, compelled by the extremity of his little garrison, has been obliged to surrender."

"We will ascend and see," was Murray's answer.

Ker led round the rock to the most accessible point, and mounting by the projecting stones, with some difficulty gained the top. Silence pervaded every part: the scattered rocks which crowned the pinnacle of this huge craig, and which had formed the temporary houses of his comrades, were lonely. On entering the recess where Wallace used to seek a few minutes slumber, the moon, which shone full into the cave, discovered something bright lying in a farther corner. Ker hastily approached it, recollecting what Wallace had told him, that if during his absence he could find means of escape, he would leave some weapon as a sign. A dagger, if it were by the south-point, where he must fight his way through the valley; and an arrow if it were by the north, as he should then seek a shelter for his exhausted followers in the wilds of Glenfinlass.

It was the iron head of an arrow which the moon had silvered, and Ker catching it up, with a gladdened countenance, exclaimed, "He is safe! this leads us to Glenfinlass." He then explained to Murray what had been the arrangement of Wallace respecting this sign, and without hesitation they decided to follow him.

Turning their faces towards the northern part of the cliff, they came to a spot which had been under the strongest guard of the enemy, but now, like the rest, was deserted. A narrow, winding path, led from this rocky platform to a fall of water which rushed impetuously by the mouth of a large cavern. Over the top of this cave, after they had descended the main craig, they clambered, and entering upon another sweep of rugged hills, commenced a rapid march.

Traversing the lower part of Stirlingshire, they crossed Graham's Dyke, and pursuing their course westward, left Stirling castle far to the right. They now ascended the Oichel hills, and proceeding along the wooded heights which overhang the banks of the Teith, forded the river, and entered at once into the broad valley which opened to them a distant view of Ben Lomond and Ben Lidi.

"There," exclaimed Ker, extending his hand towards the cloud-capped Lidi, "beneath the shadow of that mountain we shall find the light of Scotland, my dear master in arms!"

At this intimation the wearied Murrays, like seamen long harrassed on a tempestuous ocean at sight of a port, uttered a shout of joy, and hastening forward with renovated strength, met a foaming river roaring in their path. Despising all obstacles, they rushed in, and buffeting the waves, soon found a firm footing on the opposite shore. The sun shone cheerily above their heads, and illuminating the sides of the mountains as they pressed through their umbrageous defiles, hung every dew-dripping herb with the splendour of diamonds. Ben Lidi, the standard of their hope, seemed to wave them on, as the white clouds streamed from its summit, and rolling down its dark sides, floated in strange visionary shapes over the lakes beneath.

When the little troop halted on the shore of Loch Vanachoir, the mists which lingered on the brow of Lidi, now descended into the valley, and covering the mouth of the pass that led from the loch, seemed to shut them at once between the mountain and that world of waters. Ker, who had never been in these tracks before, became alarmed, but Murray, who remembered having explored them with his father in his way to Argyleshire, led forward

## The Scottish Chiefs

through a steep rough road, cut out of the side of the mountain. As they clung by the slippery rocks which overhung the lake, the mists dissolved into a heavy shower, and by degrees clearing away, discovered the shining heads of Ben Lomond and Ben Chochan.

They now entered a winding labyrinth of craigs; and passing onward, gradually descended amid pouring torrents, and gaping chasms overlaced with brambles which must have betrayed less wary travellers to inevitable destruction; till the augmented roar of rushing waters intimated to Murray that they drew near the great fall of Glenfinlass. The river, though bursting forward with the noise of thunder, was scarcely discerned through the thick forest which groaned over its waves. Here towered a host of stately pines, and there the lofty beeches, birches, and mountain ash, bending over the flood, interwove each others branches, and formed an arch so impenetrable, that while the sun gilded the tops of the mountains, all beneath lay in profound shadow.

The awful entrance to this sublime valley, struck the whole party with a feeling that made them pause. It seemed as if to these sacred solitudes, hidden in the very bosom of Scotland, no hostile foot dared intrude. Murray looked at Ker: "We go, my friend, to arouse the genius of these wilds. Here are the native fastnesses of Scotland, and from this pass the spirit will issue that is to bid her groaning sons and daughters be free!"

They entered: and with beating hearts pursued their way along the western border of Loch Lubnaig, till the royal heights of Craignacoheilg shewed their heath covered summits. The forest stretching far over the valley, lost its high trees in the shadows of the surrounding mountains, and told them they were now in the centre of Glenfinlass.

Ker put his bugle to his lips and sounded the pibroch of Ellerslie. A thousand echoes returned the notes; and after a pause which allowed the last response to die away, the air was answered by a horn from the summit of Craignacoheilg. At the same moment an armed man appeared on the rock, leaning forwards towards the loch. Ker drew near, and taking off his bonnet that he might be known, called aloud:—"Stephen! It is William Ker who speaks. I come with the Lord Andrew Murray of Bothwell, at the head of thirty men, to the support of our master Sir William Wallace."

At these words, Stephen placed his bugle to his mouth, and blowing the appointed signal, in a few minutes the rock was covered with the members of its little garrison. Women and children appeared, shouting with joy; and the men descending on the side next the glen, hastened forward to bid their comrades welcome. One advanced towards Murray, who instantly recognised him to be Sir Roger Kirkpatrick of Torthorald; a chieftain who two months before had retired in disgust to the highlands, in consequence of a blow which he had received in the court of justice at Stirling, from Cressingham, its haughty governor. The chiefs saluted each other; and Murray, pointing to his men, said—"I have brought these few brave fellows to the aid of Sir William Wallace. Poor as is my offering, I am yet eager to be led to him, that I may express my gratitude for the blessing he preserved to me; the life of my dear uncle."

Kirkpatrick's answer disappointed the eager spirit of the young warrior: "I am sorry, brave Murray, that you have no better knight to receive you than myself. I, and the gallant chieftain have not yet met; but I am in arms for him, and the hour of retribution for my injuries as well as his, is at hand."

"But where is Sir William Wallace?" demanded Murray.

"Gone towards the Forth, to rouse that part of sleeping Scotland. If all he meet have my spirit, they will not require a second call. Now is the time to aim the blow; and thanks to the accident which brought me the welcome news that an arm was raised that would strike it home."

As he spoke he led Murray to the cliffs which crown the summit of Craignacoheilg; and conducting him into the lower apartment of a tower which had once been a favourite hunting-lodge of the great King Fergus, he welcomed him a second time with a warm embrace: "This," said he, "is the far-famed lodge of the three Kings; here did our heroic Fergus, attended by his two royal allies Durstus the Pict, and Dionethus the Briton, reside during their long huntings in Glenfinlass! And here, eight hundred years ago, did the same glorious monarch form those plans which saved his kingdom from a foreign yoke! On the same spot, we will lay ours, to rescue Scotland from a tyranny more intolerable than that which menaced him. Yes, Murray; there is not a stone in this building that has not a voice which calls aloud to us to draw the sword, and give liberty to the people whom that illustrious prince kept free at the price of his blood."

"And by the ghost of that same Fergus, I swear, exclaimed Murray, "that my honest claymore shall never shroud its head while an invader be left alive in Scotland!"

## The Scottish Chiefs

Kirkpatrick caught him in his arms:—"Brave son of the noble Bothwell, thou art after mine own heart! The blow which the dastard Cressingham durst aim at a Scottish chief, still smarts upon my cheek; and rivers of his countrymen's blood shall flow to wash out the stain. After I had been persuaded by his serpent eloquence to swear fealty to Edward on the defeat at Dunbar, I vainly thought Scotland had only changed a weak and unfortunate prince, for a wise and victorious King; but when in the courts of Stirling I heard Cressingham propose to the barons north of the dyke, that they should give their strongest castles into English hands, when I opposed the measure with all the indignation of a Scot who saw himself betrayed, he first tried to over-turn my arguments; and finding that impossible, as I repeated them with redoubled force—he struck me!—Powers of earth and heaven, what was then the mighty tempest of my soul!—I drew my sword, and would have laid him dead at my feet, had not my obsequious countrymen held my arm, and dragged me from the apartment.

"Covered with dishonour by a blow which I could not avenge, I fled to my brother-in-law Sir John Scott, of Loch Doine, and there, for a time buried my injury from the world; but it lived in my heart; it haunted me day and night, calling for revenge.

"In such an hour, how did I receive the tidings which my old soldier Stephen Ireland brought to me, that a Scot was in arms against the tyrant! It was the voice of Heaven calling me to peace of mind! Stephen, on entering the neighbourhood of Loch Doine, heard of my residence with my bedridden kinsman, and bethought himself of applying to me, (as he knew in right of my deceased wife I was heir to all these domains) for clothing and other comforts for the women and children in his company. Accordingly, he came to me overnight, made his appeal to my humanity—but it aroused the courage of my soul? The dauntless Wallace had engaged in an enterprize which even my injuries had failed to inspire me with a determination to attempt. But the moment I heard he was in arms, I grasped at the opportunity of avenging my country; and of trampling on the proud heart of the Southron villain who had dared to inflict disgrace upon the cheek of Roger Kirkpatrick.

"I not only sent the contents of my wardrobe and cellars to the rock where the brave troops were assembled, but calling together, with the permission of Sir John Scott, his hardiest Loch Doiners, I set forth the tyranny which surrounded them; and then painting the advantages of that liberty for which I was determined to contend; I prevailed on them all, and led a hundred, with stout hearts and strong armour, to reinforce the brave Lanerkers on this rock.

"I have been here two days, awaiting the arrival of Wallace, that we may set forth together to Stirling; and there, in the very heart of his den, sacrifice the tiger Cressingham to the fate he merits."

"But what, my noble friend," asked Murray, "are the forces you deem sufficient for so great an enterprize? How many fighting men remain of Wallace's own company, besides your own?"

"More than a hundred," replied Kirkpatrick, "including yours."

"But how inadequate will all our forces be, (when united, not three hundred men) to storm so strong a place as Stirling castle! To attempt it, without a thousand men at least, would be to hazard our whole enterprize. It is garrisoned with four times that number; and the advantage of their situation would be more than equal to double that force again. In short, it would be Leonidas amongst the host of Xerxes."

"True;" answered Kirkpatrick; "and like him, even in death we should be triumphant. When honest vengeance nerves a single arm, it is equal in strength to a hundred. O! would to Heaven that I were this moment with my Loch Doiners alone, in the citadel of Stirling! neither Cressingham, nor any of his proud council should breathe another hour!"

"Were your Loch Doiners there," returned Murray, "they might indeed sell their lives dearly, and send many a Southron to purgatory; but how, with so small a band as that we command, are they to get into the citadel? The brunt of the contest must be before the walls; and nought but a proportionate force can be of any avail. Resolution, but not rashness, must be the principle of our proceedings.— Having passed the Rubicon, we must go forward. And my opinion is, that a few minor advantages obtained, our countrymen would flock to our standard; the enemy would be intimidated; and we should carry thousands instead of hundreds before the walls of Stirling. To attempt it now, would be to invite defeat, and pluck upon us the ruin of our project."

"You are right, young man;" cried Kirkpatrick; "my grey head, forgetting its experience, and rendered impetuous by insult, did not see the blind temerity of my scheme; I would rather for years watch the opportunity of taking a signal revenge, than not accomplish it at last: Oh, I would rather waste all my life in these solitary wilds, and know that at the close of it I should see the blood of Cressingham on these hands, than live a prince and

## The Scottish Chiefs

die unrevenged!"

Ker and Stephen now entered; the former having learnt from the latter the particulars of Sir Roger Kirkpatrick's joining them; and paying his respects to the grey-bearded knight, he informed Murray, that having disposed of his present followers, with those who had reached them in the valleys of Stirlingshire, he was come to lead him to share some refreshment in the banquetting-room of the tower. "What?" cried Murray, full of glad amazement; "Is it possible that my cousin Helen's troop have reached their destination? For none other belonging to Bothwell castle, had any chance of escaping their jailor's hands."

"Stephen will answer you, in the hall;" answered Ker; "for neither of us, my friend, shall speak farther, till, like the mortal followers of the immortal heroes of old, our hunger be appeased."

Kirkpatrick told Murray, that while he and Ker were at the board, he would retire, to dispatch expresses to two brave cousins of his, the Drummonds of Stobhall and Concraig, who, as they were in the same shire, would not be long in sending him each a hundred men: "So, my good Murray," cried he, striking Lord Andrew on the shoulder, "shall the snow-ball gather that is to fall on Edward to his destruction!"

Murray approved his zeal: and bidding him a short adieu, followed Stephen and Ker into the hall. A haunch of venison of Glenfinlass smoked on the board; and a goblet of wine from the bounteous cellars of Sir John Scott, brightened the hopes which glowed in every heart.

While Ker and Murray were recruiting their exhausted strength; Stephen, who played the part of host, sat at the head of the table to carve the food; and to satisfy the anxiety of Murray to know how the fifty Bothwellers came to Craignacoheilg; and by what fortunate occurrence, or signal act of bravery, Wallace could have escaped with his whole train from the foe-surrounded Cartlane craigs.

"Heaven smiled on us!" replied Stephen. "The very evening of the day in which Ker left us, there was a carousal in the English camp. We heard the sound of the song and of riot; and of many an insult cast upon our besieged selves. About an hour after sunset the noise sunk by degrees; and seemed to intimate that the revellers, overcome by excess, had fallen asleep. At this very time, owing to the heat of the day, so great a vapour had been exhaled from the lake beneath, that the whole of the northern summit and side of the fortress cliff was covered with a mist so exceedingly thick, that we could not discern each other at a foot's distance. Now is the moment, said our gallant leader. The enemy are stupified with wine; the rock is clothed in a veil;—It is the shield of God that is held before us! under its shelter, let us pass from their hands!"

"He called us together; and making the proper dispositions, commanded the children and women on their live to keep silence. He then led us to the top of the northern cliff that overhung the cave through which Ker escaped, and also a strong guard of the enemy. By the assistance of a rope, held above by several men, our resolute chief, twisting it round one arm to steady him, with the other catching by the projecting stones of the precipice, made his way down the rock, and was the first who descended. He stood at the bottom enveloped in the cloud which shrouded the mountain, till all the men of the first division had cleared the height; he then marshalled them with their pikes towards the foe, that they might receive them on their points should any accidental noise give the alarm. But all remained quiet on that spot; although the sounds of murmuring voices, both in song and laughter, intimated that the utmost precaution was necessary, as a wakeful part of the enemy was not far distant.

"Wallace re-ascended the rock half way; and receiving the children successively, which their trembling mothers lowered into his arms; he handed them to Fergus, and Fergus to me, and I carried them through the bushes which obscured the cave's mouth, and left them in charge of the women, who were already there. The rest of the men soon followed; and our sentinels receiving the signal, that all were safe, drew silently from their guard, and closed our march through the cavern.

This effected, we blocked up its mouth, that should our escape be discovered, the enemy might not, by seeing a passage, find the direct road we had taken.

"We pursued our way quite unmolested; and reached the northern outlets of the mountains, which opened to us the hospitable valleys of Stirlingshire. Here, some kind shepherds gave the poor women and children temporary shelter; and Wallace seeing how thin were his ranks, and that if any thing was to be done for Scotland, he must swell his few to a host, put the whole party under my guidance; and telling me, (when the women and old men were rested) to march them to this place, ordered me here to await his return. Selecting ten men; with that small band he set out towards the Forth, where, he said, he hoped to meet some valiant friends, lovers of their country, who would readily embrace her cause.



## The Scottish Chiefs

"He had hardly been an hour departed, when Fergus, who stood upon the hill side, observed a procession of monks descending the opposite mountain. They drew near; and while the rest of our party kept close, I ventured to wrap myself in my plaid and mingle with them as they halted in the glen. A crowd of women from the neighbouring hills had followed the train, and were now gathered round a bier which the monks had set down in the midst. I know not by what happy fortune I came close to the leader of the procession, but he saw something in my old rough features that declared me to be an honest Scot. "Friend," whispered he in our native gaelic, "will you conduct us to some safe place where we can rest, and withdraw this bier from the sacrilegious eye of curiosity?"

"I made no hesitation; but desired the train to follow me into a byre belonging to the good shepherd who was my host. On this motion, the common people went away; and the shepherd and myself entering the place, were left alone with the monks. He went into his cottage to collect provisions for them; and I remained with the brethren, who now sat down on the piled turf, fatigued, but happy to have found such christian charity. "When the travellers threw up their hoods, which, as mourners, they had worn over their faces, I could not help exclaiming—"Alas, for the glory of Scotland, that this goodly groupe of stout young men rather wore the helmet than the cowl!"—"How!" (asked their principal, who did not himself appear to have seen thirty years;) Do we not pray for the glory of Scotland?—Such is our weapon." "True; (replied I) but while Moses prayed, Joshua fought. God gives the means of glory that they should be used." "But for what, old veteran, (said the monk, with a penetrating look) should we exchange our cowl for the helmet? Knowest thou any thing of the Joshua that would lead us to the field?—There was something in the young priest's eyes that seemed to contradict his pacific words: They flashed an impetuous fire. My reply was short; "Are you a Scot?"—"I am, in soul and in arms."—"Then, knowest thou not the chief of Ellerslie?" As I spoke, for I stood close to the bier, I perceived the pall that covered it, shake. The monk answered my last question with an exclamation.—"You mean Sir William Wallace!"

"Yes; my master!" I replied. My eyes, still rivetted on the bier, which shook more violently at these words, saw the pall hastily thrown off and a beautiful youth habited in a shroud, start up in it, exclaiming—"Then is our pilgrimage at an end! Let us to him!"

"I confess I fell back several paces at this sight. The monk perceiving my terror, hastily said; "Fear not! he is alive—our leader! and seeks Sir William Wallace. His pretended death was a stratagem to conduct us safely through the English army; for we are all soldiers like yourself." As he spoke, he opened his grey habit, and shewed me the mailed tartans of my country beneath."

"What then!" interrupted Murray, "these monks were my faithful Bothwellers?"

"Even so," replied Stephen; "I soon assured them they might now resume their own characters; for all who inhabited the valley we were then in, were true, though poor and aged Scots. The young had long been drafted by Edward's agents to fight his battles abroad.

"Ah! (interrupted the youth on the bier;) are we a people that can die for the honour of this usurper, and are we ignorant how to do it for our country? Lead us, soldier of Wallace, (cried he, stepping resolutely on the ground) lead us to your brave master; and tell him that a few determined Bothwell men are come to shed their blood for him and for Scotland!"

"I then briefly explained to this astonishing youth, for he did not appear to be more than fifteen, and stood before me in his white robes of death like the spirit of some bright-haired son of Fingal; I told him whither Wallace was gone; and of our destination to journey forward, and await him in the forest of Glenfinlass. My momentary fright, great as it had been, was nothing to the horror which struck the good shepherd, who now entered, followed by some of my Lanerkers with a stock of provisions. He uttered a terrible cry at the sight of the shrouded youth standing amongst us; but before he had flown a yard from the byre, I caught hold of him, and bringing him back, Kenneth, who was the conductor of the procession, convinced him that the supposed spectre was a living creature.

"Closing the door, while the poor fellows were refreshing themselves, we learnt from Kenneth that the troop, when it had left Bothwell under the expectation of your soon following them, marched gaily onward. But they had hardly proceeded half a dozen miles, before their scouts perceived the out-posts of the English which surrounded Cartlane crags; and therefore they struck into a circuitous track that would bring them to a remote and less guarded entrance to these hills. They went forward with much hazard, precaution, and difficulty, till they reached the convent of St. Columba, at the western side of the crags. Kenneth knew the abbot, and entering it under

## The Scottish Chiefs

covert of the night, obtained permission for his harrassed men to rest there. The youth, now their leader, was a student in the church. He had been sent thither by his mother, a very pious lady, in the hope that as he is of a very gentle nature, he would attach himself to religious retirement, and become a novice for the sacred tonsure. But courage often springs with most strength in the softest frames.

"The moment this youth discovered what was Kenneth's errand, he threw himself at the feet of the abbot, and after many rejected entreaties, told him, rising from his knees in anger, that if he would not consent to his joining Sir William Wallace with these men, he would take the earliest opportunity to escape from the convent and throw himself on the English pikes. The abbot seeing him determined, with reluctance granted his wish:—And then it was, (said Kenneth) that the youth seemed inspired. It was no longer a lovely enthusiastic boy that we saw before us, but an angel gifted with wisdom to direct, and enterprize to lead us. It was he proposed disguising ourselves as monks: and while he painted his blooming countenance of a death-like paleness, and stretched himself on the bier, the abbot sent to the English army to request admittance into the Cartlane hills for a party of monks to cross them to bury their dead in the cave of St. Columba, in Stirlingshire. Our young leader hoped, that in passing amongst the craigs, we might find an opportunity to apprise Wallace that we were friends and ready to reinforce his exhausted garrison.

"On our entrance into the passes of the craigs, (continued Kenneth) the English commander told us of the horrors which had just happened at Bothwell; and with very little courtesy to sons of the church, ordered the bier to be opened, to examine whether it really did contain a corpse, or provisions for our besieged countrymen; and then to see us fairly through the glens, that we might not communicate with Wallace, or Wallace with us, he sent a strong guard to watch our motions. In hopes of evading their vigilance, on pretence of a vow of the deceased, that his bearers should perform a pilgrimage over all the craigs, we traversed them in every direction; and I have no doubt we should at last have wearied out our sentinels and gained our point, had not the news been brought to our guard that Wallace had escaped. How, none in the English army could guess; for not a man was missing from his post, and not an avenue appeared by which they could trace his flight; but gone he was, and with him his whole train. On this disappointment, the Southrons retired as fast as possible to Glasgow, to give as good an account as they could to their commander in chief, for the disgraceful termination of their siege. Dismayed at this intelligence, the guard hurried us into Stirlingshire, where we had said the cave of St. Columba lay: and having executed their commission, they had just parted with us, when, at the other side of yon mountain, the people around, attracted by our procession, followed us down into the valley. Had we not met with you, it was our young chief's design to have thrown off our disguises in the first safe place, and divided into small bands, have parted, and severally sought Sir William Wallace.

"Your appearance, worthy Stephen, (continued Kenneth) puts an end to our wanderings, till in Glenfinlass, we shall be joined by him, to whose service we have sworn to the Lady Helen Mar, to devote our lives."

"But where," demanded Murray, who had listened with delighted astonishment to this recital, "where is this admirable youth? Why, if Kenneth have learnt I am arrived, does he not bring him to receive my thanks and friendship?"

"It is my fault," returned Stephen, "that Kenneth will not approach you till your repast is over. I left him to see your followers properly refreshed. And for the youth, he seems timid of appearing before you; his name cannot be breathed to you till he reveals it himself, as none know him here by any other than that of Edwin. He has mentioned tomorrow morning for the interview."

"I must submit to his determination," replied Murray, "but I am at a loss to guess why so brave a creature should hesitate to meet me. I can only suppose he dislikes the idea of resigning the troop he has so well conducted, and if so, I shall think it my duty to yield to him the command."

"Indeed he richly deserves it," returned Stephen, "for the very soul of Wallace seemed transfused into his breast, as he cheered us through our long march from the valley to Glenfinlass. He played with the children, heartened up the women; and when the men were weary and lagged by the way, he sat him down on the nearest stone, and sang to us legends of our ancestors, till every nerve was new braced with warlike emulation, and starting up, we proceeded onward with resolution, and even gaiety.

"When we arrived at Cragnacoeheilg, as the women were in great want, I suddenly recollected that I had an old friend in the neighbourhood. When a boy I had been the playfellow of Sir John Scot, of Loch Doine, and understanding that he was a bedridden invalid in his house, I went thither, and while I told my tale, and begged

## The Scottish Chiefs

for only a few necessaries for our babes and their mothers, his brother-in-law, Sir Roger Kirkpatrick, who sat by his pillow, took fire at my description of the patriotic valour of my master, and remembering his own outrages, immediately declared his determination to accompany me to Craignacoheilig. When he joined the troop on the summit of this rock, he embraced them separately, hailing the men as brethren and the women as his sisters. The children he took in his arms, and while he held their hands in his, he said, "Let not this right hand be baptised, till it has been bathed in the blood of the foe; for mercy belongs not to the enemy who is now doomed to fall beneath our swords!"

"It is indeed a deadly contest!" rejoined Murray, shuddering, "for evil has been the example of that foe. How many throeing bosoms have their steel made cease to heave! How many hapless babes have their merciless hands dashed against the stones!—Ruthless, ruthless war! even a soldier trembles to contemplate thy horrors!"

"Only till he can avenge them!" cried a stern voice, entering the apartment: It was Kirkpatrick's, and he proceeded, "when vengeance is in our grasp, tell me, brave Murray, who will then tremble? Dost thou not feel retribution in thine own hands? Dost thou not see the tyrant's blood washing thy feet?" As he spoke, he looked down with a horrid exultation in his eyes, and bursting into a more horrible laugh, struck his hand several times violently on his heart: It glads me! it glads me! I shall see it— and this arm shall assist to pull him down."

"His power in Scotland may fall," returned Murray, "but I fear that Edward will be too careful of his life, to come within reach of our steel."

"That may be," rejoined Kirkpatrick, "but my dagger shall yet drink the blood of his agents. Cressingham shall feel my foot upon his neck! Cressingham shall see that hand torn from its wrist which durst violate the unsullied cheek of a true Scotsman. Murray, I cannot live unrevenged."

As he spoke he left the apartment with a countenance of such tremendous fate, that the young warrior doubted it was human; it spoke not the noble resolves of patriotism, but the portentous malignity with which the great adversary of mankind determines the ruin of nations: It seemed to wither the grass as he moved, and Murray almost thought that the clouds darkened as the gloomy knight issued from the porch into the open air.

Kenneth Mackenzie joyfully entered the hall. Murray received him with a warm embrace; and after some conversation, in which he related to Kenneth the particulars of the disasters at Bothwell castle, they separated for the night; and Stephen Ireland led the wearied Murray to a bed of freshly gathered heath he had prepared for him in an upper chamber.

## CHAP. II.

Sleep, the gentle sister of that awful power which shrouds us in her cold bosom, and bears us in still repose to the blissful wakefulness of eternal life:—she, sweet restorer! wraps us in her balmy embraces; and extracting from our wearied limbs the effects of every toil, safely relinquishes us at morn to the new-born vigor that is her gift; to the gladsome breezes which call us forth to labour and enjoyment.

Such was the rest of the youthful Murray, till the shrill notes of a hundred bugles piercing his ear, made him start. He listened; they sounded again. The morning had fully broken. He sprung from his couch, threw on his armour, and snatching up his lance and target issued from the tower. Several women were flying past the gate. On seeing him they exclaimed;—"hasten! the Lord Wallace is arrived.—His bugles have sounded—our husbands are returned!"

Murray followed their eager footsteps, and reached the edge of the rock just as the brave group were ascending. A stranger was also there, whom from his extreme youth and elegance, he judged to be the young protector of his Bothwellers; but under his present circumstances, he forbore to address him until they should be presented to each other by Wallace himself.

It was indeed the same. The youthful chieftain on hearing the first blast of the horn, had started from his bed of heath, and buckling on his brigandine, with the swiftest had rushed to the rock; but at sight of the noble figure of Wallace, who first gained the summit, the young hero fell back; an undecipherable awe checked his steps; and he stood at a distance, while Kirkpatrick welcomed the chief, and introduced Lord Andrew Murray. Wallace received the latter with a glad smile; and taking him warmly by the hand, "My gallant friend," said he, "I hope with such assistance soon to reinstate your brave uncle in Bothwell castle; and so cut out a passage to even a mightier rescue! we must carry off Scotland from the tyrant's arms; or"—added he in a graver tone, "we shall only rivet her chains the closer."

"I am but a poor auxiliary;" returned Murray, "my troop is a scanty one, for it is of my own gathering. It is not my father's, nor my uncle's strength that I bring along with me. But there is one here (continued he) who has preserved a party of men sent by my cousin Lady Helen Mar, almost double my numbers."

At this reference to the youthful warrior, Sir Roger Kirkpatrick discerned him at a distance; and hastened towards him, while Murray briefly related to Wallace the extraordinary conduct of this unknown. The youth, on being told that the chief waited to receive him, hastened forward with a trepidation he never had felt before; but it was a trepidation that did not subtract from his own worth: it was the timidity of a noble heart which believed it approached one of the most perfect among mortals; and while its anxious pulse beat to emulate such merit, a generous consciousness of measureless inferiority, embarrassed him with a confusion so amiable, that Wallace, who perceived his extreme youth and his blushes, opened his arms and embraced him. "Brave youth," cried he, "I trust that the power which blesses our cause, will enable me to return you, with many a well-earned glory, to the bosom of your family!"

Edwin was encouraged by the frank address of a hero, whom he expected to have found reserved, and wrapped in the deepest glooms of the fate which had roused him to be the thunderbolt of heaven; and when he saw a benign though pale countenance hail him with smiles, he made a strong effort to shake off the awe with which the divine dignity of the figure and mien of Wallace, had oppressed him; and replying, with a still more mantling blush: "My family are worthy of your esteem, my father is brave. But my mother fearing for me, her favorite son, prevailed on him to put me into a monastery. Dreading the power of the English even there, she allowed none but the abbot to know who I was. And as she chose to hide my name; and I have burst from my concealment without her knowledge;—till I do something worthy of that name, and deserving her pardon, permit me, noble Wallace, to follow your footsteps by the simple appellation of Edwin."

"Noble boy!" returned Wallace, "your wishes shall be complied with. We urge you no further to reveal what such innate bravery must shortly proclaim in the most honourable manner."

Edwin bowed, and turned to Murray, who now eagerly complimented him on the share he had in preserving the Bothwell men from falling into the hands of their enemies.—"As you have won them, you shall wear them!" continued he, "and I am sure my fair cousin, who swore them to be the unyielding guards of Sir William Wallace,

## The Scottish Chiefs

will not be displeased that I resign them into so brave though youthful a hand!"

"I will fight by your side and theirs;" replied Edwin; "but I must learn to serve, before I can presume to command; so, generous Lord Murray, do not make my boyhood blush, by mocking me with the offer of a truncheon!"

"Well, have it as you will;" returned Murray, laughing, "but if my little Edwin does not carry one before me, I shall have the better luck, and must make my best bow to the grim-visaged Bellona."

By this time the whole of the troops having ascended, their wives, children, and friends were rejoicing in their embraces: and Wallace, asking some questions relative to Bothwell, Murray briefly related the disasters which had happened at the castle.

"My father," added he, "is still with the worthy Neil Campell, Lord of Lochawe. —Thither my uncle Sir John Murray is gone also, to request my father to send to the Cartlane craigs all the followers he took with him into Argyleshire. But, as things have turned out, would it not be well to dispatch a messenger to Kilchurn castle, to say, that you have sought refuge in Glenfinlass."

"Before it can arrive," returned Wallace, "I hope we shall be where his reinforcements may reach us by water. Our present object must be the Earl of Mar. He is the first Scottish Earl who has hazarded his estates and life for Scotland; and as her best friend, his liberation must be our first enterprize. In my circuit through two or three eastern counties, a noble encrease has been made to our little army. Sir Simon Frazer, of Oliver castle, and his brother, my old school-fellow, have each given me a hundred men; and the brave Sir Alexander Scrymgeour, whom I met in West-Lothian, has not only brought fifty stout Scots to my command; but as the hereditary standard-bearer of the kingdom, has come hither himself to carry the royal banner of Scotland to glory or oblivion."

"To glory!" cried Murray, waving his sword; "O! not while a Scot survives, shall that golden lion again lick the dust!"

"No, rather," cried Kirkpatrick, his eyes flashing fire, "rather may every Scot and every Southron perish, provided they fill but one grave! let me," cried he, sternly grasping the hilt of his sword, and looking upwards; "let me, oh, Saviour of mankind, live but to see the Forth and the Clyde, so often stained with our blood, dye the eastern and the western oceans with the vital flood of these our foes; and when none is spared, then let me die in peace!"

The eyes of Wallace glanced on the young Edwin, who stood gazing on Kirkpatrick; and turning on the knight; with a powerful look of reprehension —"Check that prayer!" cried he, "remember my brave companion, what the Saviour of mankind was; and then think, whether he who offered life to all the world, will listen to so damning an invocation.—If we would be blessed in our arms, we must be merciful."

"To whom?" exclaimed Kirkpatrick; "to the robbers who tear from us our lands; to the ruffians who wrest from us our honours? but you are patient; you never received a blow!"

"Yes," cried Wallace, turning paler; "a heavy one, on my heart." "True," returned Kirkpatrick; "your wife fell under the steel of a Southron governor; and you slew him for it! you were revenged; your feelings were appeased."

"Not the death of fifty thousand governors," replied Wallace, "could appease my feelings. Revenge were insufficient to satisfy the yearnings of my soul." For a moment he covered his agitated features with his hands, and then proceeded; "I slew Heselrigge because he was a monster under whom the earth groaned. My sorrow, deep, deep, as it was—was but one of many which his rapacity, and his nephew's licentiousness, had occasioned. Both fell beneath my arm; but I do not denounce the whole nation without mercy!—when the sword of war is drawn, all who resist must conquer or fall: But there are some noble English who abhor the tyranny they are obliged to exercise over us; and when they declare such remorse, shall they not find mercy at our hands. Surely, if not for humanity, for policy's sake, we ought to give quarter; for the exterminating sword, if not always victorious, incurs the ruin it threatens. My hope in facing the usurper is, that by our righteous cause and our clemency, we shall not only gather our own people to our legions, but turn the hearts of the poor Welsh, and the misled Irish, whom he has forced into his armies; and so confront him with troops of his own levying. Many of the English were too generous to undertake the subjugation of a country which they had sworn to befriend; and those who are here, when they see Scotsmen no longer consenting to their own degradation, may take shame to themselves for assisting to betray a confiding people."

## The Scottish Chiefs

"That may be;" returned Kirkpatrick, "but surely you would not rank Aymer De Valence who lords it over Dumbarton; and Cressingham, who acts the tyrant in Stirling, and perhaps now plays away the month of May in Bothwell castle; you would not rank them amongst these generous English?"

"No;" replied Wallace, "the haughty oppression of the one, and the wanton cruelty of the other, have given Scotland too many wounds, for me to hold a shield before them; I leave them to your sword."

"And by heavens!" cried Kirkpatrick, gnashing his teeth with the fury of a tiger in sight of his prey; "they shall know its point!"

"To-morrow morning by day-break," said Wallace, turning to Murray; "I purpose marching towards Dumbarton. It is not at such a distance but that we may reach the castle before the moon sets. The men shall rest for an hour behind the eastern morass: I propose seizing it by storm."

Both Murray and Kirkpatrick joyfully acquiesced in this project. Edwin smiled an enraptured assent. And Wallace, with many a gracious look, and speech, disengaged himself from the clinging embraces of the weaker part of the garrison. who, seeing in him the spring of their husbands might, and the guard of their own safety, clung to him as to a presiding deity.

You, my dear countrywomen;" said he, "shall find a home for your aged parents, your children and yourselves, with the venerable Sir John Scott, of Loch-Doine. You are to be conducted thither this evening; and there await in comfort, the happy return of your husbands, whom Providence now leads forth to be the champions of your country."

The women, filled with enthusiasm, uttered a shout of triumph; and embracing their husbands, said they were ready to resign them wholly to Heaven and Sir William Wallace.

Wallace left them with these tender relatives from whom they were so soon to part, and retired with his three friends, now joined by Sir Alexander Scrymgeour, to arrange the plan of his proposed attack.—Edwin, delighted with the glory which seemed to wave him from the pinnacles of Dumbarton rock, listened in profound silence to all that was said; and then hastened to his quarters, to collect his armour for the ensuing morning.

CHAP. III.

While the young chieftain was thus employed, Kenneth entered and told him that, it being the cool of the evening, Sir William Wallace had determined to call his little army before him that he might see their strength and, know their numbers. Edwin, whose soul had become not more enamoured of the panoply of war, than of the gracious smiles of his admired leader, at this intelligence twisted his tartan plaid over his snow-white brigantine, and placing a swan-plumed helmet on his brows, hastily issued forth to meet his general on the field.

Kirkpatrick had already taken his station at the head of his Loch-Doiners, augmented by half the clan of Drummond. Scrymgeour waved the royal standard before his fifty followers; and Ireland coming up with the old staunch troop of Lanerkers; the thirty followers of Murray appeared just as the two hundred Frasers entered from an opening in the rocks. The blood mounted into the cheek of Murray as he compared his inferior numbers, and recollected the weight of obligation they were to repay, and the greater one they were now going to incur. He threw the standard, worked by Helen, (which now for the first time since they parted, he had unfurled) lightly over his shoulder; and turning to Wallace as he moved away to take the head of his men; "Behold," said he, "the poor man's mite! it is great, for it is my all!"

"Great indeed, brave Murray!" returned Wallace, "for it brings me a host in yourself."

"I will not disgrace my standard!" said Murray, lowering the banner staff to Wallace. He started when he saw the flowing lock, which he could not help recognising to be the same he had sent to the Earl of Mar. "This is my betrothed;" continued Murray in a gayer tone; "I have sworn to take her for better for worse; and I pledge you my troth that nothing but death shall part us!"

Wallace grasped his hand:—"And I pledge you my word that the head whence it sprang shall be laid low, before I ever suffer so generous a defender to be separated, dead or alive, from this standard." His eye glanced at the impresse. "Thou art right!" continued he, "God doth indeed arm thee! and in the strength of a righteous cause, thou goest with the confidence of success, to embrace victory like a bride!"

"No; I am only the bride-groom's man!" replied Murray, gaily moving off, "I shall be content with a kiss or two from the handmaids, and leave the lady for my general."

"Happy, happy, youth!" said Wallace to himself as his eye pursued the agile footsteps of the young chieftain; "no conquering affection has yet thrown open thy heart; no deadly injury hath lacerated it with wounds incurable. Patriotism is a virgin passion in thy breast, and innocence and joy wait upon her!"

"We just muster five hundred men;" said Ker, advancing from the lines to Wallace; "but they are all as stout in heart as condition; and ready, even tonight, if you will it, to commence their march."

"No;" replied Wallace, "we must not over-strain the generous spirit. Let them rest to-night; and to-morrow's dawn shall light us through the forest."

Ker, who acted as equerry to Wallace, now went forward to give the word; and they all marched forward.

Sir Alexander Scrymgeour with his golden standard charged with the lion of Scotland, led the van. Wallace raised his bonnet from his head as it drew near. Scrymgeour lowered the staff. Wallace threw up his outstretched hand at this action, in sign for him to check the intended homage, but the knight not understanding him, he stepped forward:—"Sir Alexander Scrymgeour," said he, "I am the country's soldier, not its sovereign; that standard must not bow to me. It represents the royalty of Scotland, before which we fight for her liberties. And if virtue yet dwell in the house of the valiant Saint David, some of his offspring will, when he hears of this day, shake off the spell of the tyrant, reclaim his rights, and lead it forward to conquest and to a crown. Till such an hour, let not that standard bend to any man."

Wallace fell back as he spoke; and Scrymgeour bowing his head in sign of acquiescence, marched on.

Sir Roger Kirkpatrick at the head of his well-appointed highlanders, next advanced. His blood-red banner streamed to the air; and as it bowed to Wallace, he saw that the indignant knight had adopted the thistle, the devise of the hardy King Achaius; but with a fiercer motto:—"Touch and I pierce!"

"That man, (thought Wallace, as he passed along) carries malignity and a relentless sword in his very eye!—How much brighter is courage without ferocity? That implacable countenance, instead of attracting sympathy, turns the uplifted arm from the foe it would have pierced, to shield him from the merciless stroke of

## The Scottish Chiefs

such an avenger."

While these reflections passed rapidly through his mind, the Loch-Doiners, a strong, tall, and well-armed body of men, marched on and gave place to the advancing corps of Bothwell. The eye of Wallace felt as if turning from a prospect of gloom and horror, to the cheerful light of day, when it fell on the bright and ingenuous face of Murray. Kenneth with his troop followed; and the youthful Edwin, like Cupid in arms, closed the procession.

Being drawn up in line, their chief, fully satisfied, advanced towards them, and expressing his sentiments of the patriotism which brought them into the field, and his approbation of their martial appearance, called to Stephen Ireland to make preparations for the march. "The sun has now set," said he, "and before dark, you must conduct the families of my worthy Lanerkers to the protection of Sir John Scot. It is time that age, infancy, and female weakness, should cease their wanderings with us: to-night we bid them adieu, to meet them again in freedom and prosperity."

As Wallace ceased, and was retiring from the ground, several old men, and young women with their babes in their arms, rushed forward from behind the ranks, and throwing themselves at his feet, some caught hold of his hands and others of his garments.—"We go," said the venerable fathers, "to pray for your welfare:—and sure we are, a crown will bless our country's benefactor, here or in heaven!"

"In heaven," replied Wallace, shaking the plumes of his bonnet over his eyes, to hide the moisture which suffused them; "I can have no right to any other crown."

"Yes," cried a hoary-headed shepherd, who had numbered nearly a hundred years, "you have David's right. You free your country from tyrants; and the Lord speaking from the people's hearts will proclaim their deliverer King."

"May your rightful king, worthy patriarch," said Wallace, "whoever he may be, whether a Bruce or a Baliol, meet with equal zeal from Scotland at large; and tyranny must then fall before courage and loyalty!"

The women wept as they clung to his hand; and one, the daughter of Ireland, holding up her child in her arms, presented it to him; "Look on my son!" cried she, with energy; "the first word that he speaks, shall be Wallace; the second, liberty. And every drop of milk he drinks from my bosom, shall be turned into blood, either to nerve his arm to conquer, or to flow on the field for his country!"

At this speech, all the women held up their children towards him:—"Here," cried they, "we devote them to heaven and to our country!—adopt them, noble Wallace, as thy followers in arms, when perhaps, their fathers are laid low!"

Wallace, unable to speak, pressed their little faces separately to his lips, and then returning them to their mothers, put his hand on his heart, and answered in an agitated voice—"They are mine!—my weal shall be theirs,—my woe, my own." As he spoke, he hurried from the weeping group, and immersing amid the cliffs, hid himself from their tears and their blessings.

He threw himself down on a shelving rock, whose fern-covered bosom projected over the winding waters of Loch Lubnaig; and while his eyes contemplated its serene surface, he sighed, and thought how tranquil was nature till the rebellious passions of man, wearying of innocent joys, disturbed all by restlessness and violence.

The mists of evening hung on the gigantic tops of Ben-Lidi and Ben-Vorlich; and sailing forward, by degrees obscured the whole of the mountains; and left nothing for the eye to dwell on but the long silent expanse of the lake beneath.

"So," said he, "did I once believe myself for ever shut in from the world by an obscurity that promised me happiness as well as seclusion.—But the hours of Ellerslie are gone. No tender wife will now twine her faithful arms about my neck. No child of Marion's will ever be pressed to my fond bosom!—I saw slavery around me and yet I slept. Alas, the angel that charmed away my sense of injury, that sunk my country's wrongs to a dreamy forgetfulness in her arms, she was to be immolated that I might awake!—my wife, my unborn babe, they both must bleed for Scotland! and the sacrifice shall not be yielded in vain. "No, Great God!" cried he, stretching his clasped hands towards heaven; "endow me with thine own spirit, and I shall yet lead my countrymen to liberty and happiness!—Let me counsel with thy wisdom; let me conquer with thine arm! and when all is finished, give me, O, gracious Father! a quiet grave beside my wife and child."

Tears, the first he had shed since the hour in which he, unconsciously for the last time, pressed his beloved Marion to his heart, now flowed copiously from his eyes. The women, the children, had aroused all his recollections, but in so softened a train, that they melted his heart, till he wept. "It is thy just tribute, Marion!" said



## The Scottish Chiefs

he; "It was blood you shed for me, and shall I check these poor drops!—look on me sweet saint, best beloved of my soul:—O, hover near me in the day of battle; and thousands of thine and Scotland's enemies shall fall before thy husband's arm!"

The plaintive voice of the highland pipes, at this moment broke upon his ear. It was the farwel of the patriarch Lindsay, as he and his departing company descended the winding paths of Craignacoheilig. Wallace started on his feet. The separation had then taken place between his trusty followers and their families; and guessing the feelings of those brave men from what was passing in his own breast, he dried away the traces of his tears, and grasping his spear,—cast from him all depressing thoughts; and once more resuming the warrior's cheerful look, sought that part of the rock where the Lanerk men were quartered.

As he drew near unobserved, he saw some standing on the cliff; while others leaned over to catch another glance of the departing groups ere it was lost amid the thick shades of Glenfinlass.

"Are they quite gone?" asked Fergus. "Quite," answered a young man, who seemed to have got the most advantageous situation for a view. "Then," cried he, "may Saint Andrew and the Virgin keep them till we meet again!"

"Amen!" ejaculated Wallace. At the sound of this response from their chief, they all turned round. "My brave companions," said he, "I come to repay this hour's pang, by telling you, that in the attack of Dumbarton to-morrow night, you shall have the honour of first mounting the walls. I shall be at your head; and he that first gains the summit after me, shall be knighted by my hand."

"To follow you, my lord," said Fergus, "is our duty."

"I grant it," replied the chief, "and as I am the leader in that duty, it is mine to dispense to every man the reward of his deserts; and to prove to all men that virtue alone is true nobility."

"Ah, dearest Sir!" exclaimed Edwin, who having been assisting the women to carry their infants down the steep, was now returned, and ascending the cliff had heard the latter part of this conversation; "deprive me not of the aim of my life! These warriors have had you long, have distinguished themselves in your eyes:— Deprive me not then of the advantage of being near you; it will make me doubly brave. And for the honour of being ennobled by the sword of Sir William Wallace, I know not who would not risk his life; but I contend not for that reward. Let him, whoever he may be, who is the second to gain the ascent, be the knight. But for me, O, my dear commander, let me only carry to the grave the consciousness, that next to your godlike self, I was the first, and you will make me noble indeed!"

Wallace looked at him with a smile of such graciousness, that the youth threw himself into his arms:—"You will grant my boon, Sir William Wallace!"

"I will; noble boy!" said he, "act up to your sentiments, and you shall be my brother."

"Let who will be a knight;" cried he, grasping Wallace's hand, "call me by that appellation, and I will dare anything."

"Be the first then to follow me tomorrow night;" said he, "and I will lead you to an honour the highest in my gift; you shall unloose the chains of the Earl of Mar! And ye," continued he, turning to his men; "ye shall not find your country slow to commemorate the duty of such sons. Being the first to strike the blow for her freedom, ye shall be the first she will honour. I now speak as her minister; and as a badge to times immemorial of your fidelity, wear on your shields the Scottish lion."

A shout of proud joy issued from every heart. And Wallace seeing that honour had dried the tears of regret, left them to their repose. Edwin retired to his quarters. The chief himself, entering the tower without seeking the rest of his officers, withdrew to his chamber; and after offering his evening invocation to Heaven, threw himself along his heathy couch, and soon lost all recollection of cares past and to come, in the balmy oblivion of sleep.

CHAP. IV.

Profound as was the rest of Wallace, yet the first clarion of the lark awakened him. The rosy dawn shone in at the casement; and a fresh breeze wooed him with its inspiring breath to rise and meet it. But the impulse was in his own mind; he needed nothing outward to call him to action. Rising immediately, he put on his glittering hauberk, and issuing from the tower, raised his bugle to his lips, and blew so rousing a blast, that in an instant, Murray rushed from his bed, and in nothing but his linen tunic, appeared on the platform. On seeing Wallace, he exclaimed; "Being little better than thin air, my lord, I will echo you in a moment!"—As he spoke he caught up his horn, and breathed forth such a rapid and vociferous charge that, before he had time to decamp into the tower to throw on his armour, the whole rock was covered with soldiers.

Wallace put his helmet on his head, and advanced towards them just as Edwin had joined him, and Sir Roger Kirkpatrick, armed cap—a—pee, issued from the tower. "Blest be this morn," said the old knight, "that rises to me, the happiest of my life! My sword springs from its scabbard to meet it:—And ere this good steel be sheathed again," continued he, shaking it sternly; "what deaths may dye its point!"

Wallace shuddered at the ferocity with which his colleague contemplated those horrid features of war from which every humane soldier would seek to turn his thoughts, that he might encounter them with the steadiness of a man, and not the irresolution of a woman. To hail the field of blood with the fierceness of hatred eager for the slaughter of its victim; to know any joy in combat, but that each contest might render another less necessary; did not enter into the imagination of Wallace until he had heard and seen the infuriate Kirkpatrick. He now talked of the coming battle with horrid rapture; and told the young Edwin that he should that day see Loch Lomond red with English blood.

Wallace, offended at such savageness, without answering him drew towards Murray, who had placed himself at the head of his men, and calling to Edwin, ordered him to march at his side. The youth seemed glad of the summons; and Wallace was pleased to observe it, as he thought that a longer stay with one who so grossly overcharged the feelings of honest patriotism, might breed disgust in his innocent mind against a cause which had so furious, and therefore unjust a defender.

"Justice and mercy ever dwell together;" said he to Edwin, who now drew near him; "for universal love is the parent of justice as well as of mercy. But implacable revenge! whence did she spring but from the head of Satan himself?"

Though their cause appeared the same, never were two spirits more discordant than those of Wallace and Kirkpatrick. But Kirkpatrick did not so soon discover the dissimilarity; as it is easier for fairness to descry its opposite, than for foulness to apprehend that any thing can be purer than itself.

The forces being now all drawn out and marshalled according to the preconcerted order, the three commanders, with Wallace at their head, assembled in the van. Ker; Kenneth Mackenzie; and Stephen Ireland, (now returned from Sir John Scott's) covered the rear.

Without molestation they passed through the forest of Glenfinlass. The enemy thought it too desert a region to require a guard of soldiers; and only visiting it at certain seasons to carry off the deer, or to cut down some of those trees for their navy, which had shaded the manly sports of many a Scottish king; no Southron at this time had polluted its sacred borders.

The sun had just risen as they emerged upon the eastern bank of Loch Lomond. The bases of the mountains were yet covered with the dispersing mist of the morning, and were hardly distinguishable from the blue waters of the lake which lashed the shore with a proud yet cheerful violence. The newly awakened sheep bleated from the sloping hills; and the umbrageous herbage dropping dew, seemed glittering with a thousand fairy gems.

"Where is the man that would not fight for such a country!" exclaimed Murray, as he lightly stepped over a slight bridge of interwoven trees which crossed one of the mountain streams:—"this land was not made for slaves. Look at these bulwarks of nature! Every mountain-head which forms this chain of hills, is an impregnable rampart against invasion. If Baliol has possessed but half a heart, Edward might have returned, even worse than Cæsar, from our shores;—without a cockle to decorate his helmet."

"Baliol has found the oblivion he incurred;" returned Wallace, "his son, perhaps, may better deserve the

## The Scottish Chiefs

sceptre of such a country.—Let us cut the way; and he who merits the crown, will soon rush to the goal."

"Then it will not be Edward Baliol;" rejoined Scrymgeour; "I was so unhappy as once to carry a message from his father to England. I there saw the Prince. He had been brought up by King Edward's desire at his court; and so effeminate had he become, that when I was introduced to him, I found him in a perfumed chamber, and lying upon a couch of embroidered velvet. His youthful limbs were clothed in a thin habit of blue taffeta; and his hair, which was fair, and flowing like a woman's, was in the act of being curled by a page who stood behind him. I started, thinking I had, by mistake, been shewn into a lady's apartment. But he called to me; "Scrymgeour," said he "do not be afraid to disturb me—I have been some time awake."

"At this summons I advanced. But to kneel to such a shadow of a Prince when I presented his father's letter, I found I could not; so, merely bowing, I laid it at his feet. He looked at me with an air of surprize: "Boors! boors!" cried he. "Scrymgeour," added he, breaking up the letter which a page, kneeling, had handed to him on a scented cushion; "you know nothing of politeness on your side the Tweed. When I am king, I must bring half a score gentlemen—ushers from Edward's court, to teach you manners."

"To answer such a speech in a proper style, would have been unavailing. My single rebuke could not have un-princed him, and would have ruined myself. So I made no reply; but waited in silence till he had read the letter. "My royal father is most barbarously unmerciful! (exclaimed he) he expects that I will transport myself from these dear hospitable scenes, to the horrid deserts of the north!—Tell him it is impossible. Heavens! Bertram, (said he, turning to the page who crisped his locks) what would the fair Matilda de Valence say to my desertion? —I positively cannot go. Here, Spencer! write it. I am so wearied with last night's revel, I cannot hold a pen today." His secretary advanced to his side; and in the most affected manner he dictated a letter of refusal to his father. When finished he gave it to me to carry; and receiving from him a ring, which he took off his pretty white hand as a mark of graciousness, I took my leave;—only praying that such a puppet might never disgrace the throne of our brave Scottish Kings."

"If such be the tuition of our lords in the court of Edward,—and wise is the policy for his own views!" observed Wallace; "what can we expect even from the Bruce? they were ever a nobler race than the Baliol:—but bad education and luxury will debase the most princely minds."

"I saw neither of them when I was in London;" replied Scrymgeour; "the Earl of Carrick was at his house in Cleaveland; and Robert Bruce, his eldest son, with the English army in Guienne. But they bore a noble character; particularly young Robert, who, notwithstanding the pains which the effeminate Edward of Scotland took to please the fair of the court, carried off both the palm and the myrtle from him. It seems his person and manners are graceful as well as manly; and while the English ladies call him the flower of courtesy; a knight told me, that since he had distinguished himself in the jousts and battles of Guienne, he had received from the fair of that country, the equally flattering appellation of prince of chivalry."

"It would be more to his honour," interrupted Murray, "if he compelled them to acknowledge him as Prince of Scotland. With so much bravery, how can he allow such a civet-cat as Edward Baliol to bear away the title which is his by the double right of blood and virtue?"

"Perhaps," said Wallace, "the young lion only sleepeth!—the time may come when both he and his father will rise from their lethargy and throw themselves at once into the arms of Scotland. Let them win her crown from the usurper who now holds it, and every honest Scot will hail the name of Bruce as his lawful and respected sovereign. To such an end, I look. To stimulate the dormant patriotism of these two Princes, by shewing them a subject leading their people to liberty, is one great end of the victories I seek. Only a brave King can bind the various interests of this distracted country in one; and therefore, for fair freedom's sake, my heart turns towards the Bruces with most anxious hopes."

"For my part," cried Murray, "I have always thought that the lady we will not woo, we have no right to pretend to.—If the Bruces will not be at the pains to snatch Scotland from drowning, I see no reason for making them a present of what will cost us many a wet jacket before we tug her from the waves. He that wins the day, ought to wear the laurel: and so, once for all, I proclaim him king of good old Albin, who will have the glory of driving her oppressors beyond her farthest wall."

Wallace did not hear this last sentiment of Murray's, as it was spoken in a lowered voice in the ear of Kirkpatrick.—"I perfectly agree with you;" was that knight's reply; and in the true Roman style, may the death of every haughty Southron now in Scotland, and as many more as Edward chuses to compliment us with, be the

## The Scottish Chiefs

preliminary games of the coronation!"

Wallace who heard this, turned to Kirkpatrick with a gentle rebuke in his eye; "Balaam blest, when he meant to curse!" said he, "but you curse when you mean to bless. Are not such prayers, mere blasphemies?—for, how can we expect the blessing of the all-gracious God upon our arms, when our invocations are all for the blood of our enemies; and not one solitary prayer is put up for that happy peace which ought to be the aim of all warfare?"

"Blood for blood, is only justice!" cried Murray; "and how can you, noble Wallace, as a Scot and as a man, plead for the villains who have stabbed you to the heart?"

"I plead not for them;" returned Wallace; "the monster who outraged human nature and me, is now in dust. But for the poor wretches, many of whom follow their leaders by force to the field of Scotland, I would not inflict on them the cruelties we now resent. It is not to aggrieve, but to redress, that we carry arms. If we make not this distinction, we turn courage into a crime; and plant disgrace instead of honour upon the warrior's brow."

"I do not understand commiserating the wolves who have so long made havoc with all we value. Methinks" replied Kirkpatrick in a surly tone, "that such maidenly mercy is rather out of place in the mouth of the leader of so many brave men."

Wallace turned to him with a benign smile: "I will answer you, my valiant friend, by adopting your own figure. It is, that these Southron wolves may not confound us with themselves, that I wish to shew in our conduct, rather the generous ardour of the faithful guardian of the fold, than the rapacious fierceness which equals them with the beasts of the desert. As we are men and Scots, let the burthen of our prayers be, the freeing of our country, not the slaughter of our enemies!—The one is an ambition with which angels may sympathise:—The other a horrible desire which claims kindred with devils."

"In some cases this may be;" replied Sir Roger, a little reconciled to the argument; "but not in mine. My injury yet burns upon my cheek.—And as nothing but the life blood of Cressingham can quench it, I will listen no more to your doctrine till I am revenged. That done, I will not forget your lesson."

"Generous Kirkpatrick!" exclaimed Wallace, "nothing that is really cruel, can dwell with such manly candour. Say what you will, I can trust your heart after this moment!"

"Do not trust it too far;" continued Kirkpatrick, "for I will answer for it, that it pays poor lady mercy a very jade's trick, should it mount Dumbarton walls and get into company with De Valence, or any other jailor of our brave Lord Mar!"

They had crossed the river Ennerie; and were issuing from the narrow ridge of hills between which they had been pent for some miles, when Wallace, pointing to a stupendous rock which rose in solitary magnificence in the midst of a vast plain, exclaimed, "There is Dumbarton castle! Earl Donald must repass this river to-morrow with us; and then we shall have made ourselves a power:—for that citadel holds the fetters of Scotland; and if we break them at this lock, every minor link will easily give way."

The men uttered a shout of anticipated triumph at this sight. And proceeding forwards, they soon came in view of the fortifications which helmeted the rock. As they more nearly approached, they discovered that it had two summits; being in a manner cleft in twain; the one side, rising in a pyramidal form; and the other, of a more level shape, sustained the ponderous buildings of the fortress.

It was dusk when the little army arrived in the rear of a close thicket which skirted the eastern dyke of the castle, and reached to an immense depth on the plain. On this spot Wallace rested his men; and while they lay thus in ambush till the appointed time of attack, he perceived through an opening in the wood the gleaming of the troops on the ramparts, and fires beginning to light on a lonely watch-tower which crowned the pinnacle of the highest rock.

"Poor fools!" exclaimed Murray, "like the rest of their brethren of clay, they look abroad for evils, and prepare not for those which are even at their doors!"

"That beacon-fire," cried Scrymgeour, "shall light us to their chambers; and for once we thank them for their providence."

"That beacon-fire," whispered Edwin to Wallace, "shall light me to honour! to-night, by your agreement, I shall call you brother, or lie dead on those walls; for their summit, I will gain!"

"Edwin," said Wallace, "act as you say; and deserve, not only to be called my brother, but to be the first patriot knight!"

He then turned towards the lines; and giving his orders to each division, directed them to seek repose on the

## The Scottish Chiefs

surrounding heaps of growing heather, till the now glowing moon should have sunk her tell-tale light in the western waves.

CHAP. V.

The weary troops obeyed their general. Wallace himself, having seen all depart, reclined along a pile of moss-grown stones, which, in the days of the renowned Fingal, had covered the body of some valiant Morven hero. He fixed his wakeful eyes on the castle, now illuminated in every part by the fullness of the moon's lustre, and considered which would be most assailable by the scaling ladders he had prepared. Every side seemed a precipice. The Leven surrounded it on the north and the west; the Clyde, broad as a sea, on the south. The only place that seemed at all accessible was the side next the dyke behind which he lay. Here the ascent to the castellated part of the rock, because more perpendicular than the others, was less guarded by outworks: and by this, he determined to make the attempt as soon as the setting moon should declare it to be past midnight, and have involved the garrison in the same darkness with himself.

"Under that veil, O! power of justice," cried he, looking towards the yet brilliant heavens; "let us march forward in thy light! let us conquer in thy strength! and what will then avail ten thousand foes, if thou art with us!"

While he yet spoke, he thought he heard a footstep approaching him with a swift though stealing motion. He raised himself, and laying his hand on his sword, saw a figure wrapped in a cloak advancing cautiously towards him.—"Who art thou?" demanded Wallace.

"A faithful Scot," was the reply.

Wallace recognised the voice of Edwin. —"What has disturbed you? Why do you not take rest with the others?"

"That we may have the surer to-morrow;" replied the youth; "I am just returned from the summit of yon rock."

"How!" interrupted Wallace, "have you scaled it alone, and are returned in safety?"

Wallace caught him in a transport in his arms; "Intrepid, glorious boy! tell me for what purpose did you thus hazard your precious life?"

"I wished to learn its most pregnable part;" replied Edwin, his young heart beating with triumph at these encomiums from his commander; "and particularly where in the castle the good Earl is confined, that we might make the attack directly to the point."

"And have you been successful, my brave Edwin?" demanded Wallace, with an impatience which could only be equalled by his admiration of the zeal of the young soldier.

"I have," was his answer. "Lord Mar and his lady are kept in a black square tower which stands in the cleft between the two summits of the rock. It is on every side, not only surrounded by embattled walls which flank the ponderous buttresses of this huge dungeon, but the space on which it stands is bulwarked at each end by a stone curtain of fifteen feet high, guarded by turrets full of armed men."

"And yet by this side, you suppose we must ascend?" said Wallace.

"Certainly; for if you attempt it on the west, there we should have to scale the watch-tower cliff, which is nearly twice as high as the other, and from the danger and length of the ascent, we could not all accomplish it, before day. Should we take the south, and gain the lower rock; we must cut through the whole garrison, before we could reach the Earl. And this side the dyke, (which rather should be called a deep slimy morass,) lies too near the foot of the rock to admit an approach without the greatest danger. But on the north, where I descended; by wading through part of the Leven, and climbing from cliff to cliff, I have every hope that you may succeed.

"I stole from the thicket on your dispersing the men to their rest; and under this deep green plaid, so mixed myself with the weeds at the bottom of the rock, that I very securely made my circuit round, without attracting observation. The south certainly seemed the most easy of access; and by that side I ascended. Having gained the height, I clambered behind a buttress, whose shadow the moon cast in such blackness upon the wall, that, obscured by the darkness, I crept safely through a crenelle in the parapet, and dropping gently inwards, on my hands and knees, still keeping the shadowy side of the battlements, proceeded cautiously along, even undiscovered by the sentinels who guarded this side of the fortress.

"I soon arrived at the open square before the citadel. It was yet occupied by some gay groupes of Southron officers, who were walking to and fro under the light of the moon. In hopes of gaining information by listening to

## The Scottish Chiefs

their discourse, I got behind a box of arrows, and as they passed backwards and forwards, distinctly heard them jesting each other about divers fair prisoners whom they had possessed at various times; and the conversation ended, with a long debate whether or no the icy coldness of their governor, the haughty De Valence, would be thawed by the majestic beauties of the countess of Mar. A thousand insolent things were said on the subject; but suffice it to say that I gathered from their discourse that De Valence treated the Earl and Countess very severely; and that they were confined in the black tower in the cleft.

"Having learnt all I expected from them, I speeded my way under the friendly shadow, towards the other side of the citadel, and arrived just as the guard approached to relieve the sentinels of the northern postern. I kept close behind a buttress, and happily overheard the word of the night as it was given to the new watch. This providential circumstance save my life:—finding no mode of regress from this place but by the postern, or into a small tower, the door of which was open, and take my chance for getting out on the other side; I decided at once for the tower—and stealing in, found it full of spare arms, with two or three vacant couches in different corners, where, I suppose the officers on guard occasionally repose. Several watch cloaks lay about. I readily apprehended how the discovery might be useful to me; and throwing one over my shoulders, I dropped from a large embrasure in the wall on to a declivity, which shelved down to the cleft wherein I now saw the black tower.

"I had scarcely lit on firm ground, when a sentinel, followed by two others with presented pikes, approached me and demanded the word. Pembroke—was my rapid reply. "Why leap the embrasure?" said one. "Why not enter by the postern?" demanded another. The conversation of the officers had given me a hint. "Love, my brave comrade, (replied I) seldom chuses even ways. I go on a message from a young ensign in the Keep, to one of the Scottish damsels in yonder tower. Delay me, and his vengeance will fall upon us all."—"Cupid speed you, my good lad!" was their reply; and with a lightened step I hastened towards the tower.

"Not deeming it safe, or needful, to seek an interview with any of the Earl's family, I merely crept along its base and across the works till I reached the high wall that blocks up the egress from the north. It is constructed of fragments of rock; and for the convenience of the garrison to mount to precipitate any assailants down the height, who should be daring enough to scale it, a sloping platform leads from within up to the top of the wall. On the other side it is perpendicular. A solitary sentinel stood here, and how to pass him was my next device. To have attacked him would have been a desperate hazard, as he was only one of the close chain of guards which is planted at certain distances all round the interior of the fortress. Hence his voice, had it been raised in the least, would have called half a score to his assistance, and I must have been seized on the instant.

"I bethought me of my former excuse, and remembering the flask of spirits which Ireland had put into my pouch on leaving Glenfinlass, I affected to be a little intoxicated, and staggering up to the man, accosted him as if I were a servant belonging to the garrison. He did not seem to doubt me, and holding out my flask to him, I said that a pretty girl at the tower had not only given me a long draught of the same good liquor, but had filled my bottle, that I might not lack amusement while her companion, one of the Lady Mar's ladies in waiting, was tying up a true lover's knot, to send by me to my master in the garrison. He believed my tale the more readily as I put the flask into his hand, and bidding him drink, told him not to spare it, it was a chilly night, and I should get more where it came from. My honest Southron did as I bade him, and soon saw the bottom of the flask. The spirit had the effect I wished, he became flustered and impatient of his duty: and I, yawning and telling him I was sleepy, said I would go to the top of the wall, and there, lit by the lamp of the moon, sleep like an eagle on the giddy height, if he would move a little forward on his post, and watch the coming of the pretty Scot, who was to bring me the token for my master. The fellow liked no better sport, and reeling and tumbling I gained the top of the wall.

"I threw myself along it, and seeing my dupe already several paces from me and looking towards the tower, I dropt from a height of fifteen feet, to the manifest danger of my limbs; but thank heaven I lit amidst a bed of friendly weeds. Being unhurt, I clambered down the steep with less difficulty and greater rapidity, than I had expected; and now stand before you to offer it as my humble opinion, that the north point of the rock is the most assailable."

"And your opinion shall be followed." replied Wallace, "the intrepidity of this action merits that every confidence should be put in the result of your observations. Your safe return is a pledge that our design is approved. And when we go in the strength of Heaven, who can doubt the issue! This night, when the Lord of battles puts that fortress into our hands, you shall mount by my side, and before the whole of our little army

## The Scottish Chiefs

receive that knighthood from my hand which you have so richly deserved. Such, my truly dear brother, my noble Edwin, shall be the reward of your virtue and toil!"

Wallace would now have sent him to repose himself before the attack was to be made; but animated by the success of his adventure, and exulting in the honour which was so soon to stamp a sign of this exploit upon him for ever, he told his leader, that he felt no want of rest, and would rather take on him the office of arousing the other captains to their stations, as the moon, their preconcerted signal, was approaching its setting.

When Kirkpatrick, Murray, and Scrymgeour arrived, to their great admiration, Wallace recounted the exploit of his young soldier; and then repeated the plans which the alteration in his mode of attack had caused him to make. These being approved, every man withdrew to call up his slumbering followers. In a few minutes they were under arms; and being marshalled according to Wallace's new orders, he led them forward in silence through the water, and along the beach which lay between the rock and the Leaven. Arriving at the base just as the moon set, they began to ascend. To do this in the dark, redoubled the difficulty; but as Wallace had the place of every accessible stone accurately described to him by Edwin (whom he had sent as his representative on an equally arduous duty) he went confidently forward, followed by his Lanerkers.

He and they, being the first to mount, fixed and held the tops of the scaling ladders, while Kirkpatrick and Scrymgeour with their men gradually ascended and gained the height at the bottom of the wall. Here, planting themselves in the fissures of the rock, under the impenetrable darkness of the night (for the moon had not only set, but the stars were obscured by thick clouds) they awaited the signal from Murray's detachment, for the attack.

Meanwhile, Edwin as guide, led Lord Andrew with his followers, and the Fraser men, round by the western side to mount the watch tower rock and seize the few men who kept the beacon. As a signal of having succeeded, they were immediately to smother the flame on the top of the tower, and then descend the height towards the garrison, to meet Wallace before the prison of the Earl of Mar.

While the Lanerkers in deadly stillness, with their eyes fixed on the burning beacon, watched with beating hearts the wished for signal, Wallace, by the aid of grappling irons, which he struck into the firm soil that occupied the cracks in the rock, drew himself up, almost parallel with the top of the great wall, which stretched along like a vast curtain, clasping the bases of the two hills. He listened: not a voice was to be heard in the garrison, of all the legions which he had so lately seen glittering on its battlements. It was an awful pause. Now was the moment when Scotland was to make her first essay for freedom; should it fail, ten thousand bolts of iron would be added to her chains! Should it succeed, liberty and happiness were the almost certain consequences!

He looked up; and fixing his eyes on the beacon-flame, thought he saw the figures of men pass before it—the next moment all was darkness—he sprung on the top of the wall; and feeling by the touch of hands about his feet that his brave followers had already mounted their ladders, with his sword firmly grasped, he leaped down on the ground within. As he lit on his feet, he struck against the sentinel who was just passing, and by the violence of the shock struck him to the earth; but the man as he fell, catching Wallace round the waist, dragged him after him, and with a vociferous cry shouted murder.

Several sentinels ran with levelled pikes to the spot; the adjacent turrets emptied themselves of their armed inhabitants; and fell all on Wallace, just as he had extricated himself from the grasp of the prostrate soldier.

"Who are you?" demanded they.

"Your enemy," was the stern reply; and two fell at his feet with one stroke of his sword.

"Alarm!—Treason!" was the outcry of the rest as they aimed their random strokes at the conquering chief. But he was now assisted by the vigorous arm of Ker and of several Lanerkers; who, having cleared the wall, were by his side, dealing about blows in the darkness which filled the air with groans, and strewed the ground with the dying and the dead.

One or two Southrons, whose courage was not equal to their caution, had fled to arouse the garrison; and just as the whole of Wallace's men had leaped the wall and rallied to his support, the inner ballium gate burst open, and a legion of foes, bearing torches, and in battle array, issued forth.—With horrible threatenings they came on; and in one moment surrounded Wallace and his little company. —But his soul brightened in danger, and his men stood firm with fixed pikes, receiving without injury the assault; while, their weapons being longer than the enemy's, the Southrons, unconscious of the circumstance, rushed upon their points, incurring the death they meant to give. Wallace seeing their disorder, ordered the pikes to be dropped, and his men to charge sword in hand. Terrible was now the havoc; for the desperate Scots grappling each to his foe with a fatal hold, let not go till the



## The Scottish Chiefs

piercing shriek, or the agonizing groan of their victims, convinced them that the steely death had entered their vitals. Wallace stood in front, making a dreadful passage through the falling ranks, while the tremendous sweep of his sword flashing in the intermitting light, warned the survivors where the avenging blade would next fall. A horrid vacuity was made in the lately thronged spot:—It seemed not the slaughter of a mortal arm, but as if the destroying angel himself were there; and with one blast of his desolating brand, had laid all in ruin. The platform was cleared; and the fallen torches lying, some half extinguished, and others flaming on the ground by the sides of their dead holders, shewed, by their uncertain gleams, a few terrified wretches seeking safety in flight. The same lurid rays, casting a transitory light on the iron gratings of the Black Tower, informed Wallace that the heat of conflict had drawn him to the prison of the Earl.

"We are now near the end of this night's work!" cried he, "let us press forward to give the brave Earl liberty!"

"Liberty, and Lord Mar!" cried Kirkpatrick, rushing onwards. He was immediately followed by his own men; but not so quickly but that the guard in the tower, hearing the outcry, turned out from the flanking gates, and surrounding him, took him prisoner.

"If there be might in your arms," roared he with the voice of a lion, "men of Loch-Doine rescue your leader!"

They hurried forward with yells of defiance; but the whole garrison, awakened by the flying wretches from the defeat, turned out all its troops; and with De Valence himself at their head, taking Kirkpatrick's men in flank, would have overpowered them, had not Wallace, pressing on with his sixty heroes (for each felt within himself that his whole soul was in his arm, while heaven guided the stroke) in that faith, a host in themselves, they flew forward, and with vehement acclamations, shouted, "Wallace, and Freedom!"— "Death for the Traitor!" was the loud and terrible reply.

Pikes struck against corselets, swords rung on helmets; and the ponderous battle-axe falling with the weight of fate cleft the uplifted target in twain. Blood seemed to pour from every side; and the dripping hands of Kirkpatrick, as Wallace tore him from the grasp of the enemy, proclaimed that he had bathed his vengeance in the very stream. Kirkpatrick on being released, and shaking his ensanguined arms, burst into a horrid laugh: "The work speeds!—Now through the heart of the governor!"

As he spoke, Wallace lost him from his side again: and again, by the shouts of the Southrons, who cried "no quarter for the fiend!" he learnt that he was retaken. That merciless cry was the death-bell of their own doom. It directed Wallace to the spot; and throwing himself and his brethren of Lanerk into the midst of the band which held the chief—Kirkpatrick was rescued, and again into his hands. But thousands seemed now to surround him. To do this generous deed, he had advanced farther than he ought; and himself and his brave followers must have been slain, had he not fallen back, and covering their rear with the black tower, all who had the hardihood to approach, fell under the weight of the Scottish sword.

Scrymgeour, at the head of the desperate Loch-Doiners and his own men, in vain attempted to reach his surrounded countrymen; and fearful of being taken, or of losing the royal standard, he was turning to make a valiant retreat, when Murray and Edwin, having disengaged their men from the precipices of the beacon rock, and guided by the noise of the battle, rushed into the midst of it, striking their shields, and uttering the inspiring slogan of "Wallace and Freedom!" It was re-echoed by every Scot; those that were flying returned; they who sustained the conflict hailed the cry with braced sinews; and the terrible thunder of the word, pealing from rank to rank, struck a terror into De Valence's men which made them pause.

On that short moment turned the crisis of their fate. Wallace cut his way through the dismayed Southrons; who, hearing the reiterated shouts of the fresh reinforcement, knew not whether its strength might not be thousands instead of hundreds, and panic-struck, they became an easy prey to their enemies. Surrounded, mixed with the assailants, they knew not friends from foes; and each individual's thoughts being now bent on flight, without regard to their fellows, they all indiscriminately cut to right and left, wounding as many of their own men as of the foe; and finally, after slaughtering half their companions, some few escaped through the small posterns of the garrison; the inner ballia gate being occupied by part of the Frazers, with Ireland at their head.

The whole of the field being now cleared, Wallace ordered the gates of the Black Tower to be forced. But at the main entrance resistance was still made. A strong guard was within; and as the assailants drew near, every means were used to render their assault abortive. As the Scots pressed forward to obey their commander, stones and different heavy metals were thrown down upon their heads; and a piece of iron from the machicolation over the gate, struck the right arm of Wallace motionless to his side. Not in the least obstructed by this accident, he

## The Scottish Chiefs

took his sword in his left; and ordering his men to drive a large beam of wood which lay on the ground, against the hinges of the door, it burst open—and the whole party rushed into the great hall.

A short, sanguinary, but decisive conflict took place. The hauberk and green plaid of Wallace were dyed from head to foot with red. His own brave blood, and the ferocious stream from his enemies, mingled in one horrid hue upon his streaming hands.

"Wallace! Wallace!" cried the stentorian lungs of Kirkpatrick. In a moment Wallace was at his side, and found him struggling with two men who had already forced him to the ground. The dagger that would have terminated his existence, was aimed at the very instant in which Wallace laid the holder of it dead across the body of the fallen knight; and catching the other assailant by the throat, even with his weakened arm he threw him prostrate at his feet.

"Spare me, for the honour of knighthood!" cried the conquered.

"For my honour you shall die!" cried Kirkpatrick, who had extricated himself from the slain, and starting up, almost thrust Wallace from off their supplicating enemy. His sword was already at the heart of the Englishman. Wallace beat it back. "Hold Kirkpatrick! He is my prisoner, and I give him his life."

"You know not what you do," cried the old knight in a fury, and struggling with Wallace to release his sword arm; "This is De Valence! you would not spare our deadliest foe!"

"Yes, even Edward in that position!"

"Even Edward's thanks will await you, noble chief," cried the panting and hard pressed De Valence, "if you grant me life!"

"Sooner take my own, Wallace!" cried the determined Kirkpatrick, fixing his foot on the neck of the prostrate Earl; and again trying to wrench his right hand from the grasp of Wallace.

"By all the powers of mercy, I swear," cried Wallace, "that he shall strike through my heart who aims a blow at any fallen Southron that I hear beg for quarter. It is their absence we want, not their lives And besides, this Earl being our prisoner will be of more advantage to us than his death."

"Our safety is his destruction, Wallace!" cried Kirkpatrick, who enraged at this opposition, violently pushing his commander, (who little expected such an action) from off the body of the Earl, gave that wily courtier so much advantage, that catching Kirkpatrick by the leg which pressed upon him, he overthrew him to the ground, and by a sudden spring starting up, turned quickly on Wallace, who he feared, notwithstanding his clemency, would stop him, and struck his dagger into his side. All this was done in an instant. But Wallace did not fall; staggering a few paces with the weapon sticking in the wound, he was so surprised by the baseness of the action, as not to give the alarm before De Valence had disappeared.

The flying Earl took his course through a narrow passage between the works, and proceeding swiftly along, descended the rock towards the south, where issuing at one of the outer ballium gates, (that part of the castle being now solitary, as all the men had been drawn from the walls to the contest within;) he made his escape in a fisher's boat across the Clyde.

Meanwhile, Wallace having recovered himself just as his own men brought in lighted torches from the lower apartments of the tower, he saw Sir Roger Kirkpatrick leaning sternly on his blood-dripping sword, and the young Edwin coming forward in garments too near the hue of his own. Andrew Murray was already by his side. Wallace's hand was upon the hilt of the dagger which the ungrateful De Valence had left in his breast.—"You are wounded! you are slain!" cried Murray, in a voice of the most anguished consternation. Edwin stood motionless with horror.

"That dagger!" exclaimed Scrymgeour.

"Has done nothing," replied Wallace, "but let me a little more blood." As he spoke he drew it out, and thrusting the corner of his scarf into his bosom, staunched the wound.

"So is your mercy rewarded!" exclaimed Kirkpatrick.

"So am I true to my duty," returned Wallace, "though De Valence is a traitor to his!"

"You treated him as a man," replied Kirkpatrick, "but now you find he is a wild beast! and when he next falls into our hands, I hope you will allow me to fulfil my duty in ridding the world of such a monster!"

"Your eagerness, my brave friend," returned Wallace, "has lost him as a prisoner. If not for humanity or honour, for policy's sake, we ought to have spared his life and detained him as an hostage for our own countrymen in England."

## The Scottish Chiefs

Kirkpatrick, remembering how his violence had released the Earl, looked down abashed. Wallace perceiving it, continued—"But let us not abuse our time in discoursing of the coward. He is gone; the fortress is ours; and our first measure must be to guard it from surprise."

As he spoke his eyes fell upon Edwin, who, having recovered from the shock of Murray's exclamation, was listening with anxiety. "Brave youth!" cried Wallace, beckoning him towards him; "you, who at the imminent risque of your life explored these heights, that you might render our assent more sure; you, who have fought like a young lion in this unequal contest; here, in the face of all your valiant comrades, receive that knight-hood which rather derives lustre from your virtues than gives additional consequence to your name."

Edwin, with a bounding heart bent his knee; and Wallace giving him the hallowed accolade, the young knight rose from his position with all the roses of his springing fame glowing in his countenance. Scrymgeour presented him the knightly girdle, which he unbraced from his own loins; and while the happy boy received the sword to which it was attached, he exclaimed with animation: "While I follow the example before my eyes, I shall never draw it in an unjust cause, nor ever sheath it in a just one."

"Go then;" returned Wallace, smiling an approval of this sentiment, "while work is to be done, I will keep my knight to the toil; go, and with twenty of my Lanerkers, guard the wall by which we ascended. We must not be surprised, where we surprised."

Edwin disappeared in an instant: and Wallace dispatching detachments to occupy other parts of the garrison, took a torch in his hand, and turning to Murray, proposed to seek the Earl. Lord Andrew was already at the iron door which led from the hall to the principal stairs.

"We must have our friendly battering ram here!" cried he; "a close prisoner do they make my uncle when even the inner doors are bolted on him!"

The men brought the beam, and striking it with all their strength against the iron, it burst open with the noise of thunder.—Shrieks from within followed the sound. The women of Lady Mar, who had not known what to suppose during the uproar of the conflict, and the short but horrid stillness that succeeded it, now hearing the door forced instead of being opened in the usual manner, expected nothing less than that some new enemies were advancing; and giving themselves up to despair, they flew into the room where the Countess sat, in equal though less declamatory terror.

At the first shouts of the Scots, when they began the attack, the Earl had started from his couch.—"That is not peace!" said he, "there is some surprise!"

"Alas, from whom?" returned Lady Mar; "who would venture to attack a fortress like this, garrisoned with thousands?"

The cry was repeated with the additional acclamations of liberty or death!

"It is the slogan of Sir William Wallace!" cried he, "I shall be free! O, for a sword!—hear! hear!"

As the shouts redoubled, and mingling with the various clangors of battle, drew nearer the tower, the impatience of the Earl could not be restrained. Hope and eagerness seemed to have dried up his wounds and new-strung every nerve; and unarmed as he was, he rushed from the apartment and flew down the stairs which led to the iron door. He found it so firmly fastened by bars and padlocks, that it was not to be moved. Again he ascended to his terrified wife; who, conscious of the little obligation Wallace owed to her, dreaded as much to see her husband's hopes realized, as to find herself yet more rigidly the prisoner of the haughty De Valence.

"Joanna!" cried he, "the arm of God is with us.—My prayers are heard; Scotland will yet be free. Hear those groans, those shouts.—Victory! Victory!"

As he thus re-echoed the loud cry of triumph, uttered by the Scots as they burst open the outer gate of the tower, and rushed in to the seizure of De Valence, the foundations of the building shook, and Lady Mar, almost in a state of insensibility from terror, received the exhausted body of her over-joyed husband into her arms. He fainted from an excess of transport his weakened frame was unable to bear; and he had just opened his eyes, and was beginning to revive, when the panic-struck women (who had all this time been crowded into their own apartments) ran shrieking to their mistress.

The Countess could not speak, but sat pale and motionless, supporting his head on her bosom. At this instant, guided by the noise, Lord Andrew flew into the room, and rushing towards his uncle, fell at his feet.—"Liberty! liberty!" was all he could say. His words pierced the ear of the Earl like a voice from heaven; and looking up, without a word, he threw his arms around the neck of his nephew.

## The Scottish Chiefs

Tears relieved the contending feelings of the Countess. And the women, recognizing the young Lord of Bothwell by the light of the torches which now glared through the chamber, retired into a distant corner, well assured that they had now no cause of fear.

The Earl rested but a moment on the panting breast of his nephew: and looking up to seek the mighty leader of the band, he saw Wallace enter, with the firm step of security and triumph in his eyes.

"Ever my deliverer!" cried the venerable Mar, stretching forth his arms. The next moment he held Wallace to his breast, and remembering all he had lost for his sake since they parted, a soldier's heart melted, and he burst into tears. "Wallace, my preserver! Thou victim for Scotland and for me—or rather, thou chosen of Heaven, who, by the sacrifice of all thou didst hold dear on earth, art made a blessing to thy country! Receive my thanks, and my heart."

Wallace felt all in his soul which the Earl meant to imply; but recovering the calmed tone of his mind before he was released from the embrace of his friend; when he raised himself, and replied to the acknowledgments of the Countess, it was with a serene though glowing countenance.

She, when she had glanced from the eager entrance and action of her nephew, to the advancing hero, looked as Venus did when she beheld the God of War, rise from a field of blood. She started at the appearance of Wallace: But it was not his garments dropping gore, nor the blood-stained faulchion in his hand, that caused the new sensation: It was the figure, breathing youth and manhood, it was the face, where every noble passion of the heart had stamped themselves on his perfect features; it was his air, where majesty and sweet entrancing grace mingled in lovely union. They were all these that struck at once upon the sight of Lady Mar, and made her exclaim within herself. "This is a God! this is the hero that is to humble Edward—that is to bless—whom?" was her thought, "Oh! no woman! let him be a creature enshrined and holy, for no female heart to love!"

This passed through the mind of the Countess in less time than it has been registered: and when she saw him clasped in her husband's arms, she longed to throw herself on his neck, and there utter all her admiration in a paroxysm of tears. "Helen, thou wert right," thought she, "thy gratitude was prophetic of a matchless object: while I, wretch that I am, even whispered to myself, that while I gave the information against my husband, this man, the cause of all, might be secured and perhaps slain!"

Just as the last idea struck her, Wallace rose from the embrace of his venerable friend, and met the rivetted eye of the Countess. She stammered forth a few expressions of obligation: and Wallace attributing her confusion to the surprise of the moment, replied to her respectfully, and then turning again to the Earl, briefly related the events of the night.

The good old veteran's joy was unbounded, when he found that a handful of Scots had put two thousand Southrons to flight, and gained entire possession of the castle. Wallace having satisfied the anxious questions of his brave auditor, and being nearly overpowered by the eloquent gratitude of the Countess, who had now recovered herself, gladly perceived the morning light paling the fires of the torches. He rose from his seat. "I shall take a temporary leave of you my lord," said he to the Earl, "I must now visit my brave comrades at their stations; and see that the colours of Scotland are planted on the citadel."

CHAP. VI.

As soon as Wallace withdrew, Lady Mar, who had detained Murray, whispered to him, while a blush stained her cheek, that she should like to be present at the planting of the standard. Lord Mar heard her, and saying that fear of alarming her spirits by proposing to leave her for even so short a time, had alone prevented his expressing a similar desire, he declared his willingness to accompany her to the spot, and added, "I can be supported thither by the arm of our Andrew, for sorry should I be to be absent from so glorious a sight."

Murray, though eager as themselves to be of the party, yet hesitated. "It will be impossible for my aunt to go: the hall below and the whole of the ground before the tower are strewn with the slain."

"Let them be cleared away, then," said she hastily, "for I cannot consent to be deprived of a spectacle so honourable to my country."

Murray regarded the pitiless indifference with which she gave this order with amazement: "To do that, madam," said he, "is beyond my power, as the whole ceremony would be completed long before I could clear the earth of half its bleeding load. I will rather seek a passage for you by some other way."

Before the Earl could make any remark on this part of the conversation, Murray disappeared; and after wandering about the lower part of the tower in unavailing search for a way to the inner ballium, he met Sir Roger Kirkpatrick issuing from a small door, which being in shadow, he had hitherto overlooked. It led through the ballium to the platform before the citadel. Lord Andrew returned to his uncle and aunt, and informing them of this discovery, gave his arm to Lord Mar, while Kirkpatrick led forward the agitated Countess. As they proceeded, Murray looked behind, and observing her tremble as she walked, he believed that he had wronged his aunt in supposing that her order had been given from inhumanity. Her present agitation was doubtless the effect of a compassionate dread of meeting the objects he had described, and internally he begged her pardon for his hasty aspersion of her heart.

As they approached the platform of the citadel, Wallace having been joined by Sir Alexander Scrymgeour, had already gained the summit. The standard of Edward was yet flying. He looked at it for a moment, and then laying his hand on the staff, "Down, thou red dragon," cried he, "and learn to bow before the Giver of all Victory!" As he spoke, he rent it from the roof, and casting it over the battlements, planted the Lion of Scotland in its stead.

As the vast evolvments floated on the air, the cry of triumph, the loud clarion of victory, burst from every heart, horn, and trumpet below. It was a shout that pierced the skies, and entered the soul of Wallace with a bliss which seemed a promise of immortality.

"O God!" cried he, still grasping the staff, and looking up to heaven; "we got not this in possession through our own might; but thy right hand and the light of thy countenance overthrew the enemy! Thine the conquest, thine the glory!"

"And thus we consecrate the day to thee, O! power of heaven!" rejoined Scrymgeour, "let this standard be thine own, and whithersoever we bear it the result will be victory!"

Wallace dropping on his knee, crossed it with its sword, in token that he subscribed to the vow; and rising again, took Sir Alexander by the hand: "My brave friend," said he, "we have here planted the tree of liberty in Scotland. Should I die in its defence, swear to bury me under its branches, swear that no enslaved ground shall cover my remains."

"I swear," cried Scrymgeour, laying his crossed hands upon the arm of Wallace; "by the blood of my brave ancestors whose valour gave me the name I bear, by the cross of Saint Andrew, and by your valiant self, never to sheath my sword while I have life in my body, until Scotland be free!"

"And so I swear!" cried Murray, who had impatiently broke from his uncle, to partake in the martial rites which the parapets of the citadel partially obscured: "And moreover," added the gay chieftain, "I vow to make mince-meat of every man's son in this castle who does not, on our going down, join in the oath!"

The colours fixed, Wallace and his brave colleagues descended the tower; and approached the Earl and Countess, who sat on a stone bench at the end of the platform. The Countess had sent for the standard of England, which she saw fall at a little distance from her, and having ordered it to be disengaged from its staff, was wrapping it together to preserve as a trophy, when Wallace appeared from the citadel. She rose as he drew near;

## The Scottish Chiefs

Lord Mar caught him by the hand with an expression of gratulation in his eyes that was unutterable; her ladyship spoke, hardly conscious of what she said; and Wallace putting the Earl's arm through that of Kirkpatrick, proposed to him to retire with Lady Mar into the citadel, where she would be more suitably lodged than in the black tower. The Countess returned a ready assent to this proposal, being delighted by such a mark of particular attention from their deliverer; and the Earl was obeying her movement, when suddenly stopping, he exclaimed to Wallace.—"But where is that wondrous boy who you said was your dauntless pilot over these perilous rocks? Let me give him a soldier's thanks."

Wallace, happy to be so reminded of a pleasure which had escaped him amidst his pressing duties, beckoned Edwin, who, just relieved from his guard, was standing at some distance. He took him by the hand, and putting it into that of the Earls; "Here," said he, "is my knight of fifteen! and last night he proved himself more worthy of his spurs than many a man who has received them from the hands of a King."

"He shall then wear those of a King;" rejoined the Lord Mar, unbuckling from his feet a pair of golden spurs;—"these were fastened on my heels by our great King Alexander, at the battle of Largs. I had intended them for my only son: But the first knight in the cause of rescued Scotland, doubles that blessing; he is the son of my heart and soul!"

As he spoke he would have prest the young hero to his breast, but Edwin, trembling with excess of emotion, slid down upon his knees, and clasping the Earl's hand to his heart, said, in a hardly audible voice.—"Receive and pardon the run-away son of your sister Ruthven!"

"What?" exclaimed the veteran, "is it Edwin Ruthven that has brought me this weight of glory?—Come to my arms, thou dearest child of my dearest Janet!"

The uncle and nephew were folded in each others embrace. Lady Mar wept; and Wallace, unable to bear the remembrances which such a scene pressed upon his heart, turned away towards the battlements. Edwin murmured a short explanation in the ear of his uncle; and then rising from his arms, with his beautiful face glittering like an April day in tears, allowed his gay cousin Murray to buckle the royal spurs on his feet. The rite over, he kissed Lord Andrew's hand in token of his acknowledgment, and called on Sir William Wallace to bless the new honours conferred on his knight.

Wallace turned round, and stretching forth his hand to Edwin, with a smile which partook more of heaven than earth, said; "Have we not performed our mutual promises? I brought you to the spot where you were to reveal your name; and you have declared it to me by the voice of glory!—come then, my brother, let us leave your uncle awhile to seek his repose."

As he spoke, he bowed to the Countess, and Edwin joyfully taking his arm, they walked together towards the eastern postern.

The Earl, agitated with the delightful surprise of thus meeting his favourite sister's son, (a child whom he had never seen since its infancy, and who from its delicate constitution was intended for the church) and exhausted by the variety of his late emotions, readily acquiesced in a proposal for rest, and leaning on Lord Andrew, proceeded to the citadel.

The Countess had other attractions; and lingering at the side of the rough Knight of Torthorald, she looked back; and when she saw the object of her gaze disappear through the gates which flew open before him, she sighed; and turning to her conductor, walked by him in silence till they joined her husband in the hall of the Keep.—Murray led the way into the apartments lately occupied by De Valence. They were furnished with all the luxury of a Southron nobleman. Lady Mar, with no inconsiderable degree of pleasure, cast her eyes round the splendid chamber, and seated herself on one of its tapestried couches. The Earl, not marking whether it were of silk or of rushes, placed himself beside her; and Murray drew a stool towards them; while Kirkpatrick, tired of his gallant duty, hastily bowing to the Countess, abruptly took his leave.

Lord Mar and his wife being left with Murray, she reclined her thoughtful head upon the arm of the couch, and the Earl laid his hand upon the shoulder of his nephew.

"My dear Andrew," said he, "in the midst of this proud rejoicing for myself and for Scotland, there is yet a canker at my heart. Remove it—and tell me that my beloved Helen, when she disappeared in the tumult at Bothwell, was under your protection?"

"She was;" replied Murray; "and I thank the holy Saint Fillan, she is now in the sanctuary of his church."

Murray then recounted to the Earl the events which had happened to him from the moment of his withdrawing

## The Scottish Chiefs

behind the arras, to his confiding the English soldier with the iron box to the care of the prior. Lord Mar sighed heavily when he spoke of that mysterious casket. "It is well," said he, "that it is safe. Whatever it contains, it has drawn after it much evil and much good. The domestic peace of Wallace was ruined by it, and my preservation effected; and the spirit which now restores Scotland to herself was raised by his wrongs!"

"Heaven knows what is in that Pandora-box;" interrupted Murray, "but I would not open it were I even sure the fairest lady in the land would leap out and bless me with her charms! they talk of relics, but I guess some devil is at the bottom of it; and I am glad that the good Saint Fillan has him under lock and key."

"I do not want to remove him;" said the Earl forcing a smile; "but tell me, do you think my daughter is equally safe so near a garrison of the enemy?"

"Surely my lord," said the Countess, suddenly remembering the enthusiasm with which Helen had regarded even the unknown Wallace; "surely you would not bring that tender child into a scene like this! rather send a messenger to convey her secretly to Thirlestane, where with her sister, she may be safe under the protection of her grandfather."

The Earl acquiesced in her opinion; and saying that he would consult with Wallace about the securest mode of travel for his daughter, he again turned to Lord Andrew to learn farther of their late proceedings. But the Countess, more uneasy at his second determination than at the first, once more interrupted him.

"Alas! my lord, what would you do? His generous zeal will offer to go in person for your daughter. We know not what dangers he may then incur; and surely the champion of Scotland is not to be thrown into peril for any domestic concern!—If you really feel the weight of the evils into which you have plunged Sir William Wallace, do not increase it by even hinting to him the present subject of your discourse."

"My aunt is an oracle!" resumed Murray; "and what is better, she gives me hopes of a boon which I was just going to ask when you knocked me down with my general's truncheon.—Allow me to be the happy knight that is to bear the surrender of Dumbarton to my sweet cousin? Prevail on Wallace to remain lord of this garrison till I return; and then, full tilt for the walls of old Stirling, and the downfall of Hughie Cressingham!"

The Countess and the Earl were both pleased with this arrangement. The latter, by the persuasions of his nephew, retired into an inner chamber to seek repose; and the former desired Lord Andrew to inform Wallace, that she should expect to be honoured with his presence at noon to partake of such fare as the garrison afforded.—Murray withdrew; and she, calling up some of the soldiers, sent them to the black tower to bring away her wardrobe, and to conduct her maids with her infant child, to the citadel. When they arrived she made every disposition to establish herself quite at home; and gave orders for as magnificent a dinner to be prepared as could be collected from the full stores of De Valence.

Murray, on descending to the ground before the citadel, met Ker, who told him that Wallace, having been the round of all the posts, and being perfectly satisfied with their order, had proceeded with Sir Roger Kirkpatrick, and Edwin Ruthven towards the black tower. Murray followed them thither; and on issuing from the postern which led to that part of the rock, he observed his chief standing with his helmet off in the midst of the slain.—Those of the Scots who had fallen, were collected on his right hand; while the dead of the enemy, to the number of twelve hundred, were spread in heaps on his left.

"This is a horrid sight!" said he to Murray, as he approached; "but it shall presently be removed from view.—I have just ordered biers to be prepared, by which these sad wrecks of human nature may be lowered into the Clyde: Its rushing stream will soon carry them to a deeper grave beneath yon peaceful sea." He added, that as his own dead amounted to no more than fifteen, he meant to bury them at the foot of the rock: A prisoner in the castle had described a flight of stone steps cut in the cliff, by which the solemnity could easily be performed.

"But why, my dear commander," cried Lord Andrew, "why do you take any thought about our enemies? leave them where they are, and the eagles of our mountains will soon find them graves."

"For shame, Murray!" was the reply of Wallace; "they are dead, and our enemies no more.—They are men like ourselves; and shall we deny them a place in that earth whence we all sprung? We war not with human nature: Are we not rather the assertors of her rights?"

"I know," replied Lord Andrew, blushing; "that I am often the assertor of my own folly; and I do not know how you will forgive my inconsiderate impertinence."

"Because it was inconsiderate;" replied Wallace with a smile; "inhumanity is too stern a guest to live in such a breast as yours."

## The Scottish Chiefs

"If I ever gave her quarters," replied Murray, "I should most wofully disgrace the companion she would meet there. No; next to the honour of fair Scotland, my sweet cousin Helen is the goddess of my idolatry; and she would tie me up on the nearest tree, if she thought me capable of feeling otherwise than in unison with Sir William Wallace.

Wallace looked towards him with a benign pleasure in his countenance:—Your sweet cousin does me honour: and though I hardly think she would so cruelly punish the cruelty she abhors, yet you teach me to be proud of the approbation of one so excellent."

"Ah! my noble friend," cried Murray, lowering his gay tone to one of softer expression; "if you knew all her goodness; all the amiableness that dwells in her gentle heart, you would indeed esteem her—you would love her as I do."

The blood fled from the cheek of Wallace. "Not as you do, Murray:—I can no more love woman, as you do her. Such scenes as these," cried he, turning to the mangled bodies, which the men were now carrying off in litters to the precipice of the Clyde; "have divorced woman's love from my heart.—I am all my country's, or I am nothing."

"Nothing!" reiterated Murray, laying his hand upon that of Wallace as it rested upon the hilt of his sword on which he leaned: "Is the friend of mankind, the champion of Scotland, the beloved of a thousand valuable hearts, nothing? Nay, art thou not the agent of heaven to be the scourge of a tyrant? Art thou not the deliverer of thy country?"

Wallace turned his bright eye upon Murray with an expression of mingled feelings:—"May I be all this my friend, and Wallace will yet be happy!—but speak not to me of love and woman: Tell me not of those endearing qualities which I have prized too tenderly, and which are now buried to me for ever beneath the ashes of Ellerslie."

Murray looked at his anguished face with trepidation: "Not under the ashes of Ellerslie," said he, "sleep the remains of your lovely wife." Wallace's penetrating eye, full of a surprized inquiry, turned quick upon him; Murray continued: "My cousin's pitying soul stretched itself towards them; by her directions they were brought from the oratory in the rock, and deposited with all holy rites in the cemetery at Bothwell."

The glow that now animated the before chilled heart of Wallace, over-spread his face. His eyes spoke volumes of gratitude, his lips moved, but his feelings were too big for utterance, and fervently pressing the hand of Murray; to conceal emotions which he found ready to shake his manhood, he turned from his friend and walked towards the cliff. Lord Andrew followed at a short distance; but that he might not by his immediate presence press still farther upon his awakened recollection, he kept far to the right, and joining Edwin Ruthven, assisted him in directing the men in their melancholy duty of lowering the slain to Sir Alexander Scrymgeour's detachment, who were below to commit them to the deep.

When all was finished, a young priest in the company of Scrymgeour, gave the holy blessing both to the departed in the waves, and those whom the shore received. The rites over, Murray reascending the rock, again drew near to Wallace and delivered his aunt's message, which amidst more interesting matters he had forgotten. The chief told him that he had just replied to a messenger from the Countess, and that he had sent her word he would attend her commands. "We must first," continued he, "visit our wounded prisoners in the tower. There are above three hundred of them, whom Edwin and I discovered amongst the dead. They are now safely lodged, with a few of our own men, under the care of Stephen Ireland; and I hope to have a good account of them."

Murray gladly obeyed the impulse of his leader's arm; and followed by the captains on the late solemn duty, they entered the tower. Ireland met them in the porch, and welcomed Wallace with the intelligence that he hoped he had succoured friends instead of foes; for that most of the prisoners were poor Welsh peasants whom Edward had torn from their mountains to serve in his legions; and a few Irish, who, in heat of blood and eagerness for adventure, had enlisted in his ranks, "I have shewn to them," continued Ireland, "what fools they are, thus to injure themselves in us. To the Welsh, I said they were rivetting their chains by assisting to extend the dominion of their conqueror:—And to the Irish, I enforced that they were forging fetters for themselves by lending their help to enslave their brother nation, the free-born Scots. They only require your presence, my lord, to forswear their former leaders, and to enlist under Sottish banners.

"Thou art an able orator, my good Stephen." returned Wallace; "and whatever promises thou hast made to honest men, in the name of Scotland, we are ready to ratify them. Is it not so?" added he, turning to Kirkpatrick



## The Scottish Chiefs

and Scrymgeour.

"All, as you will," replied they in one voice. "Yes;" added Kirkpatrick, "you were the first to strike for Scotland; and who but you has the right to be the first to command for her!"

"So say I; and swear it too, by the royal standard I bear!" rejoined Scrymgeour.

"And I," cried Murray, "by all the standards, royal, loyal, and saintly, between this and the Holy Land! so, dear general, lead us to our recruits."

Ireland threw open the door which led into the hall; and there, on the ground, on pallets of straw, lay most of the wounded Southrons. A few who were not so much injured as the rest, and having had balsam poured into their wounds, were assisting the Scots to administer to the others. At sight of Wallace, whom some of their dimmed eyes had discerned when he discovered them expiring on the rock and ordered them to be conveyed into the tower, they uttered such a piercing cry of joyful gratitude, that surprised, he stood for a moment. In that moment already five or six of the poor wounded wretches had crawled to his feet—"Our Enemy!—Our Preserver!" burst from their lips, as they kissed the hem of his garment.

"Not to me, not to me," hastily exclaimed Wallace; "I am a soldier like yourselves; I have only acted a soldier's part:—But I am a soldier of freedom; you, of a tyrant who seeks to enslave the world! This makes the difference between us; this lays you at my feet; when I would more willingly, as brothers in one generous cause, receive you to my arms."

"We are yours," was the answering exclamation of those who knelt, and of those who raised their feebler voice from their beds of straw. A few only remained silent. Wallace, disengaging himself with many kind expressions of approbation from those who clung around him, walked forwards to the sick who seemed to be too ill to speak. While repeating the same consolatory language to them, he observed an old man lying between two young ones, who, unlike the rest, still kept a profound silence. His rough features were marked with many a scar; but there was a meek resignation in his face that powerfully struck Wallace. As the chief drew near, the veteran raised himself a little on his arm, and bowed his head with a respectful air. Wallace stopped. "You are an Englishman?"

"I am Sir, and I have no services to offer you. These two young men on each side of me, are my sons. Their brother I lost last night in the conflict. To day, by your mercy, my own life is not only preserved, but my two remaining children also!—yet I am an Englishman, and I cannot forswear my country; I cannot be grateful at the expense of my allegiance."

"Nor would I require it of you," returned Wallace; "these brave Welsh and Irish were brought hither by the oppressor who subjugates their countries; they owe him no duty. But you are a free subject of England; he that is a tyrant over others, can only be your king: He must be the guardian of your laws, the defender of your liberties, or his sceptre falls. And having sworn to follow a sovereign so plighted, I am not severe enough to condemn you, because, blinded by that ignis fatuus which he calls glory, you have suffered him to lead you to unjust conquest."

"Once I have been so led;" returned the old man, "but never again. Fifty years I have fought under the British standard in Normandy and in Palestine; and now in my old age, with four sons; I followed the armies of my sovereign into Scotland. My eldest I lost in the plains of Dunbar. My second fell last night; and my two youngest are now by my side: You have saved them and me. What can I do? Not, as your noble self says, forswear my country: But this I swear; and in the oath, do you my sons join; (as he spoke they laid their crossed hands upon his, in token of assent) never to raise our swords against England; and with like faith, never to lift an arm against Sir William Wallace or the cause of struggling Scotland!"

"To this we also swear," cried several other men, who comprised the whole of the English prisoners.

"Noble people!" cried Wallace, "Why have you not a king worthy of you!"

"And yet," said Kirkpatrick in a surly tone; angry with Wallace for such admiration of his enemies, and at himself for feeling some sympathy with the scene; "Heselrigge was one of these people!" Wallace turned round upon him with a look of such tremendous meaning, that awed by an expression too mighty for him to comprehend, he fell back a few paces, muttering something that was not heard.

"That man would arouse the tiger in our lion-hearted chief," whispered Scrymgeour to Murray.

"Aye;" returned he, "but the royal spirit keeps the wild beast in awe:—See how coweringly that bold brow now bows before him!"

Wallace marked the impression his glance had made; and where he had struck, being unwilling also to pierce, he dispelled the thunder from his countenance, and once more looking on Sir Roger with a frank serenity;

## The Scottish Chiefs

"Come," said he, "my good knight, you must not be more tenacious for William Wallace than he is for himself; and while he possesses such a zealous friend as Kirkpatrick of Torthorald, he needs not now fear the arms of a thousand Heselriggs."

"No, nor of Edwards neither!" cried Kirkpatrick, once more looking boldly up, and shaking his broad claymore; "my thistle has a point to sting all to the death who pass between this arm and my leader's breast."

"May Heaven long preserve the valiant Wallace!" was the prayer of every feeble voice, as the chieftain left the hall to visit his own wounded, who were in an upper chamber. The interview was short and satisfactory. He found the young Edwin ministering to them with the tenderness of a son. Fergus, whom he had deputed to superintend their recovery, gave him a cheering account of their state; and as all who were wounded belonged to Wallace's own particular band, he promised that he and Edwin would return in the evening to the tower, and make it their lodging. The poor fellows, with overflowing hearts, thanked him for this condescension.—"Ah! sir," said one of them, "I cannot tell how it is, but when I see you, I feel as if I beheld the very soul of my country, or its guardian angel, standing before me;—a something I cannot describe, but that fills me with courage and comfort!"

"You see an honest Scot standing before you, my good Duncan;" replied Wallace, "and that is no mean personage; for it is one who knows no use of his life but to preserve it, or to lay it down, for the sons of Scotland, for their true happiness."

"O! that the sound of that voice could penetrate to every ear in Scotland?" rejoined the soldier, "it would be more than the call of a trumpet to bring them to the field!"

"And from the summit of this rock many have heard it, and more shall be aroused!" cried Murray, returning from the door, to which one of his men had beckoned him: "Here is a man come to announce to Sir William Wallace, that Malcolm Earl of Lennox, passing by the foot of this rock, saw the Scottish standard flying from its citadel; and as amazed as overjoyed at the sight, has sent to request the favour of being admitted."

"Let me bring him hither!" interrupted Kirkpatrick; "he is brave as the day, and will be a noble auxiliary."

"Every true Scot is welcome to these walls," returned Wallace; "and you, Sir Roger, shall have the satisfaction of conducting one of the bravest of them to at least one free spot on his native hills."

Kirkpatrick, taking with him a few followers, hastened through the different gates till he reached the northern side, where, at the foot of the rock, stood the Earl and his train. Sir Roger, with all the pride of a freeman and a victor, descended the height. The Earl advanced to meet him. "What is it I see?" said he, "Sir Roger Kirkpatrick master of this citadel; and our King's colours flying from its towers! Where is Earl De Valence? Where the English garrison?"

"The English garrison," replied Kirkpatrick, "are now, twelve hundred men, beneath the waters of the Clyde. De Valence has fled; and this fortress, manned with a few hardy Scots, will sink into the waves, sooner than again see the English dragon on its walls."

"And you, noble knight!" cried Lennox, "have achieved all this. You are the dawn to a blessed day for Scotland!"

"No;" replied Kirkpatrick, "I am but a follower of the man who inspires us all. Sir William Wallace of Ellerslie is our chief; and, with the power of his virtues, he subdues not only friends, but enemies, to his command."

He then proceeded to narrate to the Earl the particulars of the taking of the castle; and also of the volunteering of the three hundred prisoners to serve in the Scottish army. The Earl listened with wonder and joy. "What!" cried he, "so noble a plan for Scotland, and I ignorant of it?—I, that have not waked or slept day or night for many a month, without thinking or dreaming of some enterprize to free my country!—and behold it is achieved in a moment!—I see the stroke as a bolt from heaven; and I pray heaven it may light the sacrifice throughout the nation!"

"Lead me, worthy knight, lead me to your chief; for he shall be mine too: He shall command Malcolm Lennox and all his clan."

Kirkpatrick gladly turned to obey him; and mounting the ascent together, within the Barbican gate, which was thrown open to receive the expected guest, stood Wallace, with Scrymgeour, Murray, and Edwin. The Earl knew Scrymgeour well, having seen him often in the field as hereditary standard-bearer of the kingdom; of the persons of the others he was ignorant.

"There is Wallace!" exclaimed Kirkpatrick.

"Surely not one of those very young men?" interrogated the Earl.

## The Scottish Chiefs

"Even so;" was the answer of the knight; "but his is the youth of the brave son of Ammon; grey-beards are glad to bow before his golden locks; for beneath them is a wisdom which makes even the aged tremble."

As he spoke they entered the Barbican; and Wallace (whom the penetrating eye of Lennox had already singled out for the chief) advanced to meet his guest.

"Earl," said he, "you are welcome to Dumbarton castle."

"Bravest of my countrymen!" returned Lennox, clasping him in his arms; "receive a soldier's embrace; receive the gratitude of a loyal heart! accept my services, my arms, my men; my all I devote to Scotland and the great cause."

Wallace, for a moment, did not answer; but warmly straining the Earl to his breast, said, as he released him, "Such support will give sinews to our power. A few months, and, with the blessing of that arm which has already mowed down the ranks which opposed us, we shall see Scotland at liberty."

"And may heaven, brave Wallace!" exclaimed Lennox, "grant us thine arm to wield its scythe! But how have you accomplished all this? How have your few managed to overcome the English thousands?"

"He strikes home, when right points his sword;" replied Wallace, "the injuries of Scotland were my guide, and justice my companion. We feared nothing, for God was with us; we feared nothing, and in his might we conquered."

"And shall yet conquer!" cried Lennox, inflamed with the enthusiasm that blazed from the eyes of Wallace; "I feel the strength of our cause; and from this hour I devote myself to assert it or to die."

"Not to die! my noble lord;" said Murray, "we have yet many a joyous eve to dance over the buried fetters of rescued Scotland. And as a beginning of our jollities, I must remind our general to lead you to the board of my beauteous aunt; else we shall most grievously sin against the only lady in the castle."

Lord Lennox understood from this address, that it was the brave Murray who spoke to him; for he had heard sufficient from Sir Roger Kirkpatrick, to explain to him how the Countess of Mar and her patriot husband came within its walls.

The Countess, who impatiently expected her deliverer; and who, after the business of her toilet, had counted every moment in each passing hour as so many ages; with an emotion at her heart which made it bound against her bosom, saw the object of her wishes advancing along the platform. All others were lost to her as in a mist: and hastily rising from the window as they entered the porch, she crossed the room to meet them at the door. The Earl of Mar observing her hurried step, inquired whether they were their brave friends who approached. The Countess in her haste returned no answer, but entering the anti-room, met Wallace and his party just as they had ascended the stairs.

The Earl of Lennox stopped at the sight of so much beauty and splendour in such a scene. Lady Mar had hardly attained her thirty-fifth year; but from the graces of her person, and the address with which she set forth all her charms, there was a dazzling fascination about her which so bewildered the faculties of the gazer, that he found it impossible to suppose that she was more than three or four and twenty. Thus happily formed by nature, and habited in a suit of green velvet, blazing with jewels, Lennox rather thought that it was some triumphant queen he was going to salute, than a wife who had so lately shared captivity with her wounded husband. Murray started at such unexpected magnificence in his aunt. But Wallace, having his mind fully possessed with more weighty matters, scarcely observed that it was any thing unusual; and bowing to her as he advanced, presented the Earl of Lennox. She smiled, and saying a few words of welcome to the Earl, gave her hand to Wallace to lead her back into the room.

Lord Mar had risen from his seat; and leaning on his sword, (for his warlike arm refused any other staff) he stood up on their entrance. At the sight of Lord Lennox he uttered an exclamation of glad surprise. Lennox embraced him:—"I too am come to enlist under the banners of this young Leonidas."

"Thank God! thank God!" was all the reply that Mar could make, as the big tears rolled over his cheek, and he shook him by the hand. "I have four hundred stout Lennox-men," continued the Earl, "who by to-morrow's eve shall be ready to follow our leader to the very borders."

"Not so soon;" interrupted the Countess; "our deliverer needs repose. His men are wounded and weary, and he cannot stir till all be recovered."

"I thank your benevolence, Lady Mar;" returned Wallace, "but the issue of last night, and the sight of Lord Lennox this day, with the promise of so great a support, are the best aliments for me. My men I can leave in

## The Scottish Chiefs

comfort in this garrison; and to-morrow, or next day, I must march hence."

"Aye, to be sure;" joined Kirkpatrick; "Dumbarton was not taken during a sleep:—And if we stay loitering here, the devil that holds Stirling castle may get a scent of De Valence's track; make his escape, and so I lose my revenge!"

"What?" said the Countess, "and are my lord and I to be left here alone, again to fall into the hands of our enemies? Sir William Wallace I should have thought"—

"Every thing, madam," rejoined he, "that is demonstrative of my devotion to your venerable lord!—I quit not this, nor any other place, whilst the danger of himself, or of any dear to him, requires my stay. But with a strong garrison, I should have hoped you would have considered yourself safe until a wider range of security were won, to enable you to retire to Mar or to Drumlanrig."

As the apostrophe addressed to Wallace in the latter part of the Countess's speech had been said to himself in rather a low voice, his reply was made in a similar tone; so that Lord Mar, who was discoursing with the Earl of Lennox, did not hear any part of the answer but the concluding words.—"What!" said he, "is my ever fearful Joanna making objections to keeping garrison here?"

"I confess," replied Wallace, "that an armed citadel is not the most pleasant abode for a lady; but at present, excepting perhaps the protection of the church, it is the safest; and I would not advise her ladyship to remove any where else, till the plain be made as clear of the foe as this mountain."

The servants now announced that the board was spread in another apartment, and the Countess leading the way, reluctantly gave her hand to the Earl of Lennox; while Lord Mar, leaning on the arm of Wallace, proceeded into the room, followed by Edwin and the other chieftains.

## CHAP. VII.

During the repast, the Countess fixed her insatiate eyes on the youthful, yet manly countenance of the heroic Wallace. His plumed bonnet was now laid aside; and the heavy corselet unbuckled from his breast, disclosed the symmetry of his fine form, and left its graceful movements to be displayed with advantage by the flexible folds of his simple tartan vest. It was a warrior she looked on: the formidable Wallace, bathed in the blood of Heselrigge, and breathing vengeance against the adherents of the tyrant Edward! It was the enemy, then, of her kinsmen of the house of Cummin! It was the man for whom her husband had embraced so many dangers: It was the man whom she had denounced to one of those kinsmen, and whom she had betrayed to the hazard of an ignominious death! Where now was the fierce rebel, the ruiner of her peace, the outlaw whom she had wished in his grave?

The idea was distraction:—She could have fallen at his feet, and bathing them with her tears have implored his forgiveness. Even as the thought passed through her mind, she asked herself, Did he know all, could he pardon such a weight of injuries? She cast her eyes with a wild expression upon his face. The mildness of heaven was there; and the peace too, she might have thought, had not his eye, which was turned to the discourse of Lord Mar, carried a chastened sadness in its look, which told that something dire and sorrowful was buried deep within. It was a look that dissolved the soul which gazed on it. The Countess felt her heart throb violently. At that moment Wallace addressed a few words to her, but she knew not what they were; her soul was in tumults, and a mist passed over her sight, which for a moment seemed to wrap all her senses in a trance.

The unconscious object of these emotions bowed to her inarticulate reply, supposing that the mingling voices of others had made him hear her's indistinctly; and not observing her changing complexion, he again turned to the conversation of the Earls.

Lady Mar found her situation so strange, and her agitation so inexplicable, that feeling it impossible to remain longer without giving way to a burst of tears, for which she could not have accounted, she rose from her seat, and forcing a smile, curtsied to the company, and left the room.

When she gained the saloon, she threw herself along the nearest couch, and striking her breast with a strong emotion, exclaimed, "What is this that is within me? How does my soul seem to pour itself out to this man! Oh! how does it extend itself, as if it would absorb his, even at my eyes! Only twelve hours—hardly twelve hours, have I seen this William Wallace, and yet my very being is now lost in his!"

As she spoke, she covered her face with her handkerchief; but no tears now started to be wiped away. The turbulence in her veins dried their source; and with beating temples and burning blushes she rose from her seat. "Fatal, fatal hour! Why didst thou come here, too lovely Wallace, to rob me of my peace? O! why did I ever look on that face?— or rather, blessed saints!" cried she, clasping her hands in wild passion, "why did I ever shackle this hand by giving it to a man old enough to have been my father,—why did I ever render such a sacrifice necessary? Wallace is now free, had I been free! Powers of Heaven," cried she, "grant me patience to bear all that is pressing on this heart!" she gasped for breath, and again seating herself, reclined her head against the tapestry.

She was now silent; but thoughts, not less intense, not less fraught with self-reproach and anguish, occupied her mind. Should this god of her idolatry ever discover that it was her information which had sent Earl de Valence's men to surround him in the mountains; should he ever learn that at Bothwell she had betrayed the cause on which he had set his life; she felt that moment would be her last. For now, to sate her eyes with gazing on him, to hear the sound of his voice, to receive his smiles, seemed to her a joy which she could only surrender with her existence. What then was the prospect of so soon losing him, even to crown himself with honour, but to her a living death!

To defer this departure was all her study, all her hope; and fearful that his restless valour might urge him, as he seemed bent on new encounters, to accompany Murray in his intended convoy of Helen into the Tweed dale, she determined to persuade her nephew to set off without the knowledge of his general. She did not allow that it was the youthful beauty and more lovely mind of her daughter-in-law which she feared; she cloaked her alarm under the plausible excuse, even to herself, of care for the chieftain's safety. More composed by this arrangement, her disturbed features were smoothed; and having adjusted her disordered tresses at the mirror, she was ready to receive her lord, and his brave friends, who entered the room.

## The Scottish Chiefs

Neither Wallace nor Lord Lennox were with them. He had taken the Earl to shew him the dispositions of the fortress; but had promised his veteran friend that he would return in the course of an hour. Ill satisfied as the Countess was with this prolonged absence, she yet determined to turn it to advantage, and employ that time in drawing Murray to her purpose. While her lord and his friends sat examining a map of the most commanding situations in Scotland, which Wallace had sketched since she left the banquetting-room, she took Lord Andrew aside and conversed with him on the subject nearest her heart. Murray granted the cogency of her reasoning against betraying their deliverer into sharing the danger of so domestic an affair.

"It certainly belongs to me alone, as her kinsman and her friend," said he, "but my good Lady Countess, I cannot comprehend why I am to lead my fair cousin such a pilgrimage over the mountains. I assure you she is not afraid of heroes: you are safe in Dumbarton, and why not bring her here also?"

"Not for worlds!" exclaimed the Countess, for a moment thrown off her guard. Murray looked at her with surprise. It recalled her to self-possession, and she resumed, "So lovely a creature in this castle would be a dangerous magnet. You must have known that it was the hope of obtaining her, which attracted the Lord Soulis and Earl de Valence to Bothwell. The whole castle wrung with the quarrel of these two lords upon her account, when you so fortunately effected her escape. Should she be known to be here, the same fierce desire of obtaining her, would add double fire to the arms of De Valence in attempting the recovery of this place; and so perhaps her father and this brave garrison might fall a sacrifice to our imprudence in bringing her hither."

Murray was persuaded by this argument to relinquish the idea of conveying her to Dumbarton; but remembering what Wallace had said respecting the safety of a religious sanctuary, he told his aunt that he never would seriously consent to expose his cousin to the present perils of a journey to the banks of the Leeder; and therefore he advised that she should be left in quiet at St. Fillans till the cause of Scotland was more firmly established: "Send a messenger to inform her of the rescue of Dumbarton, and of your and my uncle's health;" continued he, "and that will be sufficient to make her happy!"

That she was not to be thrown in Wallace's way, satisfied Lady Mar: and indifferent whether Helen's seclusion were under the Eildon tree of her uncle of Ercildoun, or the Holy-rood, she approved Murray's decision, and dismissed the subject. Relieved from apprehension, her face was again dressed in smiles, and with a bounding heart she welcomed the re-entrance of Wallace with the Earl of Lennox.

Absorbed in one wish, every charm she possessed was directed to the same point. She played finely on the lute, and sung with all the native grace of her country. What gentle heart was not to be affected by music? She determined that it should be one of the spells by which she meant to attract Wallace to think on her, and to bind him to the castle. She took up one of the lutes which, with other musical instruments, decorated the apartments of the luxurious De Valence, and touching it with exquisite delicacy, breathed the most pathetic air her memory could dictate.

"If on the heath she moved, her breast was whiter than the down of Cana;  
If on the sea-beat shore, than the foam of the rolling ocean.

Her eyes were two stars of light. Her face was heaven's bow in showers.

Her dark hair flowed round it, like the streaming clouds.

Thou wert the dweller of souls, white-handed Strinadona!"

Wallace rose from his chair, which she had placed near her. She had designed that these tender words of the bard of Morven, should suggest to her hearer, the observation of her own resembling beauties. But he saw in them only the lovely dweller of his own soul: and walking towards a window, stood there, with his eye fixed on the descending sun: "So has set all my joys: So is life to me, a world without a sun; cold, cold, and charmless!"

The Countess, who vainly believed that some sensibility advantageous to her new passion, had caused the agitation with which she saw him depart from her side, ran through many a melodious descant, till touching on the first strains of *Thusa ha measg na reultan mor*; she saw Wallace start from his contemplative position, and with a pale countenance leave the room. There was something in his countenance which excited the alarm of the Earl of Lennox, who had been listening attentively to the songs: he arose instantly, and overtaking the chief at the threshold, enquired what was the matter?

"Nothing," answered Wallace, forcing a smile, in which the agony of his mind was too truly imprinted; "only I cannot bear music." With this reply he disappeared. The excuse seemed strange, but it was true; for her, whose

## The Scottish Chiefs

notes were to him sweeter than the thrush; whose angel strains used to greet his morning and evening hours, was silent in the grave! He should no more see her white-hand upon the lute! He should no more behold that bosom, brighter than foam upon the wave, heave in tender transport at his applause! What then was music to him? a soul-less sound, or a direful knell, to recal the remembrance of all he had lost.

Such were his thoughts, when the words of *Thusa ha measg wrung* from Lady Mar's voice. Those were the strains which Halbert used to make speak from his harp to call his Marion to her nightly slumbers:—those were the strains with which that faithful servant had announced that she slept to awake no more!

What wonder then that Wallace fled from the apartment, and buried himself, and his aroused grief, in the solitude of the Beacon-hill!

Edwin, while looking over the shoulder of his uncle on the station which Stirling held amid the Oichel hills and so many noble rivers, had at intervals cast a sidelong glance upon the changing complexion of his general; and no sooner saw him hurry from the room, than fearful of some disaster having happened the garrison, which Wallace did not chuse to mention publicly, he stole out of the apartment.

After seeking the object of his anxiety for a long time without avail, he was returning on his steps, when, attracted by the splendours of the rising moon which silvered the Beacon-hill, he ascended; once at least to tread that acclivity in light, which he had so miraculously passed in darkness. Scarce a breeze seemed to fan the sleeping air:—He bounded on with a flying step till a deep sigh arrested him. He stopped and listened: It was repeated again and again. He approached the spot, and by the side of a stone he saw a human figure reclined. The head of the apparent mourner was unbonnetted, and the brightness of the moon shone on his polished forehead. Edwin thought that the sound of those sighs was the same that he had often heard from the breast of Wallace; and seeing a man before him, he no longer doubted having found the object of his search. He walked forward. Again the figure sighed; but with a depth so full of piercing woe that Edwin hesitated.

A cloud passed over the moon; and sailing off again, displayed to the anxious boy that he had unconsciously drawn so near. He stood directly before his friend. "Who goes there?" exclaimed Wallace, starting on his feet.

"Your Edwin," returned the youth. "I feared something wrong had happened, when I saw you look so sad and leave the room abruptly."

Wallace pressed his hand in silence and stood looking on the ground. "Then some evil has befallen you?" enquired Edwin, in an agitated voice; "you do not speak!"

Wallace reseated himself on the stone, and leaned his head upon the hilt of his sword. "No new evil has befallen me Edwin. But there is such a thing as remembrance, that stabs deeper than the dagger's point."

What remembrance can wound you, my general?—The Abbot of St. Columba has often told me that memory is a balm to all ills with the good: and have not you been good to all? The benefactor, the preserver of thousands:—Surely if man can be happy, it must be Sir William Wallace!"

"And so I am my Edwin, when I contemplate the end. But in the interval with all thy sweet philosophy, is it not written here "that man was made to mourn?" he pressed his hand to his breast, and after a short pause resumed:—"Doubly I mourn; doubly am I bereaved; for, had it not been for enemies more fell than those which beguiled Adam of Paradise, I might have been a father, I might have lived to have gloried in a son like thee; I might have seen my wedded angel clasp such a blessing to her bosom: But now both are cold in clay! These are the recollections which sometimes draw tears down thy general's cheeks. And do not believe, sweet brother of my soul, (said he, pressing the now weeping Edwin to his breast) that they disgrace his manhood. The Son of God wept over the tomb of his friend; and shall I deny a few tears, dropped in stealth over the grave of my wife and child!"

Edwin sobbed aloud: "No son could love you dearer than I do—Ah, let my duty, my affection, teach you to forget you have lost a child. I will replace all to you, but your Marion; and she, the pitying Son of Mary will restore to you in the kingdom of Heaven."

Wallace looked stedfastly at the young preacher. "Out of the mouths of babes we shall hear wisdom! Thine, dear Edwin, I will lay to heart. Thou shalt comfort me when my hermit-soul shuts out all the world."

"Then I am indeed your brother!" cried the happy youth; "admit me but to your heart; and no fraternal, no filial tie shall be more strongly bound than mine."

"What tender affections I can spare from those resplendent regions," answered Wallace, pointing to the skies, "are thine. The fervours of my once ardent soul, are Scotland's, or I die—But thou art too young, my brother,"

## The Scottish Chiefs

added he, interrupting himself, "to understand all the feelings, all the seeming contradictions of my contending heart."

"Not so;" answered Edwin with a modest blush: "What was Lady Marion's, you now devote to Scotland. The blaze of those affections which were hers, would consume your being did you not pour it forth on your country. Were you not a patriot, you would die."

"You have read me, Edwin;" replied Wallace; "and that you may never love to idolatry, learn this also. Though Scotland lay in ruin, I was happy:—I felt not captivity in Marion's arms: Even oppression was forgotten when she made the sufferer's tears cease to flow. She absorbed my wishes, thoughts and life; and she was wrested from me that I might feel myself a slave; that the iron might enter into my soul, with which I was to pull down tyranny and free my country. Mark my sacrifice, young man;" cried Wallace starting on his feet; "it even now smokes—and the flames are here inextinguishable!" He struck his hand upon his breast. "Never love as I have loved; and you may be a patriot without tasting of my bitter cup!"

Edwin trembled: his tears were checked. "I can love none better than I do you, my general! and is there any crime in that?"

Wallace in a moment recovered from the transient wildness that had possessed him: "None, my Edwin;" replied he, "the affections are never criminal but when by their excess they blind us to superior duties. The offence of mine is judged, and I bow to the penalty. It will not be long, I trust, before the expiation is made; then the tears of rescued Scotland will bedew my ashes—and the seraph spirits of my wife and infant waft me in their arms to paradise." Edwin wept afresh. "Cease, dear boy!" said he; "These presages are very comforting; they whisper that the path of glory leads thy brother to his home." As he spoke, he put the arm of the silent Edwin (whose sensibility locked up the power of speech) through his; and drawing him gently forward, they descended the hill together.

On the platform before the Black Tower they were met by Murray. "I come to seek you," cried he: "We have had woe on woe in the citadel since you left it."

"Nothing very calamitous," returned Wallace, "if we may guess by the merry visage of our ambassador."

"Only a little whirlwind of my aunt's, in which we have had airs and showers enough to wet us through and blow us dry again."

The conduct of the lady was even more extravagant than her nephew chose fully to describe. On Wallace quitting Lennox at the room door, the Earl, instead of returning to the side of the countess, sat down by Lord Mar at the table. After a little conversation with the chiefs who surrounded it, he took occasion to mention that while Wallace and he were going through the posts, they had sent off Ker with credentials into Lennox to collect and bring to the castle four hundred fighting men. "When they arrive," said he, "which we expect will be tomorrow, it is our commander's intention to march immediately for Stirling, whither he supposes Aymer De Valence may have fled. I shall be left here to ease your lordship of the severer duties attendant on being governor of this place."

No sooner did these words reach the ears of the Countess, (whose vanity had received a most disappointing mortification in the avowal of Wallace, that so far from being wrapt in her music, he was running from it,) than she was struck with despair; and hastening towards her husband, she exclaimed—"You will not suffer this?"

"No;" returned the Earl, mistaking her meaning; "not being able to perform the duties attendant on the station with which Wallace would honour me, I shall relinquish them altogether to Lord Lennox, and be happy to find myself under his protection."

"Ah, where is there protection without Sir William Wallace?" exclaimed she, "If he go, the enemy will return: Who then will repel him from these walls? Who will defend myself and your only son from falling again into the hands of our doubly incensed foes?"

Mar observed Lord Lennox colour at this imputation on his bravery; and shocked at the pain which his unreflecting wife gave to so gallant an officer, he hastily replied; "Though I cannot be very strong in your defence, yet the Earl of Lennox is an able representative of our chief."

"I will die, madam," interrupted Lennox, "before any thing hostile approaches you or your child,"

She attended slightly to this assurance, only bowing her head; and again addressed her lord with fresh arguments for the detention of Wallace. Sir Roger Kirkpatrick, who heard her with hardly suppressed impatience, at last abruptly said, "Our Samson was not brought into the world to keep guard over ladies: and I hope he will be wiser than allow himself to be tied to the apron of any woman living. —He has got many a Philistine yet to make



## The Scottish Chiefs

bite the ground, and the gates of many a proud Gaza to carry away on his shoulders, before he can obey even your behests, my Lady Mar."

The brave old Earl was offended with this roughness; but ere he could so express himself, her Ladyship darted on Kirkpatrick an angry glance, and giving him a severe retort, turned again to her husband, and with two or three hysterical sobs, exclaimed—"It is well seen what will be my fate when Wallace is gone! Would he have stood by, and beheld me thus insulted!"

Lord Mar was distressed with shame at her conduct; and anxious to remove her absurd fears, he softly whispered her, and threw his arm about her waist.—She thrust it off again.—"You care not what may become of me; and when Dumbarton falls you will have the pleasure of seeing your wife buried in the ruins!"

Lennox, who ceased to be offended with the woman whose unreasonable pertinacity he despised, rose in silence and walked to the other end of the room.—Sir Roger Kirkpatrick followed him, muttering pretty audibly, his thanks to St. Andrew that he had never been yoked with a wife. —Scrymgeour and Murray tried to allay the storm in her bosom, by circumstantially describing to her how the fortress would be as safe under the care of Lennox as of Wallace; but they discoursed in vain; she was obstinate, and at last left the room in a passion of tears.

On the re-entrance of Wallace into the apartment where he had left the now dispersed party, Lord Lennox advanced to meet him:—"What shall we do, General?" said he, "without you have the power of Hercules, and can divide yourself, and be in two places at once; I fear we must either leave the rest of Scotland to fight for itself, or never restore peace to this castle!"

Wallace smiled; but before he could answer, her ladyship, who had heard his voice ascending the stairs, and who had recovered her presence of mind, suddenly entered the room.—She held her infant son in her arms.—Her air was composed, but her eyes yet shone in tears.—At this sight, Lord Lennox taking Murray by the arm, withdrew with him out of the apartment.

She approached Wallace: "You are come, my deliverer, to speak comfort to the mother of this poor babe.—My cruel Lord here, and the Earl of Lennox say you mean to abandon us in this castle?"

"It cannot be abandoned," returned the chief, "while they are in it.—But if so warlike a scene alarms you, would not a religious sanctuary—"

"Not for worlds!" cried she, interrupting him, "what altar is held sacred by the enemies of our country!—No;—wonder not," added she, putting her face to that of her child, "that I should wish this innocent babe never to be from under the wing of such a protector."

"But that is impossible, Joanna," rejoined the Earl; "Sir William Wallace has duties superior to that of keeping guard over any private family. His presence is wanted in the field; and we should be traitors to the cause did we detain him."

"Unfeeling Mar!" cried she, weeping bitterly; "thus to echo the words of the barbarian Kirkpatrick, thus to condemn us to die!—You will see another tragedy; your own wife and child seized by the returning Southrons, and laid bleeding at your feet!"

Wallace walked from her much agitated.

"Rather inhuman Joanna," whispered Lord Mar to her in an angry voice; "to make such a reference in the presence of our protector!—I cannot stay to listen to a pertinacity that is as insulting to the rest of our brave coadjutors, as it is oppressive to Sir William Wallace. Edwin, you will come for me when your aunt has consented to be guided by right reason." As he spoke he entered the passage that led to his own apartment.

Lady Mar sat a few minutes silent.—She was not to be warned from her determination by the displeasure of a husband, whom she now regarded with the impatience of a bond-woman towards her taskmaster; and only solicitous to compass the detention of Sir William Wallace for at least a sufficient length of time to make some impression on his heart: an impression which she did not despair of effecting, (as she believed that sensibility like his could not be long of re-awaking to a new tenderness;) she resolved, if he would not remain at the castle, to persuade him to conduct her to her husband's territories in the Isle of Bute. The journey, she would contrive, should occupy more than one day; and for holding him longer, she would trust to chance and her own inventions.

With these resolutions she looked up. —Edwin was speaking to Wallace— "What does he tell you?" said she, "that my lord has left me in displeasure?—Alas! he comprehends not a mother's anxiety for her sole-remaining child.—One of my sweet twins, my dear daughter died on my being brought a prisoner to this horrid fortress; and

## The Scottish Chiefs

to lose this also, would be more than I could bear. —Look at this babe," cried she, rising and holding it up to him; "let it plead to you for its life!—Guard it, noble Wallace, whatever may become of me!"

The appeal of a mother made instant way to Sir William's heart; even her weaknesses, did they point to a too tender anxiety respecting her offspring, were sacred with him:—"What would you have me do, my dear madam?—If you fear to remain here, tell me where you think you would be safer, and I will be your conductor?"

She paused for a moment to repress the triumph with which this proposal filled her, and then with downcast eyes, replied:—"In the sea-girt Bute, stands Rothsay, a rude, but strong castle of my lord's; it possesses nothing to attract the notice of the enemy; and there I might remain, amongst the poor fishermen of the isles, in perfect safety.—Lord Mar may keep his station here, until a general victory sends you, noble Wallace, to restore my child to his father."

Wallace bowed his assent to her proposal; and Edwin, remembering the Earl's injunction, inquired if he might go and inform him of what was decided. —As he left the room Lady Mar rose from her seat, and suddenly putting the child into the arms of Wallace;—"Let his sweet caresses thank you." Wallace trembled violently as she pressed its little mouth to his; and then, mistranslating this emotion, as he held him she leaned her own face upon the infant's, and so, while she affected to kiss him, rested her head upon the bosom of the chief. There was something in this action more than maternal: It surprised and disconcerted Wallace. "Madam," said he, drawing back, and relinquishing the child, "I do not require any thanks for serving the wife and son of Lord Mar."

At that moment his lordship entered. Lady Mar flattered herself that the repelling action of Wallace, and his cold answer, had arisen from the expected entrance of the Earl; and seating herself, though covered with the crimson hue of something like disappointment, in a few words she informed her husband that Bute was to be her future sanctuary.

Lord Mar approved it; but declared his determination to accompany her: "In my state I can be of little use here;" said he, "you will require some protection even in that seclusion; and therefore, leaving Lord Lennox sole governor of Dumbarton, I shall unquestionably attend you to Rothsay."

The Countess aware that this would break in upon the lonely conversations which she meditated to have with Wallace, objected to the proposal. But none of her arguments being admitted by her husband, and as Wallace did not support them by a word, she was obliged to make a merit of necessity, and consent to Lord Mar's being the guardian of her new abode.

CHAP. VIII.

Late in the next day, Ker not only returned with the Earl of Lennox's men; but brought with him Sir Eustace Maxwell of Carlaveroch, a brave knight, who having been in the neighbourhood the night that De Valence fled before the arms of Wallace across the Clyde, no sooner saw the Scottish colours on the walls of Dumbarton, than finding out who was their planter, his soul took fire; and stung with a generous ambition of equalling in glory his equal in years, he determined to assist while he emulated the victor.

To this end he went into the town of Dumbarton, and along the shore, striving to lighten the understandings of the deceived, and to excite the discontented to rise. With most he failed. Some took upon them to lecture him on fishing in troubled waters, and warned him if he would keep his head on his shoulders, to wear his yoke in peace. Others thought the project too arduous for men of small means; they wished well to the arms of Sir William Wallace; and would watch the moment, should he continue successful, to aid him with all their little power. Those who had any property remaining, feared to risque the loss of all, by embracing a doubtful struggle for the rest. Some were too great cowards to fight for the rights they would gladly regain by the exertions of others. And others again, who had families, shrunk from taking part in a cause, which, should it fail, would not only put their lives in danger, but expose their offspring to the revenge of a resentful enemy. This was the best apology of any that had been offered: A natural affection pleaded its excuse; and though blinded even to its interest, the weakness had an amiable source, and so was pardoned. But the pleas of the others were so basely selfish, so undeserving any thing but scorn, that Sir Eustace Maxwell could not forbear expressing it. "When Sir William Wallace is entering port full sail, you will send your birlings to tow him in! but if a plank could save him now, you would not throw it to him! I understand you, Sirs, and shall trouble your patriotism no more."

In short none but about a hundred poor fellows; whom outrages had rendered desperate: and a few brave spirits who would put all to the hazard for so good a cause, could be prevailed upon to hold themselves in readiness to obey Sir Eustace, when he should see the moment to conduct them to Sir William Wallace. He was trying his eloquence amongst the clan of Lennox, when Ker arriving, above five-hundred arranged themselves under their Lord's standard. Maxwell gladly explained himself to Wallace's lieutenant, and summoning his little reserve, they marched with flying pennons through the town of Dumbarton. At sight of so much larger a power than they expected would venture to appear in arms, and sanctioned by the example of the Earl of Lennox, (whose name held a great influence in those parts) several who before had held back from doubting their own judgment, now came forward; and nearly eight-hundred well appointed men marched into the fortress.

So large a reinforcement was gladly received by Wallace; and he welcomed Maxwell with a cordiality which inspired that young knight with as much affection for his commander, as he had before zeal for the cause.

A council being held in the chapel of the citadel respecting the disposal of the new troops, all of whom wished to follow Wallace to the field, it was decided that, as the fortress must be maintained, a division should be made. The five hundred Lennox men should remain with their Earl in garrison; and the three-hundred from Dumbarton, under the command of Maxwell, should follow Wallace in the prosecution of his conquests.

These preliminaries being arranged, the remainder of the day was dedicated to more mature deliberations; to the unfolding of the plan of warfare which Wallace had laid down. As he first sketched the general outline of his design, and then descended to the more minute particulars of each military proceeding, he displayed such comprehensiveness of mind, such depth of penetration, clearness of apprehension, facility in expedients, promptitude in perceiving and fixing on the most favourable points of attack, explaining their bearings upon the power of the enemy, and where the possession of such a castle would compel the neighbouring ones to surrender, and where the occupying of the flat country with a strong wall of troops, would be a more efficient bulwark than a thousand towers, that Maxwell gazed on him with admiration, and Lennox with wonder.

Mar had seen the power of his arms: Murray had often drank the experience of a veteran from his genius, which with a sort of supernatural cognizance, darted into the views of men, and turned their devices to his own advantage: Hence they were not surprized at hearing what filled strangers with amazement.

Lennox gazed on his youthful countenance, doubting whether he really were listening to military plans as great as general ever formed; or were visited in vision by a hero, who offered to his sleeping fancy, designs far vaster

## The Scottish Chiefs

than his waking faculties could have conceived. He had thought that the young Wallace might have won Dumbarton by a bold stroke: and that when his invincible courage should be steered by graver heads, every success might be expected from his arms. But now that he heard him informing veterans on the art of war; and saw that when turned to any cause of policy, the gordian knot of it he did unloose, familiar as his garter; he marvelled, and said within himself, "Surely this man is born to be a sovereign!"

Maxwell, though equally astonished, was not so wrapped. "You have made arms the study of your life?" enquired he.

"It was the study of my earliest days!" returned Wallace. "But when Scotland lost her freedom, as the sword was not drawn in her defence, I looked not where it lay. I then studied the arts of peace: that is over; and now the passion of my soul returns. When the mind is bent on one object only, all becomes clear that leads to it:—zeal in these cases is almost genius."

Soon after these observations the conference broke up; and Wallace, who had been too much occupied to see Lady Mar during the day, returned an answer by one of her messengers, that according to Lord Mar's arrangement, he would be ready to attend her on the morrow at sun-rise, when the Earl had decided to commence his journey.

According to this engagement, when the dawn broke, Sir William arose from his hether bed in the Black Tower; and calling forth twenty brave Bothwellers to be the guard of Lord Mar; he told Ireland that he should expect to have a cheering account of the wounded when he returned.

"And that I may assure the poor fellows," rejoined the honest soldier, "that something of yourself still keeps watch over their slumbers, leave me the sturdy sword with which you won Dumbarton. It shall be hung up in their sight; and a good soldier's wounds will heal by looking on it."

Wallace smiled: "Were it the holy King David's, we might expect such a miracle. But you are welcome to it; and there let it remain till I take it hence. Meanwhile lend me yours, Stephen, for a truer never fought for Scotland."

A glow of conscious valour flushed the cheek of the veteran. "There, my dear lord," said he, presenting it, "it will not dishonour your hand, for it has cut down many a proud Norwegian, and wounded Prince Magnus himself, when our great Alexander drove King Acho from the field."

Wallace took the sword, and meeting Murray with Edwin in the outward portal, by the time they had reached the platform before the citadel, Lennox and all the officers in the garrison were assembled to bid their chief a short adieu. Wallace spoke to each separately; and then approaching the Countess, who appeared at the gate, led her down the rock towards the horses which were to convey them to the shores of the frith of Clyde. Lord Mar, between Murray, and Edwin, followed; and the servants, with twenty Bothwellers, completed the suite.

Being well mounted, they pleasantly pursued their way, avoiding all inhabited places, and resting in the deepest recesses of the hills. Lord Mar had proposed travelling all night; but at the close of the evening, his Countess complained of fatigue, and declared she could not advance farther than the eastern bank of the river Cart. No shelter appeared in sight, excepting a thick and extensive wood of hazles; but the lady being obstinate and the air mild, Lord Mar at last became reconciled to his wife and child passing the night with no other canopy than the trees. Wallace finding how it was decided, ordered cloaks to be spread on the ground for the Countess and her women; and seeing them laid to rest, planted his men to keep guard around the circle.

The moon had sunk in the west before the whole of his little camp were asleep: but seeing that all were composed, he wandered forth by the dim light of the stars to view the surrounding country; a country he had so often traversed in boyish excursions from his maternal Ayr, and in which lay many of the lands of his ancestors. He was leaning over the shattered stump of an old tree, and looking towards the south, with his eyes fixed on the far-stretching plain which alone seemed to divide him from the venerable Sir Ronald Crawford, when he heard a sigh behind him. He turned round, and beheld a figure in white disappear amongst the trees. He stood motionless; again it met his view: It seemed to approach. A strange emotion awoke in his heart. When he last past these borders it was with his Marion, bringing her a bride from Ayr. What then was this ethereal visitant? The silver light of the stars seemed not brighter than the airy robes which floated in the wind. His heart paused—it beat violently—still the figure advanced. Lost at once in the wildness of his imagination, he exclaimed Marion! and darted forwards as if to rush into her embrace. But it fled, and again vanished. He dropped upon the ground in speechless disappointment.

## The Scottish Chiefs

"Tis false!" said he, recovering from his first expectation; "'tis a phantom of my own creating. The pure spirit of Marion would never fly me: I loved her too well. She would not thus have overwhelmed me in grief. But I shall go to thee, sweet wife of my soul!" cried he, "and that is comfort."

Such were his words, such were his thoughts, till the coldness of the hour and the exhaustion of nature, putting a friendly seal upon his disturbed senses, he sunk upon the bank and fell into a profound sleep.

When he awoke, the lark was carolling her joyous matin above his head, and to his surprise he found that a plaid was laid over him. He threw it off, and beheld Edwin seated at his feet. "This has been your doing, my kind brother," said he, "but how came you to discover me?"

"I missed you when the dawn broke; and at last found you here, sleeping under the dew."

"And has none else been astir?" enquired Wallace, thinking of the figure he had seen.

"None that I know of; all were fast asleep when I left the circle."

Wallace began to fancy that he had been labouring under the impressions of some powerful dream, and saying no more, he returned to the wood. Having paid his respects to the Countess, and shaken hands with Murray and the Earl, they set forth, and proceeded cheerfully, though slowly, through the delightful vallies of Barochan. By sun-set the same evening they arrived at the point where they were to embark. The journey ought to have been performed in half the time: but the Countess complaining of weakness, had petitioned for long rests; a compliance of gallantry, which the younger part of the cavalcade rather reluctantly yielded.

At Gourrock, Murray engaged two small vessels; the one for the Earl and Countess with her retinue, and Wallace for their escort; and the other, for himself and Edwin to follow with the men.

It was a fine evening; and they embarked with a brisk gale in their favour.—the mariners calculated on reaching Bute in a few hours; but ere they had been half an hour at sea, the wind began to veer about, and obliged them to woo its breezes by a traversing motion, which, though it lengthened their voyage, encreased its pleasantness, as it carried them often within near views of the ever-varying shores.—As they moved under a side wind, they beheld the huge irregular rocks of Dunoon overhanging the ocean; their deep ravines were strewn with shells, and green weeds of the sea; and from their projecting brows, hung every shrub which lives in that saline atmosphere.

"There," said Lady Mar, gently inclining towards Wallace, as they sat upon the deck; "might the beautiful mermaid of Corrie-Vrekin keep her court!—Observe how magnificently those arching cliffs overhang the hollows; and how richly they are studded with shells and sea-flowers!"

No flower of the field, or of the ocean, that ever came within the ken of Wallace, wasted its sweetness unadmired. He assented to the remarks of Lady Mar, as she eloquently expatiated on the beauties of the shores which they passed; and the hours fled pleasantly away, till turning the southern point of the Cowal mountains, the scene suddenly changed.—The wind which had gradually arisen, blew a violent gale from that part of the coast; and the sea being pent between the two ranges of rock which skirted the continent and the northern side of Bute, became so boisterous, that the mariners began to think they should be driven upon the rocks of the island instead of reaching its bay. Wallace perceived their alarm; and seeing that it had cause, tore down the sails, and laid his nervous arm to the oar to keep the vessel off the breakers against which the wind and waves were driving her.—The sky collected in a gloom; and while the teeming clouds seemed descending even to rest upon the cracking masts, the swelling of the ocean appeared to threaten heaving her up into their very bosoms.

Lady Mar looked with affright at the gathering tempest; and with difficulty was persuaded to retire with her maids below. The Earl seemed to forget his debility in the general terror, and tried to re-assure the dismayed mariners; but a tremendous sweep of wind drove the vessel far across the isle of Bute, and shot it past the mouth of Loch-Fyne, to within sight of the perilous rocks of Arran.— "Here, our destruction is certain!" cried the commander of the ship.

Lord Mar, perceiving that the crew were ignorant of the navigation of this side of the island, called to Wallace, who, having observed that the steer's-man was going to run her on a sand-bank, had seized the helm.—"While you keep the men to their duty in clearing the vessel of water, and in rowing," cried he, "as the less laborious task, I will steer."

The Earl being perfectly acquainted with the coast, Wallace resigned the helm to him:—but scarcely had he stepped forward, when a heavy sea broke over the deck, and carried two of the seamen overboard.—Wallace on the instant threw over a plank, and casting out a rope, called to the men to seize the one or the other. —Amidst a

## The Scottish Chiefs

spray so blinding, that the vessel appeared in a cloud; and buffeted on each side by the raging waves, that seemed contending to tear her to pieces, she lay to for a few minutes to rescue the sailors from the yawning gulph:—one poor creature caught by the rope and was saved; but the other was seen no more.

Again the ship was set loose to the current.—Wallace with two men only, applied their strength to the oars; or starting from their benches, struck forward long poles to prevent the rushing vessel from striking against the rocks.—The rest of the crew were employed in the unceasing toil of emptying the hold of the water which otherwise would certainly have sunk her.

Even while Wallace tugged at the oar, or stood at the head of the ship watching the thousand embattled cliffs which threatened their destruction, his eye looked for the vessel which contained his friends.—But the liquid mountains which rolled around him prevented all view; and with hardly a hope of seeing them more, he pursued his attempt to preserve the lives of those committed to his care.

All this while Lady Mar lay in the little cabin in a state of stupefaction. Having fainted at the first alarm of danger, she had fallen from swoon to swoon; and now remained almost insensible upon the bosoms of her maids. In a moment the vessel struck with a great shock, and the next instant it seemed to move with a velocity incredible.—"The whirlpool! the whirlpool!" resounded from the deck. But the next instant the rapid motion seemed suddenly checked, and the women fancying they had struck again, shrieked aloud.—The cry, and the terrified words which accompanied it, aroused Lady Mar. —She started from her trance, and while the confusion redoubled above, rushed upon the deck.

The mountainous waves and lowering clouds, borne forward by the blast, anticipated the dreariness of night. The last rays of the setting sun had long passed away; and the deep shadows of the driving heavens cast the whole into a gloom even more terrific than absolute darkness, as it partially shewed the horrid instruments of destruction. The high and beetling rocks, towering aloft in precipitous walls, mocked the hopes of the sea-beaten mariner, should he even buffet the waters to reach their base. And the jagged shingles, deeply-shelving beneath the waves, or projecting their pointed summits above, shewed the crew where the rugged death would meet them.

A little onward, a rough pediment of rocks bedded the base of immense cliffs which faced the cause of their present alarm; (a vast hollow at the bottom of the sea, which, at overflowing tides, and in stormy weather, formed a whirlpool almost as terrific as that of Scarba). The moment the powerful blast, against which the weak arm of the Earl in vain contended, drove the vessel on the outward edge of the first circle of the vortex, Wallace, with the same rope in his hand with which he had saved the life of the seaman, leaped from the deck on the opposite rocks; and calling part of the men to follow him with similar ropes, fastened like his own to the head and stern of the vessel; he strove, by towing it along, to stem the suction of the whirlpool.

It was at this instant that Lady Mar rushed upon deck. The Earl perceived her the moment she appeared. "Down, for your life, Joanna!" cried he. She answered him not, but looked wildly around her. No where could she see Wallace. "Have I drowned him?" cried she, in a voice of phrenzy, and striking the women from her who would have held her back; "Let me clasp him, even in the deep waters!"

"Drowned who?" exclaimed the Earl, who happily had lost the last sentence in the roaring of the storm.

"Wallace, Wallace!" cried she, wringing her hands, and still struggling with her women. At that moment a huge wave sinking before her, discovered the object of her fears standing on the centre of a rock; or rather, followed by the men in the same laborious task, tugging forward the rope to which the bark was attached. She gazed at them with wonder and affright, for notwithstanding the beating of the elements, (which seemed to find their breasts of iron, and their feet armed with some preternatural adhesive property, when the surges would have swept them from the cliff;) they continued to bear along the vessel. Fortunately they now went, not against the wind though against the waves. Sometimes they pressed forward for a few minutes on the level edge of the rock; then a chasm yawning between, forced them to leap from cliff to cliff, or to spring on some more elevated projection. Thus contending with the vortex and the storm, they at last arrived at the doubling of Cuthon-rock; the point that was to clear them of this minor Corie-Vrekin; when the rope which Wallace held, broke, and with the shock he fell backwards into the sea. The fore-mast man, who saw the fatal plunge, uttered a dreadful cry: But ere it was echoed by his fellows, Wallace had risen above the waves, and beating their whelming waters with his invincible arm, soon gained the vessel and jumped upon the deck: the point was doubled, and the next instant the vessel struck. The men on the rocks cried, "There is no hope of getting her off. All must take to the water or perish."

## The Scottish Chiefs

Again Lady Mar (who in the former case her husband had forced to go below) appeared. At sight of Wallace she forgot every thing but him; and perhaps would have thrown herself into his arms, had not the Earl, supposing she was so eagerly advancing to himself, caught her in his.

"Are we to die?" cried she to Wallace, in a voice of piercing horror.

"I trust that God has decreed otherwise," was his reply; "compose yourself; and all may be well."

As Lord Mar, from his yet unhealed wounds, could not swim, a raft was soon constructed by Wallace, on which he placed the Earl and Countess, with the nurse and child: The moment it was launched, while the men were towing it through the breakers, he jumped into the sea to swim by its side, and to be in readiness in case of any accident happening to those upon it. Another raft followed with the rest of the women; and was dragged along by the remainder of the crew, who in emulation of the chief, bravely took to the waves.

Having gained the shore, or rather the broken rocks that lie at the foot of the stupendous crags which surround the isle of Arran, Wallace and his sturdy assistants conveyed the Countess and her terrified women up their rugged acclivities. Where it was possible to climb with such a burthen, they carried them; and where it was not, they assisted them to scramble up alone. Fortunately for the ship-wrecked voyagers, at this period, though the wind raged, its violence was of some advantage, for it nearly cleared the heavens of clouds, and allowed the moon to send forth her guiding light. By her lamp, one of the men, who had gone a little to the right of the rest, discovered the mouth of a huge cave.

His communication was instantly made to Wallace, who glad of such a shelter for his dripping charges, soon had the comfort of seeing them seated in safety on its rocky floor. The child, whom he had guarded in his own arms during the difficult ascent, he now laid on the bosom of its mother. Lady Mar, in a transport of mingled feelings, kissed the hand that relinquished it, and gave way to a flood of grateful tears.

The Earl, as he dropped almost powerless against the side of the cave, yet had strength enough to press Wallace to his heart:—"Ever preserver of me and mine!" cried he, "How must I bless thee!—My wife, my child—"

"Have been saved to you, my friend," interrupted Wallace, "by the presiding care of Him who walked the waves!—Without his especial arm, we must all have perished in this awful night; therefore, let our thanksgivings be directed to him alone."

"So be it!" returned the Earl; and dropping on his knees, he breathed forth so pathetic and sublime a prayer of thanks, that the Countess, whose unhappy infatuation saw no higher power in this great preservation than the hand of the man she adored, trembled and bent her head upon the bosom of her child. She could not utter the solemn Amen which, at its close, was repeated by every voice in the cave. She felt that guilt was cherished in her heart; and she could not lift her eyes to join with those who, with the boldness of innocence, called on heaven to attest the sanctity of their vows.

Sleep soon sealed every weary eye excepting those of Wallace. A racking anxiety respecting the fate of the other vessel, in which were the brave Bothwellers and his two dear friends, filled his mind with dreadful pictures of what might have been their distress, with sad forebodings that they had not out-lived the storm. Sometimes, when wearied nature for a few minutes sunk into slumber, he would start grief-struck from the body of Edwin floating on the briny flood; and as he awoke, a cold despondence would tell him that his dream was perhaps too true. "O! I love thee Edwin," exclaimed he to himself, "and I fear my hermit-heart was to be separated from all but a patriot's love! So is Heaven's will; and why then did I think of loving thee?—must thou too die, that Scotland may have no rival, that Wallace may feel himself quite alone?"

Thus he sat musing, and listening with many a sigh to the dying gusts of wind and fainter dashing of the water; at last the former gradually subsided, and the latter obeying the retreating tide, sunk away in hoarse murmurs.

Morning began to dawn, and spreading upon the mountains of the opposite shore, shed a soft light over their misty sides. All was tranquil and full of beauty. That element which had lately in its rage threatened to engulf them all, now flowed by the rocks at the foot of the cave in gentle undulations; and where the spiral cliffs gave a little resistance, the rays of the rising sun, striking on the bursting waves, turned their vapoury showers into dropping gems.

As his companions were yet wrapped in profound sleep, he stole away to learn on what spot of the Isle of Arran they were cast. Close by the mouth of the cave he saw a cleft in the rock, into which he turned, and finding the footing sufficiently secure, soon gained the summit. Looking around, he found himself at the skirts of a chain

## The Scottish Chiefs

of high hills which seemed to stretch from side to side of the island, while their tops rose in alpine successions in a thousand grotesque and towering forms. The ptarmigan and capperkaily were screaming from the upper regions; while the nimble roes with their fawns were bounding through the green defiles. No trace of human habitation appeared. But from the size and population of the island he knew that he could not be very far from inhabitants; and thinking it best to return to the cave, and send the sailors in search of them, he retraced his steps. The vapours were now rolling in snowy wreaths down the opposite mountains, whose heads shining in resplendent purple, seemed to view themselves in the bright reflections of the now smooth sea. Nature, like a proud conqueror, appeared to have put on a triumphal garb, in exultation of the devastation she had committed the night before. Wallace shuddered as the parallel occurred to his mind, and turned away from the scene.

As soon as he re-entered the cave, at the mouth of which lay the seamen, he awoke them and sent them off on his mission. An hour had hardly elapsed, during which time he watched by the sides of his still sleeping friends, before the men returned, bringing with them a large boat and its proprietor; but alas! no tidings of Murray and Edwin, whom he had hoped might have been driven somewhere on the island. In bringing the boat round to the creek under the rock, the men discovered that a strong wave of the sea had seized their wreck, and driven it between two projecting rocks, where it now lay wedged. Though ruined as a vessel, yet sufficient seemed to have held together to warrant their exertions to save the property. Accordingly they entered it, and drew thence most of the valuables which belonged to Lord Mar. While this was doing, Wallace reascended to the cave, and found the Earl awake. He told him that a boat was ready for their re-embarkation. "But where, my friend, are my nephews?" inquired his lordship, "alas, that this fatal expedition has robbed me of them!"

Wallace tried to inspire him with a hope he hardly dared credit himself; that they had been saved on some more distant shore. The voices of the chiefs awakened most of the women; the rest they aroused; but the Countess still slept. Mar, suggesting the probability, that were she awake, she would resist trusting herself to the waves again, desired that she might be taken on board without disturbing her. This was readily done, as the men had only to take up the two extremities of the plaid on which she lay, and so carry her with an imperceptible motion to the boat. The Earl, who was already in, received her head on his bosom; and all being on board, the rowers struck their oars, and once more they launched upon the sea.

While they were yet midway between the isles, with a bright sun playing its beams upon the gently rippling waves, the Countess heaving a deep sigh, slowly opened her eyes. All around glared with the light of day; she felt the motion of the boat, and raising her head, saw that she was again embarked on the treacherous element on which she had lately experienced so many terrors. She grew deadly pale, and grasped her husband's hand. "My dear Joanna," cried he, "be not alarmed; we are all safe."

"And Sir William Wallace has left us?" demanded she.

"No Madam;" answered a voice from the steerage; "not till this party be safe at Bute, do I quit it."

She looked round at him with a grateful smile, "Ever generous! How could I for a moment doubt my preserver!"

Wallace bowed, but remained silent. And her ladyship sitting up and noticing her child, they passed calmly along till the vessel came in sight of a little birling, which bounding over the waves, was presently so near the Earl's boat that the figures in each could be distinctly seen, and Wallace to his rapturous surprise beheld Murray and Edwin. That moment the latter, with a cry of joy, leaped into the sea, and in the next instant was over the boat-side and clasped in the arms of Wallace. Real transport, true happiness, now dilated the heart of the before desponding chief. He pressed the dear boy again and again to his bosom, and kissed his white forehead with all the rapture of the fondest brother. "Thank God! thank God!" was all that Edwin could say; while, at every effort he made to tear himself away from Wallace to congratulate his uncle on his safety, his heart overflowing towards his friend, opened afresh, and he clung the closer to his breast; till at last exhausted with happiness, the little hero of Dumbarton gave way to the sensibility of his tender age, and the chief felt his bosom wet with the joy-drawn tears of his youthful knight.

While this was passing, the birling had drawn close to the boat, and Murray shook hands with his uncle and aunt, crying to Wallace, "That urchin is such a monopolizer, that I see you have not a greeting for any body else!" Edwin on this raised his April face, and turned to the affectionate welcomes of Lord Mar. Wallace stretched out his hand to the ever gay Lord Andrew, and inviting him into the boat, soon learnt, that on the fearful night of the storm, the vessel in which Murray and his company were, (being appointed with a more efficient helmsman than



## The Scottish Chiefs

he who steered Lord Mar's into such troubled waters) made direct to the nearest creek in Bute; not doing as the other did, who, until danger stopped him, foolishly continued to aim for Rothsay. By this prudence, without having been in much peril, or sustained any fatigue, the whole party landed safely. The night coming on dark and tremendous; and as the seamen not doubting that the Earl's rowers had carried him into a similar haven, Murray and his young companion kept themselves very easy in a fisher's hut till morning. At an early hour, however, they determined to set out; and having rewarded the boatmen, put themselves at the head of their Bothwellers, and expecting they should come up with the Earl and his party at Rothsay, walked over to the castle. Their consternation was unutterable when they found that Lord Mar was not there, neither had he been heard of. Full of terror, Murray and Edwin immediately threw themselves into a birling, resolved to seek their friends upon the seas. And when they did espy them, the rapture of Edwin was so great, that not even the unfathomable gulph could stop him from flying to the embrace of his friend.

While mutual felicitations passed, the boats, now nearly side by side, reached the shore; and the seamen, jumping on the rocks, moored their vessels under the projecting towers of Rothsay. The old steward, in hope of the barque's preservation, and in expectation of its arrival, having prepared every thing for the reception of his Lord and Lady, on perceiving the boats draw near the land, hastened down to receive a master who had not blest his aged eyes for many a year. At sight of him he expressed his exultation with a vehemence that was quite clamorous: and when he took the infant in his arms that was to be the future representative of the house of Mar, he wept aloud. The Earl spoke to him affectionately, and then walked on with Edwin, whom he called to support him up the bank. Murray led the Countess out of the boat, while the Bothwellers so thronged about Wallace, congratulating themselves on his safety, that she saw there was no hope of his yielding to her his arm.

Having entered the castle, the steward led them into a room in which he had spread a plentiful repast. Here, Murray (having before recounted the adventures of his sail) called for a history of what had befallen his friends. The Earl, happy to pour forth the grateful feelings of his heart, gladly took up the tale; and with many a glance of gratitude to Wallace, narrated the perilous events of their shipwreck, and their providential preservation on the isle of Arran.

Happiness now seemed to have shed her heavenly influence over every bosom present. All hearts owned the grateful effects of the late rescue. The rapturous joy of Edwin burst forth into a thousand sallies of ardent and luxuriant imagination. The high spirits of Murray turned every transient subject which might excite thoughtfulness, at least into a mirth-moving jest. The veteran Earl seemed restored to health and to youth again. And Wallace felt the sun of consolation expanding in his bosom; he had met a heart, though a young one, on which his soul might repose: That dear selected brother of his affection was saved from the whelming waves; and all his superstitious dreams of a mysterious doom, vanished before this manifestation of heavenly goodness. His friend too, the gallant Murray, was spared! How many subjects had he for un murmuring gratitude! and with an unclouded brow and happy spirit, he yielded to the impulse of the scene. He smiled; and with an endearing graciousness listened to every fond speaker, while his ingenuous replies bespoke the treasures of love which sorrow had locked in his heart.

The complacency with which he regarded every one; the pouring out of his beneficent spirit, which seemed to embrace all as his dearest kindred, turned every eye and heart towards him as to the source of every bliss, as to a being who seemed made to love and be beloved by all. Lady Mar looked at him, listened to him, with her wrapt soul seated in her eye. In his presence all was transport.

But when he withdrew for the night, what was then the state of her feelings! When the happy party separated, Murray, in the joyous effervescence of his spirits, embraced his aunt, and declared that the friendly salute should go round. Edwin modestly pressed lady Mar's cheek; and it was Wallace's turn to touch its crimson surface. He advanced to her with a look of sweetness; she trembled; he took her hand. "It is not my privilege, dear lady," said he, "to ascend so high," and pressing her hand gracefully to his breast, he left the room.

She had found that his heart beat violently at the moment. His face was pale, and his lips quivered. The agitation, the sweetness of his voice, the unutterable expression of his countenance, while, as he spoke, he veiled his eyes under their long brown lashes, raised such vague hopes in her bosom, that,—he being gone, she hastened her adieus to the rest; eager to retire to bed and there uninterruptedly muse on the happiness of having at last touched the heart of the man for whom she would resign all the world.

CHAP. IX.

The morning would have brought annihilation to the Countess's new-fledged hopes, had not Murray been the first to meet her, as she came from her chamber, and after hearing her describe a gay design she had just constructed, proceeded to seek his friend.

At some distance from the castle, on the cliffs, he met Wallace and Edwin. They had already been across the valley to the haven, and had ordered a boat to come immediately round to convey them to Gourrock, in their way back to Dumbarton. —"Postpone your flight, for pity's sake!" cried Murray, "if you would not kill by uncourtliness what you have preserved alive by gallantry!" He then proceeded more seriously to relate that Lady Mar was preparing a feast, which was to be spread in the glen behind the castle; "And if you do not stay over noon to partake it," added he, "we may expect that she will bribe all the witches in the isle to sink us before we reach the shore."

Wallace, though reluctant to pass an hour from the spot where he believed his duty called him, at last was prevailed on by the gay eloquence of Murray; and consenting to remain till evening, walked back to the castle.

The meeting of the morning was not less cordial than the separation of the night before; and as Lady Mar withdrew soon after breakfast, to give orders for her rural feast, time was left to the Earl for the arrangement of matters of more consequence. In a conversation which he held with Murray the preceding evening, he had learnt, that just before that young Lord left Dumbarton, he had, through Sir Eustace Maxwell's means, sent a friar from the town with a letter to the Prior of St. Fillans, enclosing one to Helen, informing her of the taking of the castle, and of the safety of her friends. This having satisfied the Earl with regard to his daughter, he did not mention her at all to Wallace, as he rather avoided enumbering his occupied mind with domestic subjects; and, therefore, when they met, their conversation was, generally, wholly dedicated to the one great theme.

While the Earl and his friends were marshalling armies, taking towns, and storming castles; the Countess, intent on other conquests, (meaning to destroy that integrity by soft delights, which rugged scenes might render invulnerable) was trailing her wreaths of mingled flowers along the verdant canopy of pendant birch which over-hung the spot she had selected for her entertainment. The tables were covered with moss; and strewn with daisies, wild honey-suckles and blue bells displayed an altar to the Sylvan deities which wooed every sense.

When her Lord and his guests were summoned to the feast, she met them at the mouth of the glen. Having before tried the effect of splendour, she now left all to the power of her natural charms, and appeared clad in her favourite green, (now peculiarly so because she saw it was the livery of Wallace) but without other ornament than her fine dark hair braided up and fastened with a gold pin. Moraig, the pretty grandchild of the steward, walked beside her like the fairy queen of the scene; so smiling did she look, so gayly was she decorated in all the flowers of spring.—"Here is the Lady of my elfin revels, holding her little king in her arms!" as the Countess spoke, Moraig held up her infant of Lady Mar, dressed like herself, in a tissue gathered from the field. The sweet babe laughed and crowed, and made a spring to leap into Wallace's arms. The Chief took him, and with an affectionate smile pressed his little cheek to his.

"I will leave you to nurse," continued the Countess, "while I do the little Lord's honours to the rest of his guests."—She then said a few graceful words to each; and putting the Earl at the top of the table by the side of the fairy queen, stationed Murray and Edwin on each side of them; and seating herself at the bottom, there was no place for Wallace but that by her side.

Though he had felt the repugnance of a delicate mind, and the shuddering of a man who held his person consecrated to the memory of the only woman he had ever loved, though he had felt these sentiments mingle into an abhorrence of the Countess, when she allowed her head to drop on his breast in the saloon at the citadel; and though, while he remained at Dumbarton, (without absolutely charging her to himself, with any thing designedly immodest) he had certainly avoided her;—yet since the wreck, the danger she had escaped, the general joy of all meeting again, had wiped away even the remembrance of his former cause of dislike; and he now sat by her, as by a sister, fondling her child; although at every sweet caress it reminded him of what might have been his,—of hopes lost to him for ever.

The repast over, the piper of the adjacent cottages appeared; and placing himself on a projecting rock, at the

## The Scottish Chiefs

blast of his merry instrument the young peasants of both sexes, ready drest for the occasion, came forward and began the dance.—At this sight Edwin seized the little hand of Moraig, and ran with her to the spot, while Lord Andrew called a pretty lass from amongst the Countess's maids, and joined the group. The happy Earl, with many a hearty laugh, enjoyed the rustic jollity of his people; and while the steward stood at his Lord's back describing whose sons and daughters passed before him in the reel, Mar remembered their parents; their fathers, as once his companions in the chase or on the wave; and their mothers, as the pretty maidens whom he used to pursue over the hills in the merry time of shealing.

Lady Mar watched the countenance of Wallace as he looked upon the happy group: it was placid as heaven, and a soft complacency illumined his eye.—How different was the expression in hers, had he marked it! All within her was in tumults, and the characters were but too legibly imprinted on her face. But he did not look on her; for the child, whom the perfume of the flowers overpowered, began to cry. He rose, and having resigned it to the nurse, turned into a narrow vista of trees and walked slowly on, unconscious whither he went.

Lady Mar, with an eager, though almost aimless haste, followed him with a light step till she saw him turn out of the vista; and then she lost sight of him. To walk with him undisturbed in so deep a seclusion; to improve the impression which she was sure she had made upon his heart, into something more tender; to teach him to forget his Marion, in the hope of one day possessing her! All these thoughts ran in this vain woman's head:—and inwardly rejoicing that the shattered health of her husband promised her a ready freedom to become the wife of the man to whom she would gladly belong in honour or in dishonour; she hastened forward, as if the accomplishment of her wishes depended upon this meeting. Peeping through the trees at the end of the vista, she saw him standing with folded arms, looking intently into the bosom of a large lake, which was so thickly surrounded with willows, that she could only perceive him as the wind tossed aside the branches.

Having stood for some time, he walked on. Several times she essayed to emerge and join him; but a sudden awe of him, a conviction of that saintly purity which would shrink from the guilty vows she was meditating to pour into his ear; a recollection of the ejaculation with which he had accosted her before her hovering figure, when she haunted his footsteps that night on the banks of the Cart: these thoughts made her pause. He might again mistake her for the same dear object!—This image it was not her interest to recal. And to approach him near to unveil her heart to him, and to be repulsed: there was madness in the idea, and she retreated.

She had no sooner returned to the scene of festivity, than she repented having allowed, what she deemed an idle alarm of over-strained delicacy, to drive her from the lake.—She would have hastened back again, still in the hope of coming up with Wallace before he left it, had not two or three aged female peasants surrounded her, and engaged her, in spite of her struggles for extrication, in listening to long stories respecting her Lord's youth. She had been with these women, and by the side of the dancers, for nearly an hour before Wallace re-appeared. She smiled on him as he approached; "Where, truant, have you been?"

"In a beautiful solitude," returned he, "amongst a luxuriant grove of willows."—

"Aye!" cried she, "it is called Glenshealeach; and a sad scene was acted there!—About ten years ago a lady of this island drowned herself in the lake they hang over, because the man she loved despised her."—

"Unhappy woman!" observed Wallace.

"Then you would have pitied her?" rejoined Lady Mar.

"He cannot be a man that would not pity a woman under those circumstances."

"Then you would not have consigned her to such a fate?"

Wallace was startled by the peculiar tone in which this simple question was asked.—It recalled a recollection of her action in the saloon of the citadel, and unconsciously turning a penetrating look upon her, his eyes met hers. He need not have heard farther to have learnt more. She hastily looked down and coloured; and he wishing to misunderstand a language so disgraceful to herself, so dishonouring to her husband, with a negligent air gave some trifling answer; and then making some observation about the Earl, advanced to him. His lordship was now tired with the scene, and taking the arm of Wallace, they returned together into the house.

Edwin and Murray soon followed, and arrived time enough to see from the window, the little pinnacle that was come to take them to the main land, draw up under the castle and throw out her moorings. The Countess too, saw its blue streamers, and hastening into the room where the young chieftains sat, (for the Earl being over-wearied, had retired to repose) inquired the reason of that boat having drawn so near the castle.

"Only that it may take us from it," replied Murray.

## The Scottish Chiefs

The Countess fixed her eyes with a powerful and unequivocal expression upon Wallace.—"My gratitude is ever due to your kindness, my dear madam," said he, still wishing to be blind to what he could not but perceive; "and that we may ever deserve it," said he, looking at his friends, "we go to keep the enemy from your doors."

"Yes," added Murray, "and to keep a more insidious foe from our own too; for Edwin and I feel it rather a dangerous sport to bask too long in these sunny bowers."

"But surely your chief is not afraid!" said she, casting a soft glance at Wallace. "And nevertheless I must fly," returned he, bowing to her.—"That you positively shall not," added she, with a fluttering joy at her heart, thinking she was about to conquer; "you stir not a step this night, else I shall brand you all as a band of cowards."

"Call us by all the names in the poltroon's calendar," cried Murray, seeing by the countenance of Wallace that his resolution was not moved; "and I shall gallop off from your black-eyed Judith, as if chased by Calypso herself."—"So, dear aunt," rejoined Edwin, smiling, "if you do not mean to play Circe to our Ulysses, give us leave to go!" Lady Mar looked at the boy intently as he innocently uttered these words.—"Are you indeed my nephew?" whispered she. A strange jealousy glanced on her heart; she had never seen Edwin Ruthven; the blooming cheek of this youth, his smooth skin, his almost impassioned fondness for Wallace: all made a wild suspicion rush upon her mind. Edwin, scarcely understanding her question, answered gaily,—"I hope so, for I am Lord Mar's; and besides, I love to be related to all handsome ladies!" as he said so, he snatched a kiss from her hand, and darted after Murray, who had disappeared to give some speeding directions respecting the boat.

Left thus alone with the object of her every wish, in the moment when she thought she was going to lose him, perhaps for ever, she forgot all prudence, all reserve, and laying her hand on his arm, as he with a respectful bow was also moving away, arrested his steps. She held him fast; but agitation preventing her speaking, she trembled violently; and weeping, dropped her head upon his shoulder.—He was motionless.—Her tears redoubled.—He felt the embarrassment of his situation; and at last extricating his tongue, which surprise and shame for her had chained, in a gentle voice he inquired the cause of her uneasiness.—"If for the safeties of your nephews—"

"No, no," cried she, interrupting him, "read my fate in that of the Lady of Glenshealeach!"

Again he was silent; astonished, fearful of too promptly understanding so disgraceful a truth, he found no words in which to answer her; and her emotions became so violent, that he expected she would have swooned in his arms.

"Cruel, cruel Wallace!" at last cried she, clinging to his arms; for he had once or twice attempted to disengage and reseal her on the bench; "your heart is steeled, or it would understand mine. It would at least pity the wretchedness it has created. But I am despised, and I can yet find the watery grave from which you so lately rescued me."

To dissemble longer would have been folly. Wallace now resolutely took the the Countess by both her arms, and seating her, though with gentleness, addressed her.—"Your husband, Lady Mar, is my friend: had I even a heart to give to woman, not one sigh should arise in it to his dishonour. But I am lost to all warmer affections than that of friendship. I may regard man as my brother, woman as my sister; but never more can I look on female form with love."

Lady Mar's tears now flowed in a more tempered current.

"But were it otherwise," cried she, "only tell me, that had I not been bound with chains which my kinsmen forced upon me; had I not been made the property of a man who, however estimable, was of too paternal years for me to love; ah! tell me if these tears should have flowed in vain?"

Wallace seemed to hesitate what to answer.

Wrought up to agony, she threw herself on his breast, exclaiming, "Answer! but drive me not to despair.—I never loved man before—and now to be scorned! —Oh, kill me, too dear Wallace, but tell me not that you never could have loved me!"

Wallace was alarmed at her vehemence. "Lady Mar," returned he, "I am incapable of saying any thing to you, that is inimical to your duty to the best of men. I will even forget this distressing conversation, and continue through life to revere, equal with himself, the wife of my friend."

"And I am to be stabbed with this?" replied she, in a voice of indignant anguish.

"You are to be healed with it, Lady Mar," returned he, "for it is not a man, like the rest of his sex, that now addresses you, but a being whose heart is petrified to marble. I could feel no throb of your's; I should be insensible to all your charms, were I even vile enough to see no evil in trampling upon your husband's rights. Yes, were

## The Scottish Chiefs

virtue lost to me, still memory would speak; still would she urge that the chaste and last kiss imprinted by my Marion on these lips, should live there in unblemished sanctity till I again meet her angel embraces in the world to come!"

The Countess awed by his solemnity, but not put from her suit, only clasped her hands together and exclaimed, "What she was, I would be to thee—thy consoler, thine adorer!—time may set me free; O! till then, only give me leave to love thee, and I shall be happy!"

"You dishonour yourself lady," returned he, "by these petitions.—And for what? In loving me, you love a senseless stone; you plunge your soul in guilty wishes; you sacrifice your peace, and your self-esteem to a phantom; for, I repeat, I am dead to woman, and the voice of love sounds like the funeral knell of her who will never breathe it to me more." He rose as he spoke. And the Countess, pierced to the heart, and almost despairing of now retaining any part of his esteem, was devising what next to say, to deprecate the scorn she dreaded, when Murray came into the room.

Wallace instantly observed that his countenance was troubled. "What has happened?" inquired he.

"A messenger from the main land has arrived with bad news from Ayr."

"Are they of a private or a public nature?" rejoined Wallace.

"Of both.—There has been a horrid massacre, in which the heads of many noble families have fallen." As he spoke, the paleness of his countenance revealed to his friend that part of the information, which he had found himself unable to communicate.

"I comprehend my loss," cried Wallace, "Sir Ronald Crawford is slain!— Bring the messenger in."

Murray withdrew; and Wallace seating himself, remained with a fixed and stern countenance gazing on the ground. Lady Mar durst not breathe, for fear of disturbing the horrid stillness which seemed to lock up his grief and indignation.

Lord Andrew re-entered with a stranger. Wallace rose to meet him; and seeing Lady Mar, "Countess," said he, "these bloody recitals are not for your ears," and waving her to withdraw, she left the room.

"This gallant stranger," said Murray, "is Sir John Graham. He has just left that new theatre of Southron treachery."

"I have hastened hither," cried the Knight, "to call your victorious arm to take a signal vengeance on the murderers of your grandfather. He and eighteen other Scottish chiefs, have been treacherously put to death in the Barns of Ayr."

Graham then proceeded to narrate the event more circumstantially. He, and his father Lord Dundaff, having been on the south coast of Scotland, were returning homewards, when his lordship not being very well, they stopped at Ayr. They arrived the very day that Lord Aymer De Valence entered it a fugitive from Dumbarton castle. Much as that Earl might have wished to keep the victory of Wallace a secret from the inhabitants of Ayr, he found it impossible. Two or three soldiers (who had escaped before their lord, and now entered the town with him) whispered the hard fighting they had endured; and thus, in half an hour after the arrival of the English Earl, every soul knew that the recovery of Scotland was begun. Elated with this intelligence, the Scots went under night from house to house, congratulating each other on so miraculous an interference in their favour:—And many stole to Sir Ronald Crawford's to felicitate the venerable knight on his glorious grandson. The good old man listened to their animated eulogiums on Wallace with meek joy: and when Lord Dundaff, who offered his congratulations with the rest, said, "But when all Scotland lay in vassalage, where did he imbibe this royal spirit, to tread down tyrants, and to command by virtue alone?" the venerable patriarch replied;—"He was always a noble boy. In infancy he was the defender of every child who was oppressed by boys of greater power; he was even the champion of the brute creation, for no poor animal was ever allowed to be tortured with impunity near him. The old looked on him for comfort, the young for protection. From infancy to manhood he has been a benefactor, and though the cruelty of our enemies have widowed his youthful years; though he should go childless to the grave, the brightness of his virtues will spread more glories round the name of Wallace, than a thousand posterities."

The next morning this venerable old man, and other chiefs of similar consequence in that quarter of the country, were summoned by Sir Richard Arnulf, to the judgment-hall in the governor's palace, there to deliver in a schedule of their estates, that quiet possession might be granted to them under the great seal of Lord Aymer De Valence the deputy Warden of Scotland, who was just arrived at Ayr.

The grey-headed knight, not being so active as the others of more juvenile years, happened to be the last who

## The Scottish Chiefs

entered this tiger's den. Wrapped in a tartan plaid, with his silver hair covered with a blue bonnet, he was walking along, supported between two of his domestics, when Sir John Graham met him at the gate of the palace. He smiled on him as he passed, and whispered—"It will not be long before my Wallace makes even the forms of vassalage unnecessary; and then these failing limbs may sit at home, undisturbed, under the fig-tree and vine of his planting!"

"God grant it!" returned Graham; and he saw Sir Ronald admitted within the interior gate. The servants were ordered to remain without the portal. Sir John walked about some time, expecting the re-appearance of the knight, whom he intended to assist in leading home; but after an hour's stay, finding no signs of any regress from the palace, he thought his father might be wondering at his delay, and he turned his steps towards his own lodgings. As he passed along, he met several Southron detachments hurrying across the streets. In the midst of some of these companies he saw one or two Scottish men of rank whom he had known in more distant parts of the kingdom. By their countenances, he guessed they were prisoners; and as he could foresee nothing but danger should he recognise them, he passed on. Indeed the first he had met hinted to him this necessary prudence; for as Graham, seeing an old acquaintance under such painful circumstances, was hastening towards him, the noble Scot raised his menaced hand and turned away his head. Graham instantly retreated, but the soldiers for some time afterwards looking back, regarded him with an air of suspicion. This was a sufficient warning to the young knight; and soon after darting into an obscure alley which led to the gardens of his father's lodgings, he was hurrying forward, when he saw one of Lord Dundaff's men running breathlessly towards him.

"Fly, Sir John!" cried the man, "if you would save your father!"

The honest creature then briefly informed his young master that a party of armed men had come under De Valence's warrant, to seize Lord Dundaff and to take him to prison; there to lie with others, who, like himself, were charged with having taken a part in a conspiracy with the grandfather of the insurgent Wallace.

The officer of the band who took Lord Dundaff, told him in the most insulting language, that "Sir Ronald his ringleader, with eighteen nobles his accomplices, had all suffered the punishment of their crime; and were lying headless trunks in the judgment hall."

"Fly, therefore, my master;" repeated the man, "fly to Sir William Wallace, and require his hand to avenge his kinsman's blood, and to free his countrymen from prison. These are your father's commands: He directed me to seek you out, and to give them to you."

Graham, alarmed for the life of his father, hesitated how to act. To leave him, seemed to be abandoning him to the death the others had received; and yet only by obeying him, could he have any hopes of averting his threatened fate. Once seeing the path he ought to pursue, he immediately struck into it; and giving his signet to the man, to assure Lord Dundaff of his obedience; he mounted a horse, which the faithful creature had brought to the town end; and setting off full speed, allowed nothing to stay him (changing his horses as fast as they tired) till he reached Dumbarton castle. There hearing that Wallace was gone to Bute, he threw himself into a boat, and plying every oar, reached that island in a shorter space of time than the voyage had ever before been effected.

Being now brought into the presence of the chief whom he had sought with such breathless expedition; he narrated his dismal tale with a simplicity and pathos which would have instantly drawn the sword of Wallace, had he had no kinsman to avenge, no friend to release from the Southron dungeons. But as the case stood, his bleeding grandfather lay before his eyes, and the axe hung over the head of the virtuous nobles of his country.

Wallace heard the young chieftain to an end without speaking, or altering the fixed determination of his countenance. But at the close, with an augmented suffusion of blood in his face, and his brows denouncing some tremendous fate, he rose. "Sir John Graham," said he, "I attend you."

"Whither?" demanded Murray.

"To Ayr;" answered Wallace, "this moment I will set out for Dumbarton to bring away the sinews of my strength; and then this arm shall shew how I loved that good old man."

"Your men," interrupted Graham, "are already awaiting you on the opposite shore. I presumed to command for you; for on entering Dumbarton, and finding you were absent; after having briefly recounted my errand to Lord Lennox; I dared to interpret your mind and to order Sir Alexander Scrymgeour and Sir Roger Kirkpatrick, with all your own force, to follow me to the coast of Renfrew."

"Thank you, my friend!" cried Wallace, grasping his hand, "you read my soul. We go directly. I cannot stay to bid your uncle farewell;" said he to Lord Andrew, "remain and tell him to bless me with his prayers; and then, dear

## The Scottish Chiefs

Murray, follow me to Ayr."

Edwin, ignorant of what the stranger had imparted to Lord Andrew, and of what was the subject of his conference with Wallace, at the sight of the chiefs approaching from the castle-gate, hastened forward with the news that all was ready for their embarkation. He was hurrying out his information, when the altered countenance of his general checked him. He looked at the stranger; his features were agitated and severe. He turned towards his cousin; all there was grave and distressed. Again he glanced at Wallace, and drew nearer to seek an explanation; but every look threatened, no word was spoken; and Edwin saw him leap into the boat, and followed by the stranger. The astonished boy, though not noticed, would not be left behind, and stepping in also, sat down beside his chief.

"I shall be after you in an hour," exclaimed Murray. The seamen pushed off, and giving loose to their swelling sail, in five minutes they were wafted out of the little harbour, and turning a point, lost sight of the castle.

"Here is a list of the murdered chiefs, and of those who are now in the dungeons expecting the like treatment," said Graham, holding out a piece of parchment, "it was given to me by my faithful servant." Wallace took it, but seeing his grandfather's name at the top, he could look no further; closing the scroll, "Gallant Graham," said he, "I want no stimulus to lead me to the extirpation I meditate. If God blesses my arms, not a perpetrator of this horrid massacre shall be alive to-morrow in Ayr, to repeat the deed."

"What massacre?" Edwin ventured to inquire. "Read that parchment," said Wallace, "and it will tell you."

Edwin took the roll, and on seeing the words, A List of the Scottish Chiefs murdered on the 18th of June, 1297, in the Judgment Hall of the English Barons at Ayr; his cheek, rendered pale by the suspense of his mind, now reddened with the hue of indignation: but when his eye, immediately afterwards, fell on the venerated name of his general's grandfather, his horror-struck eye sought the face of Wallace; it was dark as before; and he was now in earnest discourse with Graham.

Edwin, forbearing to interrupt him, continued to read over the blood-registered names. After Sir Ronald Crawford's, immediately followed that of Sir Bryce Blair, then Sir Neil Montgomery, and those of the Baron of Auckinleck, Sir Walter Barclay, Sir Thomas Boyd, and the Chieftain of Kennedy. In turning the page to read farther, his eye glanced to the opposite side, and he saw at the head of A List of Prisoners in the Dungeons of Ayr, the name of Lord Dundaff; and immediately after, that of Lord Ruthven! He uttered a piercing cry, and extending his arms to Wallace, who turned round at so unusual a sound, the terror-struck boy exclaimed, "My father is in their hands! Oh Sir William, if you are indeed my brother, fly to Ayr and save him!"

Wallace rose instantly, and taking up the open list, which Edwin had dropped, he saw the name of Lord Ruthven amongst the prisoners; and folding his arms around this affectionate son; "Compose yourself;" said he, "it is to Ayr I am going; and if the God of justice be my speed, your father and Lord Dundaff shall not see another day in prison.

Edwin threw himself on the neck of his friend: "My benefactor!" was all he could utter. Wallace pressed him silently in his arms.

"Who is this amiable youth?" inquired Graham, "to which of the noble companions of my captived father, is he son?"

"To William Ruthven," answered Wallace, "the valiant Lord of the Carse of Gowrie. And it is a noble scion from so glorious a root. He it was that enabled me to win Dumbarton. Look up, my sweet brother!" cried Wallace, trying to regain so tender a mind from the paralyzing terrors which had seized it; "Look up, and hear me recount the first fruits of your maiden arms, to our gallant friend!"

Edwin, covered with blushes, arising from anxious emotion, as well as from a happy consciousness of having won the praises of his general, rose from his breast, and bowing to Sir John, still leaned his head upon the shoulder of Wallace. That amiable being, who, in seeking to wipe the tear of affliction from the cheek of others, minded not the drops of blood which were distilling in secret from his own heart; began the recital of his first acquaintance with his young Sir Edwin. He enumerated every particular of his bringing the Bothwellers through the enemy-encircled mountains, to Glenfinlass; of his scaling the walls of Dumbarton, to make the way smooth for the Scots to ascend; and of his after prowess in that well-defended fortress. As Wallace proceeded, the wonder of Graham was raised to a pitch, only to be equalled by his admiration, and taking the hand of Edwin, "Receive me, brave youth," said he, "as your second brother; Sir William Wallace is your first: but this night we shall together fight for our fathers, and let that make us indeed brethren!"

## The Scottish Chiefs

Edwin pressed his cheek with his innocent lips. "Let us together free them;" cried he, "and then we shall be born twins in happiness."

"So be it!" cried Graham, "and Sir William Wallace shall be the sponsor of that hour.

Wallace smiled on them; and moving to the head of the vessel, saw, not only that they drew near the shore, but that the beach was covered with armed men. To be sure whether or no they were his own, he drew his sword, and waved it in the air. At that moment a hundred faulchions flashed in the sun-beams, and the shout of "Wallace!" came loudly on the breeze.

Graham and Edwin started on their feet, and the rowers plying their oars,—in the course of a few minutes Wallace jumped on shore, and was received with acclamations by his thronging troops.



## CHAP. X.

Wallace no sooner landed than he commenced his march. Murray came up with him on the banks of the Irwin; and as Ayr was not a very long journey from that river, at two hours before midnight the little army entered Laglane Wood, where they halted, while their general proceeded to reconnoitre the town. The wind swept in gusts through the trees, and seemed by its dismal yellings to utter warnings of the dreadful deeds he was come to perform. Wallace had already declared his plan of destruction: and Graham as a first measure, went to the spot which he had fixed on with Macdougall his servant, as a place of rendezvous. Having mentioned midnight as the most probable time of his return, Macdougall was prepared to be always there at that hour. Graham, after a short stay, re-appeared with the man, who informed Wallace, that in honour of the sequestered lands of the murdered chiefs, having been that day partitioned by De Valence amongst certain Southron lords, a grand feast was now held in the governor's palace. Under the very roof where they had shed the blood of the blindly-trusting Scots, they were now keeping this carousal!

"Then is our time to strike!" cried Wallace. And ordering detachments of his men to take possession of the avenues to the town; he with others, made a circuit to come in front of the castle-gates by a path that was less frequented than the main street. The darkness being so great that no object could be distinctly seen, they had not gone far before Macdougall, who had undertaken to be their guide, suddenly discovered, by the projection of a hill on the right, that he had lost the road.

"Never mind," answered Wallace, "our swords will find us one."

Graham, uneasy at any mistake in a situation where so much was at stake, gladly hailed a long line of light, which streamed from what he supposed the window of a cottage. In a few minutes they arrived at a thatched hovel, and heard issuing from it the wailing strains of the coronach. Graham paused. Its melancholy notes were sung by female voices; and seeing no danger in applying to such harmless inhabitants to know the way to the citadel, he proceeded to the door, and intending to knock, the weight of his mailed arm burst open its slender latch, and discovered two poor women wringing their hands over a shrouded body that lay upon the bed. Murray, whose ear had been struck with sounds never breathed over the vulgar dead, was arrested by curiosity, and looking in, wondered what noble Scot was the subject of lamentation in so lowly an abode. The stopping of these two chieftains impeded the steps of Wallace, who was pressing forward without either eye or ear for any thing but the object of his march; when the elder of the women, alarmed at this intrusion, running forward at this moment with a candle in her hand to ask their errand, the light struck upon his face: it fell from her grasp, and exclaiming with a scream of joy, "Sir William Wallace?" she rushed towards him, and threw her arms about his neck.

He instantly recognised Elspa his nurse, the faithful attendant on his grandfather's declining years, the happy matron who had decked the bridal bed of his Marion; and with a sudden anguish of recollections that almost unmanned him, he returned her affectionate embrace.

"Here he lies!" cried the old woman, drawing Sir William towards the bed, which was covered with a linen cloth; and before he had time to demand, "Who?" she pulled down the shroud and disclosed to the eyes of the shuddering spectators, the body of Sir Ronald Crawford. Wallace stood gazing on it with a look of such dreadful import, that Edwin, whose anxious eyes then sought his countenance, trembled with a nameless horror. "Oh," thought he, "to what is this noble soul reserved! Is he doomed to extirpate the enemies of Scotland, that every ill falls direct upon his head!"

"Sad, sad bier for the lord of Loudon!" cried the old woman; "a poor wake to mourn the loss of him who was the benefactor of all the country round! But had I not brought him here, the salt sea must have been his grave." Here the sobs of the poor old creature prevented her proceeding; but after a short pause, though interrupted with many vehement lamentations over the virtues of the dead, and imprecations on his murderers, she related, that as soon as the woful tidings were brought to Monkton Kirk, of the death of its master; (and brought too, by the emissaries of the Southron who was to take it in possession;) she and her sister, and the rest of the Scots who would not swear fidelity to the new lord, were driven from the house. She hastened to the bloody theatre of the massacre; and there beheld the bodies of the murdered chiefs on sledges, drawn successively to the sea-shore. Elspa presently knew that of her venerable master, by a scar on his breast, which he had received in the victorious

## The Scottish Chiefs

battle of Largs. When she saw corpse after corpse thrown with a careless hand into the splashing waves; and that a man approached to consign the honoured chief of Loudon to the same unhallowed burial, she threw herself frantically on the body; and so moved the man's compassion, that, taking advantage of the time when his comrades were out of sight, he permitted her to wrap the dead Sir Ronald in her plaid, and so carry him away between her sister and herself. But ere she raised her sacred burthen, he directed her to seek the venerable head from amongst the others which lay mingled in a sack, and drawing it forth, she placed it beside the body, and hastily retired with both, to the hovel where Wallace had found her. It was a shepherd's hut; but the desolation of the times having long ago driven away its former inhabitant, and no other abode being near, she had hoped that in so lonely an obscurity she might have performed the last rites to the remains of the murdered lord of the very lands on which she wept him: and intending to take him to the neighbouring convent, to be interred in secret by the fathers of a church he had in life endowed; she and her sister were chanting over him the sad dirge of their country, when Sir John Graham burst open their door. "Ah!" cried she, as she closed her dismal narrative; "though too lonely women were all they left of the once numerous household of Sir Ronald Crawford, to sigh the last lament over his once revered body; yet in that sad midnight hour, our earthly voices were not alone, for the wakeful spirits of his daughters hovered in the air, and joined the deep coronach!"

Wallace sighed heavily as he looked on the animated face of the aged mourner. Attachment to the venerable dead, seemed to have inspired her with thoughts beyond her station; but the heart is an able teacher, and he saw that true affection speaks but one language.

As her ardent eyes dropped from their heaven-ward gaze, they fell upon the shrouded face of her master. A napkin had been thrown across the wound of decapitation. "Lords," cried she, in a burst of recollection, "ye have not seen all the cruelty of these ruthless murderers!" At these words she suddenly withdrew the linen, and lifting up the pale head, held it wofully towards Wallace: "Here," cried she, "once more kiss these lips! They have often kissed yours when you were a babe, and as insensible to his love, as he is now to your sorrow."

Wallace received the head in his arms: the long silver beard, thick with goutts of blood, hung over his hands. He fixed his eyes on it intently for some minutes. An awful silence pervaded the room: every eye was rivetted upon him.

Looking round on his friends with a countenance whose deadly hue gave a sepulchral fire to the gloomy denunciation of his eyes. "Was it necessary," said he, "to turn my heart to iron, that I was brought to see this sight?" All the tremendous purpose of his soul was read in his countenance, while he laid the head back upon the bed, and added, "I obey thy signal Almighty Power of justice! and deep shall Ayr's street flow in blood for this!" As he spake, he rushed from the hut, and with rapid strides proceeded in profound silence towards the palace.

He well knew that no honest Scot could be under that roof. To fire it then was his determination. To destroy all at once in the theatre of their cruelty: to make an execution, not engage in a warfare of man to man, was his resolution: for, they were not soldiers he was seeking, but assassins; and to pitch his brave Scots in the open field against such unmanly wretches, would be to dishonour his men, and to give their unworthy opponents a chance for the lives they had forfeited.

All being quiet in the few streets through which he passed; and having set strong bodies of men at the mouth of every sally port of the citadel, he turned at once upon the guard at the Barbicangate, and slaying them before they could give the least alarm, he and his chosen troop entered the portal and made direct to the palace. The lights which blazed through the windows of the banqueting-hall, shewed him to the spot: and having detached Graham and Edwin to his right, to storm the Keep where their fathers were confined, he took the half-intoxicated sentinels at the palace gates by surprise, and striking them into a sleep from which they would wake no more; he fastened the doors upon the assassins. The palace was built of huge beams of wood, and therefore the fitter for his purpose. His men now surrounded the building with hurdles filled with combustibles, which they had prepared according to his directions; and when all was ready, Wallace, with the mighty spirit of retribution nerving every limb, mounted to the roof, and tearing off part of the tileing, with a flaming brand in his hand, shewed himself, glittering in arms, to the affrighted revellers beneath, and as he threw it blazing amongst them, he cried aloud, "The blood of the murdered calls for vengeance, and it comes!"

At that instant the matches were put to the faggots which surrounded the building; and the whole party springing from their seats hastened towards the doors: all were fastened on them; and retreating again into the midst of the room, they fearfully looked up to the tremendous figure above, which, like a supernatural being,

## The Scottish Chiefs

seemed come to avenge their crimes and to rain down fire upon their guilty heads. Some shook with superstitious dread; and others, driven to atheistical despair, with horrible execrations strove again to force a passage through the doors. A second glance told De Valence whose was the hand which had launched the thunderbolt at his feet; and turning to Sir Richard Arnulf, he cried in a voice of horror, "my arch-enemy is there!"

The rising smoke from within and without the building now obscured his terrific form. The shouts of the Scots as the fire covered its walls; and the streaming flames licking the windows, and pouring into every opening in the building, raised such a terror in the breasts of the wretches within, that with the most horrible cries they again and again flew to the doors to escape. Not an avenue appeared: almost suffocated with smoke, and scorched by the blazing rafters which fell from the burning roof, they at last made a desperate attempt to break a passage through the great portal. Arnulf was at their head; and sunk to abjectness by his despair, in a voice, which terror rendered piercing, he called aloud for mercy! The words reached the ear of Sir Roger Kirkpatrick, who stood nearest to the door; in a voice of thunder he replied—"That ye gave, ye shall receive! Where was mercy when our fathers and our brothers fell beneath your swords?"

Aymer De Valence came up at this moment with a wooden pillar which he and the strongest men in the company had torn from under the gallery that surrounded the room; and with all their strength dashing it against the door, they at last drove it from its bolts. But now a wall of men opposed them! Desperate at the sight, and with a burning furnace in their rear, it was not the might of man that should prevent their escape; and with the determination of despair; they rushed forward, and the foremost rank of the Scots fell. But ere the exulting Southrons, who began to hope, could press into the opened space, Wallace himself had closed upon them; and Arnulf, the merciless Arnulf whose voice had pronounced the sentence of death upon Sir Ronald Crawford, died beneath his hand.

Wallace was not aware that he had killed the governor of Ayr, till his enemies, by their terror-struck exclamations, informed him that the ruthless instigator of the massacre was slain. This event was welcome news to the Scots; and hoping that the next death would be that of De Valence, they pressed on with redoubled energy.

The soldiers of the garrison, aroused by such extraordinary noise, and alarmed by the flames of the palace, hastened, half-dressed, though with arms in their hands, to the spot. But their presence rather added to the confusion, than gave assistance to the besieged party. The men were without leaders; and not daring to put themselves in action, for fear of being afterwards punished in the case of a mischance for having presumed to move without their officers, they stood dismayed and irresolute, while those very officers, who had been all at the banquet, were falling in heaps under the swords of the resistless Scots.

The men who guarded the prisoners having their commanders with them, made a stout resistance; and one of them stealing off, gathered a few companies of the scattered forces of the garrison, and suddenly taking Graham in flank, made no inconsiderable havoc amongst that part of his division. Edwin, fearful that his friend would be overpowered, blew the signal for assistance. Wallace seeing that the day was won at the palace, left the finishing of the affair, and he hoped the seizure of De Valence, to Kirkpatrick and Murray; and drawing off a small party to reinforce Graham, he in his turn took the Southron officer by surprise. The enemy's rank's fell around him like corn beneath the sickle; and grasping a huge battering-ram which his men had found, he burst open the door of the Keep. Graham and Edwin with shouts of triumph immediately rushed in: and Wallace sounding his own bugle with the notes of victory, his reserves, whom he had placed at the sally-ports, entered in every direction, and received the flying soldiers of De Valence upon their pikes.

Dreadful was now the carnage; for the Southrons forgetting all discipline, fought every man for his life; and the furious Scots driving them into the far-spreading flames; what escaped the sword would have perished in the fire, had not the relenting heart of Wallace pleaded for bleeding humanity, and he ordered the trumpet to sound a parley. He was obeyed: and standing on an adjacent mound, in an awful voice he proclaimed, that whoever had not been accomplices in the horrible massacre of the Scottish chiefs, if they would ground their arms and take an oath never again to serve against Scotland, their lives should be spared.

At that blessed word of mercy, hundreds of swords fell to the ground; and their late holders, kneeling at his feet, took the oath prescribed. Amongst those who surrendered was the captain who had commanded at the prison: he was the only officer of all the late garrison who survived to do so: all else had fallen in the conflict or had perished in the flames. When he saw that this was the case, and that not one of his late numerous companions existed, to go through the same humiliating ceremony; with an aghast countenance he said to Wallace as he put

## The Scottish Chiefs

his sword into his hand; "Then with this, now to me, useless weapon, I must believe that I am surrendering into your hands, Sir William Wallace, the possession of this castle, and the government of Ayr?—I see not one of my late commanders: all must be slain; and for me to hold out longer, would be to sacrifice my men; not to redeem what has been so completely wrested from us.—But I serve severe exactors; and I hope that your testimony, if need be, my noble conqueror, will not be withheld to assure my king that I fought as became his standard.

Wallace gave him a gracious answer; and committing him to the generous care of Murray, he turned to welcome the approach of the Lords Dundaff and Ruthven, who, with a noble train of other Scottish nobles, brothers in captivity, now appeared from the Keep. Graham had deemed it most prudent, that exhausted by anxiety and privations, they should not come forth to join in the battle; and therefore, not until the sound of victory echoed through the arches of their dungeons, would he suffer the eager Dundaff to see and thank his deliverer. Meanwhile the young Edwin, after appearing before the eyes of his amazed father, like the angel who opened the prison gates to Peter: after embracing him with all a son's fondness, which for a moment lost the repressing awe of filial respect in the joy of releasing so beloved a parent: after recounting in a few hasty sentences, the events which had brought him to be a companion of Sir William Wallace, and to avenge the injuries of Scotland in Ayr; he knocked off the chains of his father: and eager to perform the like service to all who had suffered in the like manner, accompanied by the happy Ruthven (who gazed with delight on his son, treading so early the path of glory,) he hastened around to the other dungeons, and gladly proclaimed to the astonished inmates freedom and safety. Having rid them of their shackles, he had just entered with his noble company into the vaulted chamber which contained Lord Dundaff, when the peaceful clarion sounded. At the happy tidings, Graham started on his feet: "Now, my father, you shall see the bravest of men!"

"Remember we are twins in happiness!" cried Edwin, with a congratulatory smile, "Our fathers must meet him together."—So saying, he bounded forward; and the chiefs following him, they entered on the platform, just as Wallace stood in the midst of the Southrons receiving their vows of honour.

Morning was spreading her pale light over the heavens, and condensing with her cold breath the grey smoke which still ascended in volumes from the burning ruins; when Wallace, turning round at the glad voice of Edwin, beheld the released nobles. This was the first time that he had ever seen the Lords Dundaff and Ruthven; but several of the others he remembered having met at the decision of the crowns, when Baliol was elected, to the woe of Scotland. While he was cordially welcoming, and receiving to his friendship the men to whom his valour had given freedom, how great was his surprise to see in one, who now appeared between Ker and a soldier, Sir John Monteith, the young chieftain whom he had parted with a few months ago at Douglas; and from whose fatal invitation to that place, he might well date the ruin of his dearest happiness!

"We found Sir John Monteith amongst the slain before the palace," said Ker. "In obeying your commands to seek for the survivors, we discovered him; he, of the whole party, alone breathed; I knew him instantly.—How he came there, I know not; but I brought him hither to explain to yourself, while I accomplish my task." Ker withdrew to finish the interment of the dead. And Sir John, still leaning on the soldier, grasped Wallace's hand with joy: "My brave friend!" cried he, "to owe my liberty to you is a two-fold pleasure; for," added he, in a lowered voice, "I see before me the man who is to verify the words of Baliol, and be not only the guardian, but the possessor of the treasure he committed to our care?"

Wallace, who had never cast a thought on the box, since the moment he knew that it was safe under the protection of Saint Fillan, shook his head:—"A far different meed do I seek, my friend!" said he, "To behold the happy countenances of my liberated countrymen, is greater reward to me, than would be the development of all the splendid mysteries which ere the head of Baliol could devise; and the brave addition which your rescued selves make to the Scots in arms, is worth all the mines of India with which he might think to repay their valour."

"Aye!" cried Dundaff, who overheard this part of the conversation; "we invited the usurpation of a tyrant by the docility with which we submitted to his minion. Had we rejected Baliol, we had never been ridden by Edward. But it seems the Scots must be goaded to the quick before they feel they have a taskmaster. That has now been done; the rowel has entered all our sides: and who is there amongst us, that will not lay ourselves and our fortunes at the command of Sir William Wallace?"

"If all held our cause in the light that yourself and your brave son do," returned Wallace, "the blood of our fathers which these Southrons have sown, would rise up in ten thousand armed legions to overwhelm them."

"But how," inquired he, turning to Monteith, "did you happen to be in Ayr at this period? And how, above all,

## The Scottish Chiefs

amongst the slaughtered Southrons at the palace gate?"

Sir John Monteith readily replied. "My adverse fate accounts for all." He then proceeded to inform Wallace that on the very night in which they had parted at Douglas, Sir Arthur Heselrigge was told the story of the box; and that he accordingly sent to have Monteith brought prisoner to Lanerk. He lay in the dungeons of the citadel at the very time Wallace entered that town and destroyed the governor. As no advantage was taken by the Scots of the transient panic which this retribution threw over their enemies, every exertion was made by the English lieutenant to prevent a repetition of the same disaster; and in consequence every suspected person was taken up, and those who were already in confinement, loaded with double chains. Monteith being known to have been a friend of Sir William Wallace, was sent under a strong guard towards Stirling, there to stand his trial before Cressingham and the Justiciary Ormesby: "But by a lucky chance," said he, "I made my escape while my guards slept.—However, I was soon retaken by another party and conveyed to Ayr; where the Lieutenant-Governor Arnulf, being fond of music, and discovering my talents in that art, he shewed me what he esteemed indulgences, but I regarded as insults; and with no other alternative than death, he compelled me to sing at his entertainments. For this purpose, he last night confined me in the banquetting-room at the palace; and thus, when the flames surrounded that building, I found myself exposed to die the death of a traitor, though then the most oppressed of all the Scots.—Snatching up a sword, and striving to join my brave countrymen, the Southrons impeded my passage, and I fell under their arms."

Sir William Wallace, happy to have rescued his old acquaintance from further mortifications, committed him to Edwin to lead into the citadel.—As he gave these directions he took the colours of Edward from the ground, where the Southron officer had laid them, and giving them to Sir Alexander Scrymgeour, ordered him to fill their former station, the top of the citadel, with the standard of Scotland. This action he considered as the seal of each victory; as the badge which, seen from afar, shewed to the desolate Scots where to find a protector; and from what ground to start when they found courage to rise in their own defence. The standard was no sooner raised, than the proud clarion of triumph was blown from every warlike instrument in the garrison; and the Southron captain repledging his faith to Wallace, that his men would adhere to their oath of never re-entering Scotland as foes, placed himself at the head of his disarmed troops, and under the direction of Murray, marched out of the castle. His design was to proceed immediately to Newcastle, and there embark with his men to join their king in his Guienne wars. Not more than two hundred followed their officer in this expedition; for not more were English; the rest, to nearly double that number, being like the garrison of Dumbarton, Irish and Welsh, were glad to escape from enforced servitude. Some parted off in divisions to return to their respective countries; and a few, whose energetic spirits preferred a life of warfare in the cause of a country struggling for freedom, before returning to submit to the oppressors of their own, enlisted under the banners of Wallace. These recruits, amounting to about a hundred strong fighting men, he put under the command of Sir John Graham.

Some other necessary regulations being made, he dismissed the victorious Scots to find refreshment in the well-stored barracks of the dispersed Southrons; and retired himself to rejoin his friends in the citadel.

CHAP. XI.

In the course of an hour Murray returned, with the information that he had seen the departing Southrons safely beyond the barriers of the town. But he approached not Wallace alone; he was accompanied by Lord Auckinleck, the son of one of the betrayed barons who had fallen in the palace of Ayr. This young chieftain brought a large force with him to support the man whose dauntless hand had thus satisfied his revenge; and when he met Murray at the north gate of the town, and recognised in his flying banners a friend of Scotland, he was happy to make himself known to an officer of Wallace, and to be conducted to that chief.

As Lord Andrew and his new colleague made the range of the suburbs, by his general's direction he gave orders that the different detachments of troops which had been left to guard their avenues, should march towards the citadel. The glad progress of the victor Scots through the streets, turned the whole aspect of that late gloomy city. Doors and windows which were so lately closed in deep mourning for the sanguinary deeds just done in the palace, now opened, teeming with gay inhabitants. The general joy penetrated to the most remote recesses. Mothers now threw their fond arms around the necks of those children whom they had lately regarded with the averted eyes of despair: In the one sex they thought they beheld the devoted victims of perhaps the next requisition for blood; and in the other, the hapless prey of passions more fell than the horrid rage of the beast of the field. But now all was secure again. These terrific tyrants were driven hence; and the happy parent embracing her children, as if restored to her from the grave, implored a thousand blessings on the head of Wallace, the dispenser of such a world of good.

Sons who in secret had lamented the treacherous death of their fathers, and brothers of their brothers, now opened their gates, and ready armed joined the valiant troops in the streets. Widowed wives, and fatherless daughters, almost forgot that they had been bereaved of their natural protectors, when they saw Scotland rescued from her enemies, and her armed sons once more walking in the broad day, masters of themselves and their liberties.

Thus then, with every heart rejoicing, every house teeming with numbers to swell the ranks of Wallace, did he, the day after he had entered Ayr, see all arranged for its peaceful establishment. Having placed formidable garrisons in the citadel, and suburbs, composed of its own youth and the adjacent peasantry, and commanded by Lord Auckinleck, he prepared to proceed on his march. But ere he bade that town adieu in which he had been educated; and where almost every man remembered his boyish years, and thronged to him with recollection of former days; one duty demanded his stay: To pay funeral honours to the remains of his beloved grandfather.

Accordingly the time was fixed upon; and with every solemnity due to his virtues and his rank, he was buried in the chapel of the citadel. It was not a scene of mere ceremonious mourning: as he had been the father of the fatherless, he was followed to the grave by many an orphan's tears; and as he had been the protector of the distressed in every degree, and the beneficent friend of all human kind; a procession long and full of lamentation conducted his shrouded corse to its earthly rest. The mourning families of those who had fallen in the same bloody theatre with himself, closed the sad retinue; and while the holy rites committed his body to the ground, the sacred mass was extended to those who had been plunged into the weltering element.

Several of the name of Crawford, and of the kindred of Wallace, were present. To these he resigned the lands he inherited from his grandfather; and while he confided the aged Elspa and her sister to the care of Sir Reginald Crawford, to whom he gave Loudon and Monktoone—Kirk, he said, "Cousin, you are a valiant man!—I leave you to be the representative of your venerable uncle: to cherish these poor women whom he loved; to be the protector of the people of Ayr, and the defender of the suburbs. The garrison is under the command of the Baron of Auckinleck who, with his brave followers, was the first to hail the burning of the accursed barns of Ayr."

After this solemnity, and these dispositions; and that Wallace saw that the town and citadel were in a state of stout resistance, should any attempt be made by the enemy; he resolved to pursue a similar plan at this part of the kingdom, to that which he had intended to have pursued had his operations been confined to the north of the Clyde.

He called a review of his troops; and found that he could leave five—hundred men at Ayr, and march an army of at least two—thousand out of it. His present design was to take his course to Berwick, and by seizing every

## The Scottish Chiefs

castle of strength in his way, form a chain of works across the country, which would bulwark Scotland against any farther inroads from its enemies; and render the subjugation of the interior Southron garrisons more certain and easy. While he was thus employed, it would not be difficult for his troops, (thus planted as a south wall) by excursions, to clear Annandale and Roxburghshire of the enemy; and so make the Cheviot hills and the ocean the boundaries of Edward's conquests.

With this design, Wallace on the third morning after he had entered Ayr, marched over the green bosoms of his native hills; and manning every watch-tower on their summits, (for now, whithersoever he moved, he found his victories had preceded him, and that all from hall or hovel, turned out to greet and offer him their services) he crossed by Muirkirk to Douglas Castle.

He no sooner appeared, and summoned it to surrender, than the Southron governor (who had been apprised by fugitives, of the late events at Ayr) hearing from the herald who brought the requisition, that he was called upon to resign the keys of Douglas to Sir William Wallace, beheld in his panic-struck fancy the castle stormed around him, and in flames. Believing that all would be sacrificed to the young warrior's vengeance, should he offer the slightest resistance, he consented to surrender; and laying down his arms before Wallace, the castle was relinquished into his hands.

This advantage gained, he did not stay longer than to take the usual oaths of the troops: and as a hostage for the performance of their engagement, he detained the governor in his possession. Sir Eustace Maxwell took the command of Douglas and its environs, with Monteith (whose late wounds demanded rest) as his lieutenant. The little garrison being fixed, Wallace was well satisfied with the zeal of both his officers; and proceeding thence across Couthboanlaw to the Pentland hills, possessed himself, after little resistance, of the castles of Peebles, of Nidpath, and of Traquair, in Tweed-dale; and though he met firmer opposition as he approached the coast, he compelled every strong hold to surrender to him; which lay between the western borders of the Merse and the walls of Berwick.

Arrived before these blood-stained towers, which had so often been the subjects of dispute between the powers of England and of Scotland, he prepared for their immediate attack. Berwick being a valuable fortress to the enemy, not only as a key to the invaded kingdom, but a point, whence, by his ships, he commanded the whole of the eastern coast of Scotland; Wallace expected that a desperate stand would here be made to stop the progress of his arms. But being aware, that the most expeditious mode of warfare was the best adapted to promote his cause, he first took the town by assault, and having driven the garrison into the citadel, assailed them by a vigorous siege. It had lasted not more than ten days, when Wallace, fore-seeing that his enemies might be reinforced with little difficulty, should their ships continue to command the harbour, resolved upon a stratagem to gain them also into his possession. Accordingly, he found among his own troops many men who had been used to a sea-faring life. These he sent, disguised as fugitive Southrons, in boats to the ships which lay off in the roads. The feint took; and by these means seizing upon the vessels nearest to the town, he manned them with his own people; and going out with them himself, in three days made himself master of every ship on the coast.

By this manoeuvre the situation of the besieged was rendered so hopeless, that no mode of escape was left but by desperate sallies. They made them, but without other effect than weakening their strength and increasing their miseries. Wallace was aware of all their resolutions; for knowing what would be best for them to do in their situation, he needed no better spy over their actions than his own judgment. Foiled in every attempt; as their opponent, guessing their intentions, was prepared at every point to meet their different essays; and losing men at every rencontre, their governor was quite at his wit's end. Without provisions, without aid of any kind for his wounded men, and hourly annoyed by the victorious Scots, (who by showers of arrows and other missile weapons, which they continued to throw from the towers and springalls with which they overtopped the walls, suffered not the besieged to rest day or night) the unhappy Southron was ready to rush upon death to avoid the disgrace of surrendering the fortress. Every soul in the garrison was reduced to similar despair. Wallace had found means to dam up the spring, which by running under a particular track of land, usually supplied the citadel with water. The common men, famished with hunger, smarting with their wounds, and now perishing with unextinguishable thirst, threw themselves at the feet of their officers, imploring them to represent to the governor, that if he longer held out, he must defend the place alone, for that they could not exist twenty-four hours under their present sufferings.

The governor now repented of the rashness with which he had thrown himself unprovisioned into the citadel.

## The Scottish Chiefs

He now saw that expectation was no apology for want of precaution. When his first division had been overpowered in the assault of the town, his evil genius suggested to him that it was best to take the second unbroken into the citadel, and there await the arrival of a reinforcement by sea, for which he had immediately sent. But he had beheld the ships which defended the harbour seized by Wallace before his eyes! Hope was then crushed, and nothing but death or dishonour seemed to be his alternatives. Cut to the soul at the recollection of his own want of judgment in so hastily throwing himself into the castle, when he was sensible he might have maintained the town longer, he determined to retrieve his fame by washing out his error with his blood. To fall then under the ruins of Berwick Castle was his resolution. Such was the state of his mind, when the officers appeared with the petition of his men. In proportion as they felt the extremities into which they were driven, the offence he had committed, glared with tenfold enormity in his eyes; and with wild despair he told them, "they might do as they would, but for his part, the moment they opened the gates to the enemy, that moment should be the last of his life. He, that was the son-in-law of King Edward, would never yield his sword to a Scottish rebel."

Terrified at these threats on himself, the soldiers, who loved their general declared themselves willing to die with him; and therefore, as a last effort, determined to make a mine under the principal tower of the Scots; and by setting fire to it, at least destroy the means by which they feared their enemies would storm the citadel.

Wallace, as he kept his station on the tower, observing numbers of the besieged passing behind a mound in a direction to the part of the wall where the tower stood, concluded what was their design; and ordering a countermine to be made,—what he anticipated, happened; and Murray, at the head of the miners, encountered those of the castle at the very moment they were setting fire to the combustibles which were to consume the tower. The conflict was violent, but short, for the impetuous Scots drove their amazed and enfeebled adversaries through the aperture into the centre of the citadel. At this instant, Wallace, with a band of resolute men, sprung from the tower upon the walls, and while they were almost deserted by their late guardians, who had quitted them to assist their fellow-sufferers in repelling the foe below, he leaped down amidst them, and the battle became general. It was decisive. For Wallace, beholding the undaunted resolution with which the weakened and dying men supported the cause their governor was so determined to defend, found his admiration and his pity alike excited; and even while his men seemed to have every man's life in his hands; and one instant more would make him the undisputed master of the castle, (for not a Southron would then breathe to dispute it) he resolved to stop the carnage. At the moment when a gallant officer, who, having assaulted him with the vehemence of despair, and wounded him in several places, now lay disarmed and under him; at that moment when the discomfited knight exclaimed, "In mercy strike, and redeem the honor of Ralph de Monthermer!" Wallace raised his bugle and sounded the note of peace. Every sword was arrested; and the universal clangor of battle was lost in expecting silence.

"Rise, brave Earl;" cried he, to the governor; "I revere your virtue too sincerely to take an unworthy advantage of my fortune. The valour of this garrison commands my respect; and as a proof of my sincerity, I grant to it what I never yet have done to any: That yourself and these dauntless men march out with the honours of war; and without any bonds on your future conduct towards us. We leave it to your own hearts to decide whether you will ever again be made instruments to enchain a brave people."

While he was speaking, De Monthermer leaned gloomily on the sword he had returned to him, with his eyes fixed on his men. They answered his glance with looks that seemed to say they understood him; and passing a few words in whispers to each other, one at last spoke aloud:—"Decide for us Earl. We are as ready to die as to live, so that we may be in neither divided from you."

At this generous declaration, the proud despair of De Monthermer gave way to nobler feelings; and while a big tear stood in each eye, he turned to Wallace, and stretching out his hand to him, "Noble Scot," said he, "your unexampled generosity, and the invincible fidelity of these heroic men, have compelled me to accept the life I had resolved to lose under these walls rather than resign them. But virtue is resistless: and to it do I surrender that pride of soul which made existence insufferable under the consciousness of having erred. When I became the husband of King Edward's daughter, I believed myself pledged to victories or to death. But there is a conquest, and I feel it, greater than over hosts in the field;—and here taught to make it, the husband of the Princess of England, the proud Earl of Gloucester, consents to live to be a monument of Scottish nobleness and of the inflexible fidelity of English soldiers."

"You live, illustrious and virtuous Englishman," returned Wallace, "to redeem that honour of which the



## The Scottish Chiefs

rapacious sons of England had robbed their country. Go forth therefore as my conqueror; for you have, at least in this spot, extinguished that burning antipathy with which the outraged heart of William Wallace had vowed to extirpate every Southron from off this ravaged land. Honour, brave Earl, makes all men brethren; and as a brother I open these gates for you to repass into your country. When there, if you ever remember William Wallace, let it be as a man who fights not for conquest or renown; but to restore Scotland to her rights, and then to resign his sword in peace."

"I shall remember you, Sir William Wallace!" returned De Monthermer; "and as pledge of it, you shall never see me more in this country till I come an ambassador of that peace for which you fight. But meanwhile, in the moment of your hot contention for the rights which you believe wrested from you, do you remember that they have not been so much the spoil of my royal father's ambition, as the traffic of your own venal nobles, and of the King who purchased a throne at the expence of his country. Had I not believed that Scotland was unworthy of freedom, I should never have appeared upon her borders: But now that I see she has brave hearts within her, who not only resist oppression but know how to wield power, I shrink from the zeal I shewed to rivet her chains, (for I even volunteered to occupy this station, so unworthy my rank;) and I repeat, that never again shall my hostile foot impress this land."

These sentiments were answered in the same spirit by his soldiers. And the Scots, following the example of their leader, treated them with every kindness. After dispensing amongst them provisions, and appointing horses and other means to convey the wounded away in comfort, Wallace bade a cordial farewell to the Earl of Gloucester; and his men conducted their reconciled enemies safe over the Tweed. There they parted. The English bent their course towards London, and the Scots returned to their victorious general.

## CHAP. XII.

The happy effects of these rapid conquests were soon apparent. The fall of Berwick excited such a confidence in the minds of the neighbouring chieftains, that every hour brought fresh recruits to Wallace. Every mouth was full of the praises of the young conqueror; every eye was eager to catch a glimpse of his person: and while the men were emulous to share his glory, the women in their secret bowers put up prayers for the preservation of one so handsome and so brave.

Amongst the many who, of every rank and age, hastened to pay their respects to the deliverer of Berwick, was Sir Richard Maitland of Thirlestane, a veteran of such celebrity, that he went by the title of the Stalwarth Auld Knight of Lauderdale. Hearing of Wallace's mighty deeds, Sir Richard determined to see the brave grandson of his old friend, the treacherously murdered Sir Ronald Crawford. He sought him, not only in this light, but as an object fraught with every cause of interest; as the champion of Scotland, as the benefactor of mankind. Months ago he had been informed of Lord Mar's obligations to Wallace; and of the subsequent imprisonment of the Earl. But now, when he found that the resistless chief had not only freed Lord Mar, but had seized the fetters of Scotland at Dumbarton; and that after forming a wall across his country, stronger than those of Agricola and Adrian, a rampart of determined Scots; he had gained possession of the Eastern sea:—When Maitland heard all this, new blood seemed to flow in his aged veins; and he who had not mounted a horse for twenty years, now bestrode a proud charger, to go as became a knight to pay his duty to the hope of his country.

Wallace was no sooner told of the approach of the venerable knight of Thirlestane, than he set forth, accompanied by his chief officers, to bid him welcome. At sight of the deliverer of Scotland, Sir Richard threw himself off his horse with a military grace that would have become even youthful years; and hastening towards Wallace, clasped him in his arms.

"Let me look on thee!" cried the old knight; "let me feast my eyes on the brave Scot who again raises this hoary head which has so long bent in shame for its dishonoured country!" As he spoke he viewed Wallace from head to foot. "I knew Sir Ronald Crawford and thy valiant father:" continued he, "O! had they lived to see this day! But the base murder of the one thou hast nobly avenged; and the honourable grave of the other in the field of Loudon-hill, thou wilt cover with the monument of thine own glories. Low are laid my own children in this land of strife; but in thee I see a son of Scotland that is to dry all our tears."

He embraced Wallace again and again. And as the venerable chieftain's overflowing heart rendered him garrulous, he expatiated on the energy with which the young victor had pursued his conquest; and paralleled them with the brilliant actions he had seen in his youth. While he thus discoursed, Wallace drew him towards the castle, and there presented to him the two nephews of the Earl of Mar.

He paid some warm compliments to Edwin on his early success in the career of glory; and then turning to Murray, "Aye!" said he, "it is joy to me to see the valiant house of Bothwell in the third generation. Thy grandfather and myself were boys together at the coronation of Alexander the second; and that is eighty years ago. Since then, what have I not seen! The death of two noble Scottish kings: our blooming princes ravished from us by untimely fates: The throne sold to a coward; and at last seized by a foreign power!—And in my own person! I have been the father of as brave and beautiful a family as ever blessed a parent's eye:—But they are all torn from me. Two of my sons sleep on the plain of Dunbar; my third, my dauntless William, since that fatal day, has been kept a prisoner in England. And my daughters, the tender blossoms of my aged years; they grew around me the fairest lilies of the land:—But they too are passed away. The one, scorning the mere charms of youth, and preferring an union with a soul that had long conversed with superior regions, loved Thomas Lord Learmont the sage of Ercildoune. But my friend lost this sweet rose of his bosom, and I the dearest child of my heart, ere she had been a year his wife. Then was my last and only daughter married to the Lord Mar; and in giving birth to my dear Isabella, she too died.—Ah, my good young Knight, were it not for that sweet child, the living image of her mother, who in the very spring of youth was cropt and fell; I should be alone:—And my hoary-head would descend to the grave unwept, unregretted!"

The joy of the old man having recalled such melancholy remembrances, he wept upon the shoulder of Edwin, who, interested in the sad detail, had drawn so near, that the story which was begun to Murray, was ended to him.

## The Scottish Chiefs

Wallace, to give the mourning father time to recover his composure, walked towards the other lords who were conversing in an opposite part of the room. At that moment Ker entered, and told him that a youth was in the anti-chamber, who had just arrived from Stirling with a sealed packet which he would deliver into no hands but those of Sir William Wallace. At this intimation, Wallace, turning to Ruthven and Dundaff, requested them to shew every attention to the Lord of Thirlestane during his absence, and left the apartment.

On his entering the anti-room, the messenger sprung forwards; but suddenly checking himself, he stood as if irresolute what to say.

"This is Sir William Wallace, young man;" said Ker, "deliver your embassy to him."

At these words the youth pulled a packet from his bosom, and putting it into the chief's hand, retired in confusion. Wallace gave orders to Ker to take care of him; and then prepared to inspect its contents. He wondered from whom in Stirling it could come; as he knew no Scot there, who would dare to write to him while it was possessed by the enemy. But not losing a moment in conjecture, he broke the seal.

How was he startled at the first words! and how was every energy of his heart roused to redoubled action when he turned to the signature! The first words in the letter were these:

"A daughter, trembling for the life of her father condemned to die, presumes to address Sir William Wallace."—The signature was "Helen Mar."—He began the letter again.

"A daughter, trembling for the life of her father condemned to die, presumes to address Sir William Wallace. You have been his deliverer from the sword, from chains, and from the waves. Refuse not then again to save him to whom you have so often given life; and hasten, brave Wallace, to preserve the Earl of Mar from the scaffold.

"A cruel deception brought him from the Isle of Bute, where you imagined you had left him in security. Lord Aymer De Valence, in escaping a second time from your sword, fled under covert of the night from Ayr to Stirling. Cressingham, the rapacious robber of all our castles, found in him an apt coadjutor. They concerted how to avenge the late disgraces of Earl De Valence; and Cressingham, eager to enrich himself while he flattered the resentments of his commander, suggested to him that you, Sir William Wallace, our deliverer, and their scourge, would most easily be made to feel through the bosoms of your friends. They therefore determined, as the first victim, after a mock trial, to condemn my father to death: and thus while they distress you, put themselves in possession of his lands and wealth with the semblance of justice.

"The substance of this most unrighteous debate was communicated to me by Lord Aymer De Valence himself: He thought to excuse his part in the affair, by proving to me how insensible he is to the principles which move a patriot and a man of honour.

"To this end, these arch-enemies of our country, (having learnt from some too well-informed spy, that Lord Mar, instead of being within the strong hold of Dumbarton, had retired in peaceful obscurity to Bute,) sent a body of men, disguised as Scots, to Gourock. There they stopped; and dispatched a messenger into the island to inform Lord Mar that Sir William Wallace, having driven the Southrons out of Ayr, was waiting to converse with him on the banks of the Frith. My noble father, unsuspecting of treachery; and thinking he was going to meet the friend in whom he gloried, hurried to obey the summons. Lady Mar accompanied him; and so both fell into the snare.

"He was brought a close prisoner to Stirling, where another affliction awaited him:—He was to see his daughter and sister in captivity.

"After I had been betrayed from St. Fillans monastery, by the falsehoods of one Scottish knight; and rescued from his power by the gallantry of another; I sought the protection of my aunt, Lady Ruthven, who then dwelt at Alloa on the banks of the Forth. Her husband had been invited to Ayr by some treacherous requisition of the governor Arnulf; and with many other lords was thrown into prison. Report says, bravest of men! that you have given freedom to my betrayed uncle.—I speak from report alone; for we are too closely watched in this citadel to be able to receive any messenger he might have sent.

"According to the plan of our tyrants, the moment Lord Ruthven's person was secured, his estates in the Highlands, with those around Stirling, were seized; and my aunt and myself being found at Alloa, a castle which she had brought to him in dowry, we were carried prisoners to this city. Alas! we had no valiant arm to preserve us from our enemies! Lady Ruthven's first-born son was slain in the fatal day of Dunbar; and in terror of the like fate, she has placed her eldest surviving boy in a convent. Some days after our arrival, my dear father was brought in and taken to the dungeons, where they loaded him with double chains. Though a captive in the town, I was not then confined to any closer imprisonment than the walls. While he was yet passing through the streets, rumour

## The Scottish Chiefs

told my aunt, that the Scottish lord who was then leading to prison, was her beloved brother. She flew to me in an agony to tell me the dreadful tidings. I heard no more, saw no more, till having rushed into the streets, and bursting through every obstacle of crowd and soldiers, I found myself clasped in my father's arms—in his shackled arms!— Oh! my God, what a moment was that! Where was Sir William Wallace in that hour? Where the brave unknown knight, who had sworn to me to die in my father's defence? Both were absent, and he was in chains.

"My grief and distraction baffled the attempts of the guards to part us: and what became of me I know not, till I found myself lying on a couch, attended by many women, and supported by my aunt. When I had recovered to lamentation and to tears, the women withdrew, and my aunt told me I was in the apartments of the Deputy Warden. He, with Cressingham, having gone out to meet the man they had so basely drawn into their toils, De Valence himself saw the struggles of paternal affection, contending against the men who would have torn a senseless daughter from his arms; and yet he, merciless man! separated us, and sent me, with my aunt, a prisoner to his house.

"The next day a packet was put into my aunt's hands, containing a few precious lines from my father to me, and a letter from the Countess to Lady Ruthven, telling her of the conquest of Dumbarton, and of all your goodness to her and to my father; and at last narrating the cruel manner in which they had been ravished from the asylum in which you had placed them. She then said, that could she find means of apprizing you of the danger in which she and her husband were now involved, she was sure you would fly to their rescue. Whether she has ever found these means, I know not, for all communication between us was immediately rendered impracticable. The messenger who brought my aunt the packet, was a good Southron soldier who had been won by Lady Mar's entreaties. But on his quitting the apartments where we were confined, he was seized by a servant of De Valence, who having descried the soldier slip rather mysteriously into my aunt's chamber, by listening found his errand, and made him prisoner the moment he appeared from the door. The poor soldier was the same day put publickly to death, in order to intimidate all others from the like compassion on the sufferings of unhappy Scotland. Oh! Sir William Wallace, will not your sword at last reach these men of blood!

"But to return. Earl de Valence compelled my aunt to give up the packet to him. We had already read it, therefore did not regret it on that head; but we feared the information it might give relative to you, our benefactor. In consequence of this circumstance, I was made a closer prisoner than before. But captivity could have no terrors for me, did it not divide me from my father. And grief on grief! what words have I to write it? They have CONDEMNED HIM TO DIE! That fatal letter of my step-mother's was brought out against him; and as your adherent, Sir William Wallace, they have sentenced him to lose his head.

"I have knelt to Earl de Valence; I have implored my father's life at his hands; but to no purpose. He tells me that Cressingham at his side, and the Justiciary Ormesby, by letters from Scone, declare it necessary that some execution of consequence should be made to appal the discontented Scots; and that as no lord is esteemed greater in Scotland, than the Earl of Mar, he must die!

"Hasten then, my father's preserver and friend! hasten to save him!—Oh, fly for the sake of the country he loves; for the sake of the hapless beings dependent on his protection!—I shall be on my knees till I hear your trumpet before the walls; for in you and heaven now rest all the hopes of Helen Mar."

A cold dew stood on the limbs of Wallace as he closed the letter. It might be too late? Even his arms might not now be able to rescue his friend from the sentence that had been passed on him: the axe may already have fallen!

Struck with this terror, he called to Ker, and ordered that the messenger should be brought in. He entered. Wallace inquired how long he had been in bringing the packet from Stirling. The youth replied, only twenty-four hours; adding, that he had travelled night and day, for fear the news of the risings in Annandale, and the taking of Berwick, which had reached Stirling, should precipitate the Earl's death.

"I accompany you this instant," cried Wallace. And giving orders to Ker that the troops should immediately get under arms; he desired the messenger to keep with his own particular train: and then returned into the room where he had left the venerable knight of Thirlestane.

"Sir Richard Maitland," said he, willing to avoid exciting his alarm; "there is more work for me at Stirling. Lord Aymer de Valence has again escaped the death we thought had overtaken him; and he is now there.—I have just received a summons thither which I must obey." At these last words, Sir Roger Kirkpatrick, who had hastened forward at the word Stirling, gave a loud shout, and rushed from the apartment. Wallace looked after

## The Scottish Chiefs

him for a moment, and then continued—"Follow us with your prayers, Sir Richard; and I shall not despair of sending blessed tidings to the banks of the Leeder."

"What has happened?" inquired Murray, who saw that something more than the escape of De Valence had been imparted to his general.

"We must spare this good old man," returned he, "and have him conducted to his home before I declare it publicly; but the Earl of Mar is again a prisoner, and in Sirling."

Murray, who instantly comprehended his uncle's danger, speeded the departure of Sir Richard: and as Wallace held his stirrup, the chief laid his hand on his head and blessed him; "The prophet of Ercildoune is too ill to bring his benediction himself, but I breathe it over our preserver's head!" The bridle being in the hand of Lord Andrew, he led the horse out of the eastern gate of the town; and there taking leave of the veteran knight and his train, turned on his way; and soon rejoined Wallace in the midst of his officers.

He had informed them of the Earl of Mar's danger; and of the policy, as well as justice, of rescuing so powerful and patriotic a nobleman from the death his enemies threatened. Lord Ruthven needed no arguments to precipitate him forward in the service of the beloved brother of his wife; and the anxieties of the affectionate Edwin were all awake when he knew that his mother was a prisoner. Lord Andrew smiled when he returned his cousin's letter to Wallace: "We shall have the rogues on the nail, yet," said he, "and if we do not this time pin the light heels of De Valence to the rock of Stirling, we shall deserve to be brained for ignorance of slight of hand. My uncle's brave head is not ordained to fall by the stroke of such cowards!"

"So, I believe," replied Wallace, and then turning to Lord Dundaff; "My Lord," said he, "I leave you governor of Berwick."

The veteran warrior grasped Wallace's hand.—"To be your representative in this fortress, is the proudest station this war-worn frame hath ever filled.—My son, must be my representative with you in the field." He waved Sir John Graham towards him; the young knight advanced; and Lord Dundaff, placing his hands upon his shield, said, "Swear that as this defends the body, you will ever strive to cover Scotland from her enemies; and that from this hour, as Achatas was to Æneas, you will be the faithful friend and follower of Sir William Wallace!"

"I swear," returned Graham, kissing the shield.—Wallace pressed his hand: "I have brothers around me rather than what the world calls friends! And with such valour, such fidelity to aid me, can I be otherwise than a victor?"

Edwin, who stood near at this rite of generous enthusiasm, softly whispered to Wallace as he turned towards his troops; "But amongst all these brothers, cease not to remember that Edwin was your first.—Ah, my beloved general, what Jonathan was to David I would be to thee!"

Wallace looked on him with penetrating tenderness; his heart was suddenly wrung by a recollection which the words of Edwin had recalled. "But thy love, passes not the love of woman, Edwin!"—"No, but it equals it," replied he, "what has been done for thee, I would do; only love me as David did Jonathan, and I shall be the happiest of the happy."—"Be happy then; sweet boy!" answered Wallace, "For all that ever beat in heathen or in Christian breast for friend or brother, lives in my heart for thee."

At that moment Sir John Graham rejoined them; and some other captains coming up, Wallace made the proper military dispositions, and every man took his station at the head of his division.

Until the men had marched far out of the chance of rumours from them reaching Thirlestane, they were not informed of the Earl of Mar's danger. They conceived that their present errand was the re-capture of De Valence. But at a proper moment, Wallace said they should know the whole truth; "For," added he, "as it is a law of equity that what concerns all should be approved by all; and that common dangers should be repelled by united efforts; the people who follow our standards not as hirelings, but with willing spirits, ought to know our reasons for requiring their services."

"They who follow you," said Graham, "have too much confidence in their leader to require any reasons for his movements."

"It is to place that confidence on a sure foundation, my brave friend;" returned Wallace, "that I explain what there is no just reason to conceal. Should policy ever compel me to strike a blow without previously telling my agents wherefore, I should then draw upon their faith; and expect that confidence in my honour and arms, which I now place on their discretion and fidelity."

It was noon when they set forth. The veteran band which Wallace had brought from Dumbarton led the way;

## The Scottish Chiefs

while an army of above five thousand men, officered by the bravest chieftains of the Merse, Tweedale, and the Lothians, followed, and with streaming banners crossed Lauderdale to Lammermuir. At the top of Soutra-hill Wallace halted, and there informed his soldiers of Lord Mar's perilous situation; and of the necessity for forced marches, if they would save Scotland from the disgrace of allowing one of her bravest nobles to die by the hand of the executioner.

Exordiums were not requisite to nerve every limb, and to strengthen every heart in the toilsome journey. Mountains were climbed, vast plains traversed, rivers forded, and precipices crossed, without one man in the ranks lingering on his steps, or dropping his head upon his pike to catch a moment's slumber. Those who had fought with Wallace, longed to redouble their fame under his command; and they who had recently embraced his standard, panted with a virtuous ambition to rival these first-born in arms. Every eye was awake, every spirit on fire, to seize the monsters in their den; and to snatch away the noble prey even in the moment they believed it ready to bleed beneath their fangs.

Sir Roger Kirkpatrick, who having rushed out from the group in the citadel of Berwick, as soon as the march to Stirling was mentioned, and had been one of the first to call forth the soldiers to the expedition; now when Wallace stood forward to declare that rest should be dispensed with till Stirling fell, his ardent soul, full of a fierce joy, that seemed to see his revenge and redeemed honour at once in his grasp, darted over every obstacle to reach his aim. He flew to the van of his troops, and hailing them forward: "Come on!" cried he, "and in the blood of Cressingham let us for ever sink King Edward's Scottish crown!"

The shouts of the men, who seemed to drink in the spirit that blazed from Kirkpatrick's eyes, made the echoes of Lammermuir ring with a strange noise. It was the voice of liberty. And leaping every bound, thus did they pursue their way till they reached the Carron side. At the moment the foaming steed of Wallace, smoking with the labours of a long and rapid march, was plunging into the stream to take the ford, Ker, who was the avenue through which every dispatch reached his general, took the horse by the bridle:—"My Lord," said he, "a man on full gallop from Douglas Castle has brought this packet."

Wallace opened it and read as follows:—

"The patriots in Annandale have been beaten by Lord de Warenne; and Sir John Monteith (who volunteered to head them,) is taken prisoner with twelve hundred men.

"Earl de Warenne, as Lord Warden of Scotland, comes to assume his power and to relieve his deputy, Lord Aymer de Valence, who is recalled to take possession of the Earldom of Pembroke. In pursuance of his supposed duty, Earl de Warenne is now marching rapidly towards the Lothians in the hope of intercepting you in your conquests.

"Thanks to the regular information which you send us of your movements, that we can thus transmit accounts of what may arise to impede your progress! I should have attempted to have checked the Southrons by annoying their rear, had not De Warenne's numbers, amounting to 60,000 strong, rendered such an enterprise so hopeless as to endanger the safety of this fortress. As it is, his whole aim being to come up with you; if you beat him in the van, we shall have him in the rear; and he must be surrounded and cut to pieces. Let us take heart, and success is ours.— Ever my General's and Scotland's true servant,

"Eustace Maxwell."

"What answer?" inquired Ker.

Wallace hastily engraved with his dagger's point upon his gauntlet "Reviresco! — —God is with us," and desiring that it might be given to the messenger to carry to Sir Eustace Maxwell, he refixed himself in his saddle, and spurred over the Carron.

The moon was at her meridian just as the wearied troops halted on the deep shadows of the carse of Stirling. All around them lay in wide desolation: the sword and the fire had been there; not in declared warfare, but under the darkness of midnight, and impelled by rapacity or wantonness; and from the base of the rock even to the foot of the Clackmannan hills, all lay a smoking wilderness.

An hour's rest was sufficient to restore every exhausted power to the limbs of the determined followers of Wallace. And as the morning dawned, the sentinels on the ramparts of the town were surprised to find that the Scots, by the most indefatigable labour, had not only passed the ditch, but having gained the counter-scarp, had fixed their moveable towers, and were at that instant overlooking the highest bastions. The mangonels and petraries, and other implements for battering walls; and the balista, with every efficient means of throwing

## The Scottish Chiefs

missive weapons, were ready to discharge their arrows and stony showers upon the heads of the besieged.

At a sight so unexpected, which seemed to have arisen out of the earth by some enchantment, (with such silence and expedition had the Scottish operations been commenced) the Southrons, struck with dread, fled from the walls; but instantly recovering their presence of mind, they returned, and discharged a cloud of arrows against their opponents; whilst a summons was sent to the citadel to call De Valence and the Governor Cressingham to their assistance. The interior gates now sent forth thousands to the walls: but in proportion to the numbers who approached, the greater was the harvest of death prepared for the terrible arm of Wallace; who, with his tremendous war-wolfs throwing prodigious stones, and his springalls casting forth brazen-winged darts, swept away file after file of the reinforcement. It grieved the noble heart of the Scottish commander to see so many valiant men urged on to inevitable destruction: but still they advanced; and that his own might be preserved, they must fall. To shorten the bloody contest, his direful weapons were worked with redoubled energy; and so mortal a shower fell, that the heavens seemed to rain iron. The crushed and stricken enemy, shrinking under the mighty tempest, left their ground.

The ramparts deserted, Wallace immediately sprung from his tower upon the walls. At that moment De Valence, who had suggested the idea of diverting the hot assault of the besiegers, by a sally, opened one of the gates, and at the head of a formidable body charged the nearest Scots. Murray and Graham were prepared to receive him, (for a good soldier is never taken unawares,) and furiously driving him to a retrograde motion, forced him to fall back upon the troops in the town. But there all was confusion. Wallace, with his resolute followers, had already put Cressingham and his legions to flight; and while they though closely pursued by Kirkpatrick, threw themselves into the castle; the victorious Commander in Chief surrounded the amazed De Valence, who, finding himself caught in double toils, called to his men to fight for St. George and their king to their latest gasp.

The brave fellows too strictly obeyed him: and while they fell on all sides, pierced and overwhelmed by their determined opponents; he at last, fighting with a courage which horror of Wallace's vengeance for his grandfather's death, and his attempt on his life in the hall at Dumbarton, rendered desperate, encountered the conquering chieftain arm to arm. Great was the dread of De Valence at this meeting: but death was now all he saw before him, and he resolved, if he must die, that the soul of his enemy should attend him to the other world.

He fought, not with the steady valour of a warrior determined to vanquish or of a warrior determined to die; but with the fury of despair, with the violence of a hyena thirsting for the blood of the man with whom he contended. Drunk with rage, he made a desperate plunge at the heart of Wallace; a plunge, armed with execrations and all his strength: But his sword missed its aim and entered the side of a youth who at that moment had thrown himself before his general. Wallace saw where the deadly blow fell; and instantly closing on him with a vengeance in his eyes which his now determined victim had never seen blaze there before, with one grasp of his arm he hurled him to the ground, and setting his foot upon his breast, would have buried his dagger in his heart, had not De Valence dropped his uplifted sword, and with horror in every feature, exclaimed "Mercy!"

Wallace removed his hold; and De Valence, overpowered with terror, held up his clasped hands before him. "My life! this once again, gallant Wallace! In the name of the God of mercy I ask it!"

Wallace looked on the trembling recreant as he shrunk beneath him, with a glance, which, had he had a soul, would have made him crawl to death to avoid a second. "And hast thou escaped me again!" cried Wallace; then turning his indignant eyes from the abject Earl to his bleeding friend, who was leaning on his sword: "I yield him his life Edwin, and you perhaps are slain?"

"Forget not mercy, to avenge me;" said Edwin, gently smiling; "he has only wounded me. But you are safe, and I hardly feel a smart."

Wallace replaced his dagger in his girdle. "Rise, Lord De Valence. It is my honour, not my will, that grants your life. You threw away your arms! That action, and your cry, arrested mine. I cannot strike even a murderer who opens his breast. I give you that mercy you denied to the hoary heads of nineteen unoffending, defenceless old men, whom your ruthless axes made fall in the barns of Ayr. Let memory inflict the sword on you which I have withheld!"

While he spoke, De Valence, who had risen, stood conscience-struck before the majestic mien of Wallace: There was something in his denunciation that sounded like the irreversible decree of a divinity; and the condemned wretch quaked beneath the threat, while he panted for revenge.

The whole of the survivors in De Valence's train having surrendered the moment they saw their leader fall; in a

## The Scottish Chiefs

few minutes Wallace was surrounded by his officers, bringing in the colours and the swords of the prisoners.

"Sir Alexander Ramsay," said he to a brave and courteous knight who had joined him in the Lothians; "I confide Earl De Valence to your care. See that he is strongly guarded; and that he has every respect, according to the honour of him to whom I commit him."

Ramsay conveyed his prisoner into an adjacent tower; and placing a double guard over him; stationed himself in an outward apartment, there to watch that the Proteus arts of the Earl should not again find a mode of escape.

Meanwhile, as the town was now entirely in the possession of the Scots, Wallace having sent off the captive Southrons to safe quarters, reiterated his persuasions to Edwin to leave the ground and have his wound dressed.—"No, no;" replied he, "the same hand that gave me this, inflicted a worse on my general at Dumbarton: He kept the field then; and shall I retire now, and disgrace my example? No my brother; you would not have me so disprove my kindred!"

"Do as you will;" answered Wallace, with a grateful smile, "so that you preserve a life that must never again be risked to save mine. As long as it is necessary for me to live, God will shield me: But when his word goes forth that I shall be recalled; it will not be in the power of friendship nor of hosts to turn the steel from my breast. Therefore, dearest Edwin, throw not yourself away in defending what is in the hands of Heaven, to be lent, or to be withdrawn at will."

Edwin bowed his modest head; and having suffered a balsam to be poured into his wound, braced his brigantine over his breast; and was again at the side of his friend, just as he had joined Kirkpatrick before the citadel. The gates were firmly closed: and the dismayed Cressingham, with his troops, were panting behind its walls, as Wallace commanded the parley to be sounded. Cressingham, afraid of trusting himself within arrow-shot of an enemy who he believed conquered by witchcraft, sent his lieutenant upon the walls to answer the summons.

The herald of the Scots demanded the immediate surrender of the place. Cressingham was at that instant informed by a messenger, who had arrived too late the night preceding to disturb his slumbers, that De Warenne was approaching with an immense army. Inflated with new confidence, the lately panic-struck governor mounted the wall himself, and in the most haughty language returned for answer. That he would fall under the towers of the citadel before he would surrender it to a Scottish rebel. "And as an example of the fate which such a delinquent merits," continued he, "I will change the milder sentence passed on Lord Mar, and immediately hang him and all his family on these walls, in sight of your insurgent army."

"Then," cried the herald, who received his answer from his general; "thus says Sir William Wallace: If even one hair on the heads of the Earl of Mar and his family, fall with violence to the ground, every Southron soul in the Scottish camp, who has this day been taken prisoner, shall lose his head by the axe."

"We are used to the blood of traitors:" cried Cressingham, "and mind not its scent. The army of Earl De Warenne is at hand: and it is at the peril of all your necks for the rebel your master to put his threat in execution. Withdraw, or you shall see the dead bodies of Donald Mar and his family fringing these battlements; for no terms do we keep with man, woman, or child, who is linked with treason!"

At these words, an arrow winged from a hand behind Cressingham, flew directly to the un-visored face of Wallace: But it struck too high, and ringing against his helmet, fell to the ground.

"Treachery!" resounded from every Scottish lip; and indignant at so villainous a rupture of the parley, every bow was drawn to the head, and a flight of arrows armed with retribution flew towards the battlements. All hands were now at work to bring the towers to the wall; and mounting on them; while the archers, by their rapid showers, drove the men from the ramparts, soldiers below with pick-axes destroyed the wall to make a breach.

Cressingham, who began to fear that his boasted auxiliaries might arrive too late, made every effort to gain time; and determining on a stouter resistance here than he had maintained in the town, opposed for his defence, flights of darts and large stones shot from a thousand engines, besides arrows and quarrels from the cross-bows of his men. Intimidated from making a sally, as he concluded De Valence had fallen in his, he adapted every other method of repulsion, and discharged burning combustibles over the ramparts, in hopes of setting fire to the enemies' attacking machines.

But all his promptitude and energy proved of no effect. The walls were giving way in parts; and Wallace was mounting by scaling ladders, and clasping the parapets with the bridges from his towers. Driven to extremity, Cressingham resolved to try the attachment of the Scots for Lord Mar; and even at the moment when Wallace, by



## The Scottish Chiefs

the first assault, had seized the barbican and the outer ballium, this sanguinary politician ordered the imprisoned Earl to be brought out upon the wall of the inner ballia. A rope was round his neck, with one end run through a groove which projected from the nearest tower.

At this sight a chill horror seized upon the ardent blood of Wallace. But the intrepid Earl, descrying his friend on the ladder which would carry him to the top of the wall, exclaimed, "Hesitate not! Let not my span of life stand between my country and this glorious victory!"

"Run him up!" cried the infuriate Cressingham.

At these words, Murray and Edwin precipitated themselves from their tower, upon the battlements, and mowed down all before them in a direction towards their uncle. The lieutenant of Cressingham, who held the cord, aware of the impolicy of the cruel mandate, hesitated to fulfil it; and now fearing a rescue from the impetuous Scots, hurried his victim off the works back to his prison. Meanwhile, Cressingham, perceiving that all would be lost should he suffer the enemy to gain this wall also, sent such numbers upon the men at arms who had followed the cousins, that overcoming some, and repelling others, they threw Murray with a sudden violence over the ramparts; and surrounding Edwin, were bearing him off, struggling and bleeding, when Wallace, springing like a lioness on the hunters carrying away her young, rushed in singly amongst them; and while his falchion flashed terrible threatenings in their eyes, he seized Edwin; and with a backward step, fought his passage to one of the wooden towers which were brought close to the wall.

Cressingham, who was wounded in the head, desired that a parley should be sounded.

"We have already taken Lord De Valence and his host prisoners;" returned Wallace, "and we grant you no cessation of hostilities, unless you deliver up the Earl of Mar and his family, and surrender the castle into our hands."

"Think not, proud boaster!" cried the herald of Cressingham, "that we ask a parley to conciliate. It was to tell you, that if you do not draw off directly, not only the Earl of Mar, and his family, but every Scottish prisoner within these walls shall perish in your sight."

While he yet spoke, the Southrons uttered a great shout. And the Scots, looking up, beheld several high poles erected on the roof of the Keep, the lofty towers of which were seen at a little distance overtopping the interior of the castle; and the Earl of Mar, as before, was led forward. But he seemed no longer the bold and tranquil patriot. He was surrounded by shrieking female forms clinging to his knees, and his aged hands were lifted to heaven, as if imploring its pity.

"Stop!" cried Wallace, in a voice whose thundering mandate rung from tower to tower. "The instant he dies, Lord Aymer de Valence shall perish."

He had only to make the sign: and in a few minutes that nobleman appeared between Ramsay and Kirkpatrick. Wallace, when he saw him, blushed: "Earl, though I granted your life in the field with reluctance, yet here I am ashamed to put it in danger. But your own people compel me. Look on that spectacle! A venerable father in the midst of his family; he and they doomed to an ignominious and instant death, unless I betray my country and abandon these walls! Were I weak enough to purchase their lives at such an expense, they could not survive that disgrace. But that they shall not die while I have power to preserve them, is my resolve and my duty!—Life then for life: yours for this family!"

"The moment," cried Wallace, directing his voice towards the Keep; "in which that vile cord presses too closely the neck of the Earl of Mar, or of any of his blood; the axe shall sever the head of Lord De Valence from his body."

De Valence was now seen on the top of one of the besieging towers. He was pale as death. He trembled; but not with dismay only; ten thousand varying emotions tore his breast. To be thus set up as a monument of his own defeat; to be threatened with execution by an enemy he had contemned; to be exposed to such indignities by the unthinking ferocity of his coadjutor; filled him with such contending passions of revenge, both against friends and foes, that he forgot the present fear of his own death, in the turbulent wishes of his soul to deprive of life, them by whom he suffered.

Cressingham became alarmed at seeing the retaliating menace of Wallace brought so directly into execution; and dreading the future vengeance of De Valence for much that he had done against his designs; he ordered a herald to say, that if Wallace would draw off his troops to within the outer ballium until evening, the Earl of Mar and his family should be taken down from their perilous situation; and he would consider on terms of surrender.

## The Scottish Chiefs

Wallace, well aware that the intentions of Cressingham were only to gain time until De Warenne should arrive, determined to foil him with his own weapons, and make the gaining of the castle the natural consequence of vanquishing the Earl. He told the now perplexed governor, that he should consider Lord de Valence as the hostage of safety for Lord Mar and his family; and therefore he consented to withdraw his men from the inner ballium till the setting of the sun; at which hour he should expect a herald with the surrender of the fortress.

Cressingham, thinking that he had caught the Scottish chief in a snare, and that without his suspicion of its being so near, the Lord Warden's army would be upon him long before the expiration of the armistice; congratulated himself upon his manoeuvre; and determined that the moment Earl de Warenne should appear, he would destroy Lord Mar secretly in the dungeons: though he knew that such an act would be in opposition to the deeper policy of De Valence, who, outwardly denouncing the immediate death of that nobleman, had, while in the castle, expressed his design to delay the execution, and perhaps finally grant him pardon. Accordingly, with his head full of these ideas, he ordered Lord Mar back to prison; and while he meditated a second offence to De Valence, he hoped to make his peace with him by the eagerness he would shew to set him at liberty.

Wallace, meanwhile, who fully comprehended what were his enemy's views, and what ought to be his own measures, as soon as he saw the unhappy group disappear from the battlements of the Keep, recalled his men from the inner ballium wall; and stationing several detachments along the ramparts and in the towers of the outer wall; left De Valence in the guard-room of the barbican, under the charge of Lord Ruthven; who was eager, himself, to hold the means that were to check the threatened danger of relatives so dear to him as were the prisoners in the castle.

The Scottish Chiefs

**VOL. III.**

CHAP. I.

Wallace, having disposed part of his men in commanding posts around the town, went forward with his chosen troops towards the place where, from the information of his scouts, he deemed it most likely he should intercept De Warenne. He took his position upon an advantageous ground about half a mile from Stirling, near to the abbey of Cambuskenneth. The Forth lay before him, crossed by a wooden bridge, over which the enemy must pass to reach him, as the river was not in that part fordable, and some late rains had rendered it at present particularly swollen.

The beams which supported this bridge, he ordered to be sawed at the bottom; but not moved in the least, that they might stand perfectly firm for as long as he should deem it necessary. To each beam were fastened strong ropes; all of which were held by some of his sturdiest Lanerkers who lay concealed amongst the rushes. These preparations being made, he drew up his troops in order of battle. Kirkpatrick and Murray commanded the flanks. In the centre stood Wallace himself, with Ramsay on one side of him, and Edwin with Scrymgeour on the other, awaiting with steady expectation the approach of the enemy, who, by this time, he knew could not be far distant.

Cressingham, from the information he had received, was also as well aware of the proximity of De Warenne; and burning with malice against Wallace, and earnest to redeem the favour of De Valence by some act in his behalf, (having left certain orders with his lieutenant) he went alone to an avenue of escape that was never divulged to any but to the commanders of the fortress; and there, by the light of a torch, making his way through a passage that was bored in the rock, he emerged at its western base, amongst a thicket of obscuring bushes. He had wisely arrayed himself in a shepherd's dress, in case of being observed by any passing Scot; but fortune favored him, and unseen he crept along through the underwood and furze on the ground, till he came up with the advance of De Warenne's army on the skirts of Torwood.

Having missed Wallace in West Lothian, where he expected to find him, De Warenne divided his army into three divisions, to enter Stirlingshire by different routes, hoping by that means certainly to intercept him in one of them. The Earl of Montgomery led the first, of twenty thousand men; Baron Hilton the second, of ten thousand; and De Warenne himself, the third, of thirty thousand.

It was the first of these divisions that Cressingham encountered in Torwood; and immediately revealing himself, he was conducted to Lord Montgomery, to whom he recounted how rapidly Wallace had gained the town, and in what jeopardy stood the citadel if he were not instantly attacked. The Earl advised waiting for a junction with Hilton or the Lord Warden, "which," said he, "must happen in the course of a few hours."

"In the course of a few hours," returned Cressingham, "you will have no Stirling castle to defend. The enemy will seize it at sun-set in pursuance of the very agreement by which I warded him off, to give us time to annihilate him before that hour. Therefore no hesitation, if we would not see him lock the gates of the north of Scotland upon us, even when we have the power to hurl him to perdition."

By arguments such as these, the young Earl was induced to give up his judgment; and accompanied by Cressingham, who felt himself brave amid such a host, he proceeded to the southern bank of the Forth.

The troops of Wallace were drawn up on the opposite shore, hardly five thousand strong; but so disposed that the enemy could not calculate their numbers: yet, the narrowness of their front suggested to Cressingham the idea that they could not be very numerous, as he must have left forces to occupy the outworks of the town and the citadel. "It will be easy to surround the rebel," cried he, "and that we may effect our enterprise, and rescue De Valence, before the arrival of our Warden robs us of the honour, let us about it directly, and cross the bridge!"

Montgomery replied, that he thought a herald ought to be sent to inform Wallace, that besides the long line of troops he saw, De Warenne was advancing with double hosts: and therefore if he would now surrender, a pardon should be granted to him in the king's name, for all his late rebellions. Cressingham was vehement against this measure, but Montgomery being resolute, the messenger was sent.

In a few minutes he returned, and repeated to the two Southron commanders the words of Wallace:—"Go," said he, "tell your masters we came not here to treat for a pardon of what we shall never allow to be an offence: We came to assert our rights, and to set Scotland free. Till that is effected, all negotiation is vain. Let them advance, they will find us prepared."

## The Scottish Chiefs

"Then onward!" cried Montgomery; and spurring his steed, he led the way to the bridge: his eager soldiers followed, and the whole of his centre ranks passed over. The flanks advanced, and the bridge from end to end was filled with archers, cavalry, gens d'armes, and war carriages; and Cressingham in the midst, was halloing in proud triumph to those who occupied the rear of the straining arches; when the blast of a trumpet sounded from the till now silent and immoveable Scottish phalanx: It was reechoed by loud shouts from behind the passing enemy—And in that moment the supporting beams of the bridge were pulled away, and the whole of its mailed throng fell into the roaring stream.

The cries of the maimed and the drowning, were joined by the terrific slogen of the two bands of Scots; the one with Wallace on the north of the river; and the other under the command of Sir John Graham, who had lain in ambuscade on the south, ready to assail the rear of the enemy the moment the bridge should fall. Both parties rushing down upon the dismayed troops, attacked them with a sweeping impetuosity which drove those who fought on land, into the river; and those who had escaped the flood, to meet its waves again, a bleeding host.

In the midst of this conflict, which rather seemed a carnage than a battle, Kirkpatrick, having heard the proud shouts of Cressingham on the bridge, now sought him amidst its ruined arches with a ferocity which seemed to transmute his own nature into that of a fiend thirsting for blood, as he ran from man to man of those who emerged from the water. But even while his glaring eyeballs and uplifted axe threatened their destruction, he only looked on them, and with imprecations of disappointment, rushed forward on the same chase. Almost in despair that the waves had stolen from him his revenge, he was hurrying on in another direction, when he perceived a body moving through some sedges in a hollow on his right. He turned, and saw the object of his search crawling amongst the mud which lay on that spot.

"Ha!" cried Kirkpatrick with a voice of thunder: "Art thou yet mine?— Damned, damned villain!" cried he, springing upon his breast; "Behold the man you dishonoured—Behold the hot cheek which your dastard hand dared pollute!—Thy blood shall obliterate the stain;—and then Kirkpatrick may again front the proudest in Scotland!"

"For mercy!" cried the horror-struck Cressingham; struggling with almost preternatural strength to extricate himself.

"Hell would be my portion, did I grant any to thee," cried Kirkpatrick; and with one stroke of his axe, he severed his head from his body. "I am a man again!" shouted he, as he held its bleeding veins in his hand, and placed it on the point of his sword. "Thou ruthless priest of Moloch and of Mammon, thou shalt have thine own blood to drink, while I shew my general how proudly I am avenged!" As he spoke, he dashed again amongst the victorious ranks of his less sanguinary brethren in arms; and came up with Wallace at the very moment he was extricating himself from his fallen horse, which a random arrow from the opposite shore had killed. Murray at the same instant was bringing towards him the wounded Montgomery, who came to surrender his sword, and to beg quarter for his men. The Earl turned deadly pale, as the first object that struck his sight was the fierce knight of Torthorald walking under a stream of blood, which continued to flow from the ghastly head of Cressingham as he held it triumphantly in the air.

"If that be your chief?" cried Montgomery, "I have mistaken him much—I cannot yield my sword to him."

Murray understood him:—"If cruelty be an evil spirit," returned he, "it has fled every breast in this army to shelter with Sir Roger Kirkpatrick, and its name is Legion! That is my chief!" added he, pointing to Wallace with an evident consciousness of deriving honour from his command. The chieftain rose from the ground, and though dyed in the same ensanguined hue that had excited the abhorrence of Montgomery, yet it had been drawn from his own veins and those of his horse, and all of blood about him seemed to be on his garments; none was in his eyes; none in his heart, but what warmed it to mercy, and to benevolence, for all mankind. His eye momentarily fell on the approaching figure of Kirkpatrick, who, waving the head in the air, blew the triumphal notes of the Pryse from his bugle, and then cried aloud: "I have slain the tiger of Scotland! I have sent my brave Loch-Doiners to case my target with his skin: and when I strike its bossy sides, I will exclaim as I do now, "So perishes my dishonour! So perish all the enemies of Scotland!"

"And with the extinction of that breath, Kirkpatrick;" cried Wallace, looking sternly from the head to him; "let your fell revenge perish also. For your own honour, commit no indignities on the body you have slain.—Let us subdue our enemies, but not riot in their fall!"

"'Tis for you, my general, to conquer like a God!" cried Kirkpatrick; "I have felt as a man, and like a man I

## The Scottish Chiefs

revenge. This head shall destroy even in death: It shall vanquish its friends for me; for I will wear it like a Gorgon on my sword to turn to stone every Southron who looks on it." As he spoke, he disappeared amongst the thickening ranks, towards the shattered bridge; and as the rejoicing Scots hailed him as he passed, Montgomery struck to the heart by every shout of triumph, suffered Murray to lead him forwards to the scene of his humility.

The ever comprehensive eye of Wallace perceived him as he advanced; and guessing, by his armour and dignified demeanor, who he was; with a noble grace he raised his helmet from his head, as the Earl approached him. Montgomery looked on him; he felt his soul even more subdued than his arms; but still there was something about a soldier's heart that shrunk from yielding his power of resistance. The blood mounted into his before pale cheeks: he held out his sword in silence to the victor, for he could not bring his tongue to pronounce the word "surrender."

Wallace put it gently back with his hand: "Ever wear what you honour," said he, "but, gallant Montgomery, when you next draw it, let it be in a better cause. Learn, brave Earl, to discriminate between a warrior's glory and his shame: between being the defender of his own country, and the unprovoked ravager of another's."

Montgomery blushed scarlet deep at these words; but it was not with resentment. He looked down for a moment: "Ah!" thought he to himself, "perhaps I ought never to have drawn it here!" Then raising his eyes to Wallace, he said—"Were you not the enemy of my king, who, though a conqueror, sanctions none of the cruelties that have been committed in his name; I would give you my hand before the remnant of his brave troops, whose lives you grant. But you have my heart: a heart that knows no difference between friend or foe, when the bonds of virtue would unite what only civil dissensions divide."

"Had your king possessed the virtues you believe he does," replied Wallace, "my sword might have now been a pruning hook. But that is past! We are in arms for injuries received, and to drive out a tyrant: For, believe me, noble Montgomery, that monarch has little pretensions to virtue, who suffers the oppressors of his people, or of his conquests, to go unpunished. To connive at cruelty is to practise it. And has Edward ever frowned on one of those despots, who in his name, have, for these two years past, laid Scotland in blood and ashes?"

The appeal was too strong for Montgomery to answer: he felt its truth; and bowed, with an expression in his face that told more than as a subject of England, he dared declare.

Wallace now turned to a herald, and commanded him to sound the notes of peace. He sounded:—and where the moment before was the horrid clash of arms, the yell of savage conquest, and the piercing cries for mercy, all was still as death. Not that death which has past; but that which is approaching:—None spoke; not a sound was heard but the low groans of the dying, who lay overwhelmed and perishing under the bodies of the slain, and the feet of the living.

The voice of Wallace rose from this dreary pause. Its sound was ever the harbinger of glory or of good will to men. "Soldiers!" cried he, "God has given us victory.—Let us shew our gratitude, by healing those images of himself which we have broken!—Gather the wounded into quarters, and bury the dead."

The late silence was now turned into a buzz of busy heads and hands, all eager to obey their commander. The prisoners were conducted to the rear of the town, while the major part of the troops, to allow the appointed detachment to unburthen the earth of its bleeding load, crossed the river at the ford, and came in front of Stirling just as De Warenne's division appeared on the horizon like a moving cloud gilded by the now setting sun. At this sight, Wallace sent Edwin into the town with Lord Montgomery, and extending his line, prepared to bear down upon the approaching Earl.

But the Lord Warden had received information which fought better for the Scots than a host of swords. When he had advanced a very little onward on the carse of Stirling, a scout, whom he had previously sent out, (and who had approached the south border of the Forth at the very moment Kirkpatrick came forward waving the bloody head of Cressingham on his sword,) met him; and related that he had seen the remains of the slaughtered Governor of Stirling, the river floating with dead bodies, and Southron soldiers flying on all sides, while the Scottish horns were blowing the notes of victory. From what he had learnt from the fugitives, he also informed his lord, that he had found it necessary to fly, for fear of being impeded in his return to him, as the town and citadel of Stirling had not only been taken by Sir William Wallace, but the two detachments under Montgomery and Hilton were both discomfited, and their leaders slain or taken.

At this intelligence, Earl de Warenne stood aghast: and while he was still doubting that such disgrace to King Edwards arms could be possible, two or three fugitives came up and witnessed to its truth: For one of them having

## The Scottish Chiefs

been near Cressingham in the wood, when he told Montgomery of the capture of de Valence, concluded that he meant the leader of the other detachment; and corroborating the scout's information of the two defeats, and of the town and citadel being entirely in the possession of the Scots, he added, (for terror had multiplied objects in his vision;) that their army was incalculable; and was so disposed by Sir William Wallace, as to appear few; that he might ensnare his enemies by filling them with hopes of an easy conquest.

These accounts had already persuaded Warenne to make a retreat: but Wallace, perceiving a sort of confusion in his enemy's flanks, and that they seemed making a retrograde motion in no very good order, called his men to the attack; and with fixed pikes bearing down upon them, while a stream of arrows from his archers behind, poured upon them with such thickness as to darken the air, he sent Graham round by the wood to take the enemy in flank. All was executed with promptitude; and the tremendous slogen of victory sounding from side to side, the terrified Southrons, before panic-struck, now threw away their arms to lighten themselves for escape; and dreadful would have been the slaughter, had not de Warenne, sensible that it is not the number of the dead but the terror of the living which gives the finishing stroke to conquest, and believing that now all was lost, to put at end to the useless carnage of his troops, sounded a parley.

The bugle of Wallace instantly answered it. De Warenne sent forward his herald. He offered to lay down his arms at the feet of Sir William Wallace, provided that he might be exempted from relinquishing the royal standard, and that he and his men might be permitted to return unmolested into England.

Wallace accepted the first article: granted the second; but added, that with regard to the third, he would accord with it on condition, That he, the Lord de Warenne, and the officers taken in his army, or in other engagements lately fought in Scotland, should be immediately exchanged for the like number of Scots he should name, who were prisoners in England; and that the common men of the army now about to surrender their arms, should take an oath never to serve again against Scotland.

These preliminaries being agreed to, the Lord Warden advanced at the head of his 30,000 troops; and first laying down his sword, which Wallace immediately returned to him, the officers and soldiers marched by with their heads uncovered, throwing down their pikes, bows, arrows, and swords, as they approached their conqueror. Wallace extended his line as the procession moved; for he had too much policy to shew his enemies that 30,000 men, had yielded almost without striking a blow, to hardly 5,000. The oath was administered to each regiment by heralds sent for that purpose round into the strath of Monteith, whither he directed the captured legions to assemble and refresh themselves by sleep, previous to their march the next morning for England. The privates thus disposed of, Wallace, hoping that Hilton might also fall into his hands, resolved to pass the night in Torwood under arms; and, therefore, to release himself from the commanders also, he told De Warenne that duty kept him from returning with him into the town; but that he should receive every respect from the Scottish officers.

He then gave directions to Sir Alexander Ramsay; who, with a small detachment, escorted De Warenne and the rest of the noble prisoners to Stirling.

## CHAP. II.

The first prisoners being lodged behind the town, and the wounded Southrons carried into the abbey of Cambuskenneth, while those of the Scots were brought into Stirling; Edwin was pleased to hear that all had been done according to his general's orders. But even while he was listening to the returns of the subalterns who had been on these duties, he perceived that Montgomery became faint from fatigue and loss of blood; and contriving that he should be carried in a litter, as he could no longer sit a horse, he conducted him to Snawdoun; the ancient palace of the kings of Scotland in Stirling, but which had lately been inhabited by Cressingham. The priests, who in Wallace's army not only exercised the Levitical but the good Samaritan functions, soon obeyed Edwin's orders; and he had the pleasure of seeing the Earl's wounds drest, and himself laid without pain, and composedly, on a couch.

Messengers had arrived from Wallace to his young knight, and to the other captains in and about Stirling, to acquaint them with the surrender of De Warenne's army. Hence no surprise was created in the breast of Montgomery, when he saw his commander enter the room as the prisoner of the illustrious Scot.

Montgomery held out his hand to the Lord Warden in silence, and with a flushed cheek.

"Blush not, my noble friend!" cried De Warenne, "these wounds speak more eloquently than a thousand tongues, the gallantry with which you maintained the sword that fate compelled you to surrender. But I, without a scratch! How can I meet the unconquered Edward? And yet it was not for myself I feared: my brave and confiding soldiers were in all my thoughts. For, I saw that it was not to meet an army I led them; but against a whirlwind, a storm of war with which no strength that I commanded could contend."

While the English generals thus conversed, Edwin, whose impatient heart yearned to be again at the side of its brother, gladly resigned the charge of his noble prisoner to Sir Alexander Ramsay, whose gentle courtesy of manners, he knew, would well supply the place of his divided spirit. As soon as he found a cessation in the conversation of the two Earls, he drew near Montgomery to take his leave.

"Farewel, till we meet again!" said the young Earl, pressing his hand; "You have been a brother rather than an enemy to me."

"Because," returned Edwin, smiling, "I follow the example of my general, who would willingly be no man's enemy, but the brother of all mankind."

Warenne looked at him with surprise: "And who are you, who, in that stripling form, utter sentiments which might grace the maturest years?"

Edwin blushed, but with a sweet dignity replied—"I am Edwin Ruthven, the adopted brother of Sir William Wallace."

"And the son of him," asked De Warenne, "who with Sir William Wallace, was the first to mount Dumbarton walls?"

At these words of the Lord Warden, the glowing blush on the cheek of Edwin was suffused with a more animated bloom. At the moment when his courage was distinguished on the heights of Dumbarton by the vowed friendship of Wallace, he found his heart expand with a new emotion; he loved, and was beloved by the bravest and most amiable of beings, and in his light he felt both warmth and brightness. But this question of De Warenne conveyed to him that he had found fame himself; that he was then acknowledged to be an object not unworthy of being called the brother of Sir William Wallace!—and casting down his eyes, beaming with exultation from the fixed gaze of De Warenne, he answered:—I am that happy Ruthven who had the honour to mount Dumbarton rock by the side of my general; and from his hand, there received the stroke of knighthood."

De Warenne rose, much agitated; "If such be the boys of Scotland, need we wonder when the spirit of resistance is roused in the nation, that our strength should wither before its men!"

"At least," said Montgomery, whose admiration of what had past, seemed to re-animate his before languid faculties; "it deprives defeat of its sting, when we are conscious that we yielded to a power that was irresistible. But, my Lord," added he, "if the courage of this youth amazes you; what will you say ought to be the fate of this country, ought to be the crown of Sir William Wallace's career, when you know by what a chain of brave hearts he is surrounded? All that approach him, seem to partake of his invincible soul: even tender woman loses the



## The Scottish Chiefs

weakness of her sex when she belongs to him." Earl de Warenne, surprised at the energy with which he spoke, looked at him with an expression that told him so.—"Yes," continued he, "I witnessed the dauntless heroism of the loveliest of human beings when, in the midst of an armed host, she defended the character of her husband, and preserved the secret of his retreat inviolate; I saw that matchless woman whom Sir Arthur Heselrigge so basely slew."

"Surely," cried Edwin with indignant vehemence, "you were not a spectator of that bloody deed? If you were, retire from this house; go to Cambuskenneth, any where; but leave this town before the injured Wallace arrives; and blast not his eyes with a second sight of one who could have beheld his wife murdered."

Every eye was now fixed on the commanding figure of the young Edwin, who stood with the determination of being obeyed breathing in every look. De Warenne then at once saw the possibility of so gentle a creature being transformed into the soul of enterprise, into the fearless and effective soldier.

Lord Montgomery held out his hand to Edwin.—"By this right arm, I swear, noble youth, that had I been on the spot when Heselrigge lifted his sword against the breast of Lady Wallace; though he was then my commanding officer, and an ignominious death might have awaited me, I would have sheathed my sword in his! It was then that I saw Lady Wallace. Heselrigge, offended with my want of severity in the scrutiny I had made at Ellerslie a few hours before; sent me under an arrest to Ayr. Arnulf quarrelled with me on the same subject; and I retired in disgust to England."

"Then how?—you ought to be Sir Gilbert Hambleton?" said Edwin, "but whoever you are, as you were kind to the Lady Marion, I cannot but regret my late hasty charge; and for which I beg your pardon?"

Montgomery took his hand and pressed it: "Generous Ruthven, your warmth is too honourable to need forgiveness.—I am that Sir Gilbert Hambleton; and had I remained so, I should not now be in Scotland. But, in consequence of an uncle's death, a few weeks ago I became Earl of Montgomery; and in my first interview with the Prince of Wales, he told me that it had been rumoured I was disloyal in my heart to my king: and to prove, said he to me, the falsehood of your calumniators, I appoint you second in command to Earl de Warenne in the new expedition against Scotland. To have refused to fight against Sir William Wallace, would have been to have accused myself of treason. And while I respected the husband of the murdered Lady Wallace, I yet regarded him as an insurgent; and with the same spirit you follow him to the field, I obeyed the commands of my prince."

"Justice is justice, Lord Montgomery!" returned Edwin, "let princes say what they will. But I am rejoiced to meet one who proves to me, what my general, wronged as he has been, yet always inculcates—that all the Southrons are not base and cruel. When he knows who is indeed his prisoner, what recollections will it not awaken! But gratitude to you, will be at least an assuasive to the rest. To-morrow morning you will see him. Till then I shall not intimate to him the melancholy satisfaction he is to enjoy; for, with the remembrances it will arouse, your presence must bring the antidote."

Young Edwin then telling Ramsay in what parts of the palace the rest of the lords were to be lodged, took his leave of the party; and with recovered composure descended to the court-yard to mount his horse to rejoin Wallace. He was galloping along under the bright light of the moon, when he heard a squadron on full speed approaching, and presently Murray appeared at the head of the troop. "Edwin," cried he, "I was coming to you. We are sent to demand the instant surrender of the citadel. Hilton's division has struck, and we are complete masters of the field."

He then proceeded to relate that the Baron came up about half an hour after Earl de Warenne had marched towards the town. Sir William Wallace immediately sent forward his heralds with the colours of De Valence, and Montgomery, with the personal banner of De Warenne, and required him to lay down his arms. The sight of these standards was sufficient to assure Hilton that there was no deceit in the embassy; and not seeing any reason for 10,000 men disputing the day with a power to whom 50,000 had just surrendered, he directly grounded his arms, and very quietly submitted to the terms proposed.

Wallace, impatient to apprise Lord Mar and his family of their safety; as the castle must be his, since he had discomfited all who would have maintained it against him; and thinking it prudent to lodge the noble prisoners he had taken in a stronger hold than the town; while he was inspecting the secure disposition of his new conquest in the shelter of the wood, he sent off Murray with a considerable number of men, to demand the immediate surrender of the citadel.

Murray gladly obeyed this mission; and now accompanied by Edwin, with the banners of Cressingham and De

## The Scottish Chiefs

Warrenne trailing in the dust as Scrymgeour held the royal lion over them, the trumpet of the herald summoned the lieutenant to the walls. He feared to appear, well aware of what was going to happen; for he had seen from the battlements of the Keep the dreadful conflict on the banks of the Forth: He had seen the thousands of De Warrenne pass before the conqueror: and he now believed that in punishment for the treachery of Cressingham in stealing out under the armistice, and breaking his word to surrender the citadel at sun-set, that Wallace was sending to inform him that the whole garrison should be put to the sword.

Even at the moment when the trumpet blew, driven to the direst extremity, he had forced himself to consult with his enemy; and had just entered Lord Mar's room, to offer him his liberty if he would go to Wallace and treat with him to spare the lives of the garrison. He had scarcely delivered his wishes to the overjoyed Earl, (who, closed up in a solitary dungeon, knew nought of what had happened without; and who expected that his present re-entrance was to lead him to the death that had been twice averted) before he answered for Wallace in the most gracious manner. Indeed, the pale and trembling lieutenant had no sooner spoken the first word, than Mar discerned that it was a suppliant, not an executioner, he saw before him; and he was even promising that clemency from Wallace which he knew dwelt in his heart, when the trumpet sounded.

The lieutenant started horror-struck on his feet: "It is now too late! I have not made the first overture; and there sounds the death-bell of this garrison!—I saved your life, Earl;" said he, turning more confidently to Mar; "when the enraged Cressingham commanded me to pull the cord which would have launched you into eternity:—I disobeyed him!—For my sake, then, seek to preserve this garrison, and accompany me to the ramparts."

The chains were immediately knocked off the limbs of Mar; and the lieutenant presenting him with a sword, they, together, approached the battlements. As the declining moon shone on their backs, Murray did not discern that it was his uncle who mounted the wall. But calling to him in a voice which declared there was no appeal, pointed to the humbled colours of Edward, and demanded the instant surrender of the citadel.

"Let it be then with the pledge of Sir William Wallace's mercy?" cried the venerable Earl.

"With every pledge, Lord Mar," returned Murray, now joyfully recognising his uncle, "which you think safe to give."

"Then the keys of the citadel are yours:" cried the lieutenant, "I only ask the lives of my garrison."

This was granted; and immediate preparations made for the admission of the Scots. As the enraptured Edwin heard the heavy chains of the portcullis drawing up, and the massy bolts of the huge doors grating in their guards, he thought of his mother's liberty, of his father's joy in pressing her again in his arms; and hastening to the tower where that lord, with an anxious heart held watch over the now sleeping De Valence, he told him all that had happened; "Go, my father;" added he, "enter with Murray, and be the first to open the prison doors of my dearest mother."

Lord Ruthven embraced his son.— "My dear Edwin! this sacrifice to my feelings is worthy of you. But I have a duty to perform superior to even the tenderest private ones. I am planted here by my commander, and shall I quit my station for any gratification, till he gives me leave? No, dear boy.—Be you my representative to your mother: and while my example teaches you, above all earthly considerations, to obey your general, your tender embraces will shew her what I sacrifice to duty."

Edwin no longer urged his father, but acquiescing in his orders, left his apartment, and flew to the gate of the inner ballium. It was open: and Murray already stood on the platform before the Keep, receiving the keys of the garrison. The business of the surrender being over, "Now," said he to the lieutenant, "lead me to the Ladies Mar and Ruthven, that I may assure them they are free."

"Blessed sight!" whispered the Earl to his nephew; "little could I expect, even under my most sanguine expectations when at Bothwell I put the banner of Mar into your unpractised hand, that in the course of four months I should see my brave boy receive the keys of proud Stirling from its commander!"

"But so it is!" returned Murray, with a gay smile; "and you may think yourself well off if you do not see me pull Edward himself by the beard, before four moons silver my raven locks."

The gates of the Keep were now unclosed to them: and the lieutenant leading the way, conducted them along a gloomy passage to a low door studded with knobs of iron. As he drew an outward bolt, he said to Lord Mar with a flushed cheek, "These severities are not to be laid to my account. They are the hard policy of governor Cressingham."

He pushed the door slowly open, and discovered a small miserable cell, whose walls of rugged stone had no

## The Scottish Chiefs

other covering than the incrustations which time and many a dripping winter had strewn over its vaulted sides. On the ground, on a pallet of straw, lay a female figure in a profound sleep. But the light which the lieutenant held, streaming full upon the uncurtained slumberer, she started, and with a shriek of terror at sight of so many armed men, discovered the pallid features of the Countess of Mar. The Earl, with an anguish which hardly the freedom he was going to bestow could ameliorate, rushed forward, and throwing himself beside her, caught her in his arms.

"Are we then to die?" cried she in a voice of horror, and thrusting him from her; "Has Wallace abandoned us?— Are we to perish?—Heartless, heartless man!"

The Earl, overcome by the violence of his emotions, could only strain her to his breast in speechless agitation. Edwin, who saw a picture of his mother's sufferings in the present distraction of the Countess, felt his powers of utterance locked up: But Lord Andrew, whose ever-light heart was gay the moment he was no longer unhappy, jocosely answered; "The world is not to be so relieved, my fair aunt. There are many hearts to die beneath my uncle's sword and your eyes, before the Lady Fates think fit to snip your threads; and meanwhile I come with the shears of Sir William Wallace to clip your chains."

The name of Wallace, and the intimation that he had sent to set her free, drove every former thought of death and misery from her mind: Again the ambrosial gales of love seemed to breathe around her: she saw not her prison walls; she felt herself again in his presence; and in a blissful trance in which the words of Murray had involved her, she rather endured than participated the warm congratulations of her husband on their mutual safety.

"Let us leave my aunt and uncle together," whispered Murray to his cousin, "while we go and open the cages of our other pretty birds; I know, my little one, you want to nestle to your mother; and I promise you I shall have no objection to hear again the soft cooing of the sweet dove of Mar."

Edwin eagerly acquiesced: and the lieutenant, who preceded them a few paces along the same gallery, said, "Lady Ruthven's habitation is not better than the Countess's." As he spoke he threw open the door, and discovered its sad inmate asleep. But when the glad voice of Edwin pierced her ear, when his fond embraces clung to her bosom, her surprise and emotions were almost insupportable. Hardly crediting her senses, that he whom she had believed was safe in the cloisters of St. Columba, could be within the dangerous walls of Stirling; that it was his mailed breast that pressed against her bosom; that it was his voice she heard exclaiming, "Mother we come to give you freedom!" all appeared to her like a dream of madness.

She listened, she felt him, she even found her cheek wet with his rapturous tears: "Am I in my right mind?" cried she, looking at him with a fearful yet overjoyed countenance, "Am I not mad? O! tell me," cried she, turning round upon Murray and the lieutenant, "is this my son that I see, or has terror turned my poor brain?"

"It is indeed your son, your Edwin, my very self," cried he, alarmed at the expression of her voice and countenance. Murray now advanced, and kneeling down by her, gently took her hand. "He speaks truth, my dear Madam. It is your son Edwin. He left his convent to be a volunteer with Sir William Wallace. He has covered himself with honour on the walls of Dumbarton, and here also, a sharer in his leader's victories, he is come to set you free."

At this explanation, which being given in the sober language of reason, Lady Ruthven believed, she gave way to the full happiness of her soul, and falling on the neck of her son, embraced him with a flood of tears: "And thy father, Edwin! Where is he? Did not the noble Wallace rescue him from Ayr?"

"He did, and he is here." Edwin then proceeded to relate to his mother the affectionate embassy of his father and the particulars of his release. Murray perceiving how happily they would be engaged, rose from his knees, and told the lieutenant to conduct him to Lady Helen's door.

"The Lady Helen," returned the officer, "lodges in the upper apartments of the Keep."

Murray leaving the cell of Lady Ruthven, followed the lieutenant up a winding staircase into a stone gallery, where, throwing open a door, he let Lord Andrew into a splendid apartment surrounded with couches on which several women lay asleep. The lieutenant passed through this room, to an opposite door, "Within this chamber," said he, "is Lady Helen."

"Open the door," returned Murray, "though she seems not to have tasted the hardships of her parents, she has shared their misery I do not doubt, and I will not withhold from her a moment of their happiness."

The lieutenant opened the door, but remembering the charges he had received to treat her with particular respect, he retreated, and Murray entered alone. It was a magnificent bed-chamber, lighted up with lamps in the

## The Scottish Chiefs

most superb style. He cautiously approached the bed, fearing too hastily to disturb her, and gently pulling aside the curtain, beheld vacuity. An exclamation of alarm had almost escaped him, when observing a half-open door at the other side of the apartment, he drew towards it, and there beheld his cousin with her back to him, kneeling before a crucifix. She spoke not, but the fervour of her action manifested how earnestly she prayed. He moved behind her, but she heard him not: her whole soul was absorbed in the success of her petition, and at last raising her clasped hands in a paroxysm of emotion, she exclaimed: "If that trumpet sounded the victory of the Scots, then, Oh, Power of Goodness! receive thy servant's thanks. But if De Warrene have conquered where De Valence failed, if all whom I love be lost to me here, take me then to thyself; and let my freed spirit fly to their embraces in heaven!"

"Aye, and on earth, too, thou blessed angel!" cried Murray, throwing himself towards her. She started from her knees, and with a cry of such joy as the widow of Serepta uttered when she embraced her son from the dead, Helen threw herself on the bosom of her cousin, and closed her eyes in a blissful swoon—for even while every outward sense seemed fled, the impression of joy played about her heart, and the animated throbbings of that of Murray, while he pressed her in his arms, at last aroused her to recollection. Her glistening and uplifted eyes told all the happiness, all the gratitude of her soul. "My father?—All are safe?" cried she, "All, my best beloved!" answered Murray, forgetting, in the powerful emotions of his heart, that what he felt and what he uttered were beyond even a cousin's limits—"My uncle; the Countess; Lord and Lady Ruthven; all are safe."

"And Sir William Wallace?" cried she, "You do not mention him. I hope no ill—"

"No evil has happened to him," interrupted Murray, holding her clasped hands in his, with looks of the fondest affection; "he is conqueror here. He has subdued every obstacle between Berwick and Stirling, and he has sent me hither to set you and the rest of the dear prisoners free."

Helen's heart throbbed with a new tumult as he spoke: she longed to ask him whether the unknown knight she had parted from at the hermit's cell, had ever joined Sir William Wallace? She yearned to know that he yet lived. At the thought of the probability of his having fallen in some of these desperate conflicts, her soul seemed to gasp for existence; and dropping her head on her cousin's shoulder: "Tell me, Andrew," said she, and there she paused, with an emotion for which she could not account to herself.

"Of what would my sweet cousin inquire?" asked Murray, partaking her agitation, and trembling while he pressed his cheek on her silken hair.

"Nothing particular," said she, covered with blushes, "but did you fight alone in these battles? Did no other knight but Sir William Wallace?"

"Many, dearest Helen," returned he, enraptured at the sensibility of a solicitude which he appropriated to himself, and pressing her gently to his breast. "Many knights joined our arms. All fought in a manner worthy of their leader, and thanks to heaven, none have fallen."

"Thanks indeed!" cried Helen, rising from her seat; and with a hope, she dared hardly whisper to herself, of seeing the unknown knight in the gallant train of the conqueror, she said, "Now Andrew, lead me to my father."

Murray would perhaps have required a second bidding, had not Lord Mar, impatient to see his daughter, appeared with the Countess at the door of the apartment. Rushing towards them, she fell on the bosom of her father, and while she bathed his face and hands with her glad tears, he too wept, and mingled blessings with his caresses. No coldness here met his paternal heart: no distracting confusions tore her from his arms: no averted looks, by turns, alarmed and chilled the bosom of tenderness. All was innocence and duty in Helen's breast; and every ingenuous action shewed its affection and its joy. The estranged heart of Lady Mar had closed against him: and though he suspected not its wanderings, he felt the unutterable difference between the warm transports of his daughter, and the frigid congratulations forced from the lips of his wife.

Lady Mar gazed with a wierd frown on the lovely form of Helen as she wound her exquisitely turned arms around the Earl in filial tenderness: her bosom, heaving in the snowy, whiteness of virgin purity; her face radiant with the softest blooms of youth: all seemed to frame an object, which malignant fiends had conjured up to blast her hopes. "Wallace will behold these charms!" cried her distracted spirit to herself, "and then, where am I?"

As her thoughts followed each other, she unconsciously glanced on Helen looks, which, if an evil-eye had any witching power, would have withered all her beauties. At one of these portentous moments the glad eyes of Helen met hers: she started with horror. It made her remember how she had been betrayed, and all she had suffered from Soulis. But she could not forget that she had also been rescued; and with the thought, the image of her preserver

## The Scottish Chiefs

rose before her. At this gentle idea her alarmed countenance took a softer expression; but deeply sighing, both from the recollection of her step-mother's perfidy, and with a fear that she might repeat it; she turned to her father's question of "How did she come to be with Lady Ruthven, when he had been taught by Lord Andrew to believe that she was safe at Saint Fillan's?"

"Yes," cried Murray, throwing himself down on a seat beside her, "I saw in your letter to Sir William Wallace that you had been betrayed by some traitor Scot from your asylum; and but for the fulness of my joy at our meeting, which absorbed all the past in the present, I should have inquired who that villain was?"

Lady Mar, who felt a deadly sickness at her heart on hearing that Sir William Wallace was so far acquainted with her daughter as to have received a letter from her, in despair prepared to listen to what she expected would bring a death-stroke to her hopes. They had met—They wrote to each other! Then, far indeed had proceeded that communication of hearts which was the aim of her life—and she was undone!

Helen glanced at the face of Lady Mar, and observing its changes, regarded them as corroborations of her guilt. It was conscience accusing her of having intended to betray her daughter to Soulis at Bothwell; and bidding her prepare to hear how in consequence she had afterwards fallen into his hands!—"If conscience disturbs you thus," thought Helen, "let it rend your heart with shame, and perhaps remorse may follow!"

As the tide of success seemed so full for the Scots, Helen no longer feared that her cousin would rashly seek a precarious vengeance on Soulis, when he would probably so soon have an opportunity of making it certain at the head of an army; and she therefore commenced her narrative from the time of Murray's leaving her at the priory, and continued it to the hour when she met her father a prisoner in the streets of Stirling. As she proceeded, the indignation both of the Earl and of Murray against Soulis, was vehement; and the latter was full of immediate personal revenge. But the Earl, with arguments similar to those which had suggested themselves to his daughter, calmed his rage; and saw him re-seat himself with repressed, though burning resentment, to listen to the remainder of her relation.

The quaking conscience of Lady Mar did indeed vary her cheeks with a thousand dyes, when, as Helen repeated part of the conversation of Margery, Murray abruptly said—"Surely that woman could inform you who was the traitor that would have betrayed us all into the hands of our enemies! Did she not hint it?"

Helen cast down her eyes, that even a glance of hers might not overwhelm with insupportable shame the already trembling Countess. Lady Mar seeing by her manner that she was acquainted with her guilt, and expecting no more mercy, than she knew she would shew to Helen were she in the like circumstances with herself, hastily rose from her chair, internally vowing vengeance against her triumphant daughter, and hatred of all mankind.

While all the furies raged in the breast of this guilty woman, Helen, wishing to avoid mystery, and determined never to accuse her step-mother, (who she hoped might have erred from blind affection to her husband,) simply answered—"You do not think that Lord Soulis would be so weak as to trust a secret of that kind with a servant." And then hurrying the relation of subsequent events, the Countess breathed again; and almost deceiving herself with the hope that Helen was ignorant of her treachery, listened with emotions of another kind when she heard of the rescue of her daughter-in-law. She saw Wallace in the brave act! But as Helen, undesignedly to herself, passed over the more interesting parts of their conversations, and never named the graces of his person; Lady Mar thought that to have viewed Wallace with so little notice would have been impossible; and therefore, without surprise at her first suspicion being entirely removed, but at the same time glad of such a conviction that he and her daughter had never met, she heard Helen say that the unknown chief had promised to join his arms with those of Wallace.

Murray looked on Helen as she spoke, with an impression at his heart that made it pause. Something in this interview had whispered to him what he had never dreamt before, that she was dearer to him than fifty thousand cousins; and while the blood flushed and retreated in the complexion of Helen, and her downcast eyes refused to shew what was passing there, as she hastily ran over the circumstances of the stranger knight's appearance on the mountain, to his disappearance in the cell of the hermit; his own emotions declared the secret of hers; and with a lip as pale as her own, he said—"But where is this brave man? He cannot have yet joined us; for surely he would have told Wallace or myself that he came from you!"

"I warned him not to do so," replied she, "for fear that your indignation against my enemies, my dear cousin, might have precipitated you into dangers inimical to the duty you owe your country."

"Then if he have joined us," replied Murray, rising from his seat, "you will probably soon know who he is."

## The Scottish Chiefs

Tomorrow—morning Wallace means to remove my uncle and his family into Snawdoun. He will therefore, at a very early hour, enter this citadel attended by his principal knights, to lodge his prisoners of rank here; and in his train you will doubtless discover the man who has laid such obligations on us all by your preservation. Glad shall I be to have an opportunity of expressing my gratitude."

Murray's feelings told him that glad should he be if that gratitude would repay him; if the confusion of Helen when she mentioned him, did not arise from the conscious remembrance of some tenderer communion, than the mere act of her rescue!

Helen herself knew not how to account for the agitation which shook her whenever she adverted to her unknown preserver. At the time of the hermit's friend, the good lay—brother, attending her to Alloa, and she explained to Lady Ruthven the cause of her strange arrival, when she came to the mentioning of her deliverer, then, for the first time, she felt a confusion that disordered the animation with which she described his patriotism and his bravery. But it was natural, she thought; gratitude for a recent benefit made her heart beat high. It was something like the enthusiasm she had felt for Wallace on the rescue of her father, and she was satisfied. When a few days of quiet at the castle had composed her feelings, she proposed to her aunt to send some trusty messenger to find his way to the imprisoned Earl at Dumbarton, and to inform him where she had found refuge. Lady Ruthven suggested the impropriety of such a project; urging the probability that the messenger would be intercepted, and so her asylum be discovered. "Let it alone," continued she, "till this knight of yours, by performing his word, and giving freedom to your father, calls you to declare his honourable deeds. Till then, Lord Mar, ignorant of your danger, needs no assurance of your safety."

This casual reference to the knight, made the before tranquil heart of Helen renew its throbbings; and turning from her aunt with an acquiescing reply, she retired to her own apartment to quell the unusual and painful blushes she felt burning on her cheeks. Why she should feel thus she could not account, "Unless," said she to herself, "I fear that my suspicion of who he is, may be guessed at. Should my words or looks betray the royal Bruce to any harm, that moment of undesigned ingratitude would be the last of my life."

This explanation seemed an ample apology to herself. And henceforth avoiding all mention of her preserver in her conversations with Lady Ruthven, she confined the subject to her own breast: and thinking that she thought of him more, by her attention to speak of him less, she wondered not that whenever she was alone his image immediately rose in her mind; his voice seemed to sound in her ears, and even as the summer air wafted a soft fragrance over her cheek, she would turn as if she felt that breath which had so gently hushed her to repose. She would then start and sigh, and repeat his words to herself: but all was then serene in her bosom. It seemed as if the contemplation of so much loveliness of soul in so beautiful a form, soothed instead of agitated her innocent heart. "What a king will he be!" thought she, "with what transport would the virtuous Wallace put the Scottish crown on so noble a brow."

Such were her meditations and feelings when she was brought a prisoner to Stirling. And when she heard of the victories of Wallace, she could not but think that the brave arm of her knight was there, and that he, with the more renowned champion of Scotland, would fly on the receipt of her letter to Stirling, there to repeat the valiant deeds of Dumbarton. The first blast of the Scottish trumpet under the walls, found her, as she said, upon her knees, and kept her there; for hardly with any intermission, with fast and prayer, did she kneel before the altar of Heaven, till the voice of Andrew Murray, at midnight, called her to freedom and happiness.

Wallace, and perhaps her nameless hero with him, had again conquered!— His idea dwelt in her heart and faltered on her tongue; and yet, when in reciting the narrative of her late sufferings to her father, when she came to the mentioning of the stranger's conduct to her,—with surprise and embarrassment she felt her augmented emotions as she drew near the subject; and forced, as if by an invisible power, to hurry over every event; she could only excuse herself for such perturbation, by supposing that the treason of Lady Mar in one instance, excited her alarm, for fear she would now fix on a new object. Indeed, turning cold at the idea of endangering the life of the royal Bruce, she gladly turned from a theme so full of agitation, to speak of the civility with which De Valence had treated her in every respect, except denying her the sight of her parents, and maintaining the necessity of the cruel sentence that had been passed upon her father.

"Yes;" cried the Earl, "I must suppose that, though inflexible, he was, not so barbarous in his tyranny as Cressingham. For it was not until De Valence was taken prisoner that Joanna and I were divided. Till then we were lodged in decent apartments: But on that event, Cressingham tore us from each other, and threw us into

## The Scottish Chiefs

different dungeons beneath the Keep. My sister Janet I have never seen since the hour we were separated in the street of Stirling; excepting the few awful minutes in which we met on the roof of this castle, when I expected to see her and my wife die before my eyes."

Helen, now, for the first time, learnt the base cruelties which had been exercised on her father and his family since the capture of De Valence. She had been exempted from sharing them, by the fears of Cressingham; who, knowing that the English Earl had particular views with regard to her, durst not risque offending him by outraging one whom he had declared himself determined to protect.

Murray, during part of this conversation, had withdrawn to seek Lady Ruthven and her son: and now re-entering with both; after half an hour's affectionate congratulations had unburthened the hearts of the happy circle; he left Lord and Lady Mar with Helen, and retired to settle the tranquillity of the castle.

Edwin and his mother accompanied Murray to the gate of the Keep; and there taking leave of him they proceeded to the barbican which contained Lord Ruthven; while he returned to the lieutenant of the castle to pursue his duty.

CHAP. III.

Soon after sun-rise next morning Murray received a message from Wallace, desiring him to tell the Earl of Mar that he should have the happiness of seeing him in the course of an hour. He was coming to the citadel to offer the palace of Snawdoun to the Ladies of Mar; and to request the Earl to remain governor of the town and castle, and to take charge of the illustrious prisoners he was bringing to put into his hands.

At this intimation, Lord Mar, (whose wounds were now healed;) felt new vigour infused into him by the idea of the momentous trust that was to be confided to his care; and hastening to prepare for the reception of his brave friend, he sent to the apartments of his wife and daughter, and to Lady Ruthven (who had returned from her husband) to inform them of his expected visitant.

They all rose to meet, an interview that excited different expectations in each different breast. Lady Mar, well satisfied that Helen and Wallace had never met, and still hoping what she wished, and clinging to the vague words of Murray, that he had sent him to give her liberty, called forth every art of the toilet to embellish her still fine person. Lady Ruthven, with the respectable eagerness natural to a chaste matron's heart at the prospect of seeing the man who had so often been the preserver of her brother, and who had so lately delivered her husband from a loathsome dungeon, was the first who hurryingly arrayed herself, and joined the Earl in the great saloon. Soon after, Lady Mar entered like Juno, in all her plumage of majesty and beauty.

But the trumpet of Wallace had sounded in the gates, before the trembling, half-fainting Helen could leave her room. It was the herald of his approach; and she sunk breathless into a seat. She was now going to see, for the first time, the man whose woes she had so often wept; the man who had incurred them all for objects dear to her. He whom she had mourned as one stricken in sorrows; and feared for as an outlaw, doomed to suffering and to death; was now to appear before her, not in the garb of woe which excites the sympathy its wearer excites, but arrayed as a conqueror; as the champion of Scotland, giving laws to her oppressors; and entering in triumph over fields of their slain!

Awful as this picture was to the timidity of her gentle nature, it alone did not occasion that inexpressible sensation which seemed to check the pulses of her heart. Was she, or was she not, to see in his train, the young and noble Bruce? Was she to be assured that he still existed? Or, by seeking him everywhere in vain, be ascertained that he, who could not break his word, had perished lonely and unknown?

While these ideas thronged into her mind, the platform below was filling with the triumphant Scots; and her door suddenly opening, Edwin entered in delighted haste:—"Come, cousin!" cried he, "Sir William Wallace has almost finished his business in the great hall. He has made my uncle governor of this place, and has committed nearly a thousand prisoners of rank to his care. If you do not be expeditious, you will allow him to enter the saloon before you."

As he spoke, hardly observing her face, from the happy emotions which dazzled in his eyes, he seized her hand. Summoning a sudden resolution, she obeyed its impulse; and was led by Edwin into the saloon.

Her aunt and step-mother only were there. Lady Ruthven sat composedly on a long tapestried bench, awaiting the arrival of the company. But Lady Mar was near the door, listening impatiently to the voices beneath. At the sight of Helen she drew back; but she smiled exultingly when she saw that all that splendour of beauty she had lately beheld, and so dreaded, was fled. Her unadorned garments gave no particular attraction to the simple lines of her form: the effulgence of her complexion was gone; her cheek was pale; and the tremulous motion of her step deprived her of that elastic grace which was the peculiar charms of her nymph-like figure.

Triumph now sat in the eyes of the Countess; and with an air of authority she waved Helen to take a seat beside Lady Ruthven. But Helen, fearful of what might be her emotion when the train entered, had just placed herself behind her aunt, when the steps of many a mailed foot sounded upon the stone gallery. The next moment the great doors at the bottom of the saloon opened, and a crowd of knights, in armour, flashed upon her eyes. A dimness overspread her faculties; and nothing appeared to her but an indistinct throng approaching. She would have given worlds to have been removed from the spot, but unable to stir; her recovering senses beheld Lady Mar, who, exclaiming "Ever my preserver!" had hastened forward, and was now leaning on the bosom of one of the chiefs:—His head was bent as if answering her in a low voice. By the golden locks which hung down upon the



## The Scottish Chiefs

jewelled tresses of the Countess, and obscured his face, she judged it was indeed the deliverer of her father, the knight of her dream. But where was he who had delivered herself from a worse fate than death? Where was the dweller of her daily thoughts—Ah, and of her dreams too, ever since the moment of her first beholding him?

Helen's sight now clearing to as keen a vision as before it had been dulled and indistinct, with a timid and anxious gaze glanced from face to face of the chieftains around; and withdrawing her eyes with a sad conviction at her heart, that their search was indeed in vain, they were arrested by a glimpse of the features of Wallace, as he raised his head from the Countess; he shook back his clustering hair, and her secret was revealed. In that godlike countenance, she recognised the object of her devoted wishes; and with a gasp of overwhelming surprise which denied all louder utterance, she would have fallen from her seat to the ground, had not Lady Ruthven, hearing a sound that burst like the sigh of death from her niece, turned round and caught her in her arms. The alarmed cry of Lady Ruthven drew every eye to the spot. Wallace immediately relinquished the Countess to her husband, and moved towards the beautiful and senseless form that lay on the bosom of Lady Ruthven. The Earl and his agitated wife followed.

"What ails my Helen?" asked the affectionate father.

"I know not," replied Lady Ruthven; "she sat behind me. I knew nothing of her disorder till she fell as you see."

Murray instantly supposed that she had discovered the unknown knight: and looking from countenance to countenance amongst the train, to see if he could discover the envied cause of such emotions; he read in no face an answering feeling with that of Helen's: and turning away from his unavailing scrutiny, on hearing her draw a deep sigh, his eyes fixed themselves on her as if they would have read her soul. Wallace, who in the pale form before him, saw not only the woman whom he had preserved with a brother's care, but the compassionate saint who had given a hallowed grave to the remains of an angel as pure as herself, hung over her with an anxiety so eloquent in every feature, that the Countess would willingly at that moment have stabbed her in every vein.

Lady Ruthven had sprinkled her niece with water; and as she began to recover, Wallace motioned his chieftains to withdraw. Her eyes opened slowly; but recollection returned with every re-awakened sense: she dimly perceived a press of people around her; and fearful of again encountering that face which declared the Bruce of her secret meditations, and the Wallace of her declared veneration, to be one; she buried her face in the bosom of her father. In that short point of time, images of past, present, and to come, rushed before her; and without confessing to herself why she thought it necessary to make the vow, her soul seemed to swear on the sacred altar of a parent's heart, never more to think on either idea. Separate, it was sweet to muse on her own deliverer; it was delightful to dwell on the virtues of her father's preserver. But when she saw both characters blended in one, her feelings seemed sacrilege; and she wished even to bury her gratitude where no eye but Heaven's could see its depth and fervour.

Lady Mar, trembling at what might be the consequences of this scene, got behind the bench; and then joyfully recollecting what Helen had said of the unknown knight, whispered in a soft voice, yet loud enough for Wallace to hear; "Retire my dear; you will be better in your own room, whether pleasure or disappointment about the person you wished to discover in Sir William's train, have occasioned these emotions."

Helen blushed scarlet deep at this indelicate remark; and raising her head with that modest dignity which only belongs to the purest mind, gently but firmly said; "I obey you, madam; and he whom I have seen will be too generous not to pardon the effects of so unexpected a weight of gratitude." As she spoke, her turning eye met the fixed gaze of Wallace. His countenance became agitated: and dropping on his knee beside her; "Gracious Lady," cried he, "mine is the weight of gratitude! but it is dear and precious to me; a debt that my life will not be able to repay. I was ignorant of it, when, at our first meeting, I durst not confess to you an outlaw's name; but had I known it, no considerations could have prevented me from then pouring out my grateful soul to the last friend of her who was the friend of all. The spirit of an angel like yourself, Lady Helen, must whisper to you all her widowed husband's thanks." He pressed her hand fervently between his, and rising, left the room.

Helen looked on him with an immovable eye, in which the heroic vow of her soul spoke in every beam; but as he arose, even then she felt its frailty; for her spirit seemed leaving her: and as he disappeared from the door, her world seemed shut from her eyes. Not to think of him was impossible: how to think of him was in her own power. Her heart felt as if suddenly made a desert. But heroism was there. She had looked upon the heaven-dedicated Wallace; on the widowed mourner of Marion; the saint and the hero; the being of another world! and as such she

would regard him; till the wall of mortality falling between them, in the realms of purity she might acknowledge the brother of her soul!

A sacred inspiration seemed to illuminate her features, and to brace with the vigour of immortality, those limbs which before had sunk under her. She forgot she was still of earth, while a holy love, like that of the dove in paradise, sat brooding on her heart.

Lady Mar gazed on her without understanding the ethereal meaning of those looks. Judging from her own impassioned feelings, she could only resolve the resplendent beauty which shone from the now animated face and form of Helen, into the rapture of finding herself beloved. Had she not heard Wallace declare himself to be the unknown knight who had rescued Helen? she had heard him devote his life to her: and was not his heart included in that dedication? And then so publicly made: avowed on the fainting of Helen; who had acknowledged that her emotions had been occasioned by the sight of him. What could she consider all this but as an exchange of hearts; as the dedication of that love to another, which she would have sacrificed her soul to win?

Murray too was confounded; but his reflections were far different from those of Lady Mar. He saw his newly-discovered passion smothered in its first breath. At the moment in which he found that he loved his cousin above all of woman's mould, an unappealable voice in his bosom bade him crush every fond desire. That heart which, with the chaste transports of a sister had throbbed so entrancingly against his, was then another's! Was become the captive of Wallace's virtues; of the only man whom his judgment would have said, deserves Helen Mar. But when he had clasped her glowing beauties in his arms the night before, his enraptured soul believed from the tender smile on her lips, that it was only the earnest of the moment when he might hold her there for ever. That dream was now past.—"Well! be it so!" said he to himself; "If this new fledged passion must be clipt on the wing, I have at least the consolation that I soared like the bird of Jove!—But, loveliest of created beings;" thought he, looking on Helen with an expression which, had she met it, would have told her all that was passing in his soul; "if I am not to be thy love; I will be thy friend—and die for thee and Wallace!"

Lady Mar believing that she had read her sentence, in what she thought the triumphant glances of a happy passion, turned from her daughter-in-law with such a hatred mantling in her heart, that she durst not trust her eyes to the inspection of any of the by-standers. But her tongue could not be restrained longer than the moment in which the object of her jealousy left the room. As the door closed upon Helen, leaning on the arms of her aunt and Edwin, the Countess turned to her Lord, and observed his yet fixed eyes looking with doting fondness towards the point where she withdrew. This sight augmented the angry tumults in the breast of Lady Mar, and with a bitter smile, she said, (for she half-suspected what was passing in his mind;) "So, my lord, you find that the icy-bosomed Helen can be thawed!"

"How do you mean, Joanna?" returned the Earl, doubting her words and looks; "you surely cannot blame our daughter for being sensible of gratitude."

"I blame all young women," replied she, "who give themselves airs of unnatural coldness; and then, when the proof comes, behave in a manner as indelicate as extraordinary."

"My Lady Mar!" ejaculated the Earl, with an amazed look; "what am I to think of you, from this! How has my daughter behaved indelicate? She did not lay her head on Sir William Wallace's bosom, and weep there, till he replaced her on her natural pillow, mine! Have a care Lady Mar that I do not see more in this spleen, than it would be honourable to you for me to discover."

The Countess fearing nothing so much as that her husband should really suspect the passion which possessed her; for the very idea of being removed from the side of Wallace, which, under such circumstances would certainly be the case, recalled her to all her former duplicity and affected tenderness for her lord. With a surprised and uncomprehending air, she said—"I do not understand what you mean, Donald." And then turning to Lord Ruthven, who stood uneasily viewing this scene; "How," cried she, "can my lord discover spleen in my maternal anxiety respecting the daughter of the man I love and honour above all the earth. But men, however sensible, do not properly estimate female reserve. Any woman would say with me, that to faint at the sight of Sir William Wallace was declaring an emotion not to be revealed before so large a company; a something, from which men might not draw the most agreeable inferences."

"It only declared surprise, madam;" cried Murray, "the surprise of a modest and ingenuous mind, that did not expect to recognise its mountain-friend in the person of the protector of all Scotland. Perhaps, had I been cast away on a desert shore; been succoured by a pretty fisher's girl; and afterwards discovered my protectress to be

## The Scottish Chiefs

my Lady Mar, I might have fainted too; and I assure you I should have thought it a most delicate proof of my gratitude!"

"Pogh! you are always a fool, Andrew!" said she with a smile; and turning to the still silent Lord Ruthven, again addressed him. "Step-mothers, my lord," said she, "have hard duties to perform; and when we think we fulfil them best, comes our husband with a magician's wand to turn all our good to evil."

"Array your good in a less equivocal garb, my dear Joanna;" answered the Earl of Mar, rather ashamed of the hasty words which the suspicion of a moment had drawn from his lips; "judge my child by her usual conduct, and not by an accidental appearance of inconsistency, and I shall ever be grateful for your solicitude. But in this instance, though she might betray the weakness of an enfeebled constitution, it was certainly not the frailty of a love-sick heart."

"Judge me by your own rule, dear Donald;" said she, blandishly kissing his forehead; "and you will not again wither the mother of your boy with such a look as I just now received!"

Lord Ruthven, glad to see this reconciliation, made a sign to Murray, and they withdrew together. Meanwhile, the honest Earl, surrendering his whole heart to the wiles of his wife, poured into her not inattentive ear all his wishes for Helen, all the hopes which her late meeting with Wallace, and their present recognition, had given birth.—"I had rather have that man my son;" said he, "than see my beloved daughter placed on an imperial throne."

"I do not doubt it;" thought Lady Mar, "for there are many emperors, but only one William Wallace!" However, her sentiments she confined to herself; neither assenting nor dissenting, but answering so as to secure the confidence by which she hoped to traverse his designs. According to the inconsistency of the wild passion that possessed her, one moment she saw nothing but despair before her; and in the next it seemed impossible that Wallace should in heart be proof against her demonstrations of tenderness; or insensible to those beauties which, soon after her marriage with Lord Mar, had been the admiration of the whole court of France. She remembered that Murray had told her he was sent to set her free! and that re-awakened every hope. He had placed Lord Mar in a post as dangerous as honourable. Should the Southrons return in any force into Scotland, Stirling would be one of the first places they would attack. The Earl was brave, but age had robbed him of much of his martial vigour: might she not then be indeed set free? And might not Wallace on such an event, mean to repay her for all those sighs he now sought to repress from ideas of virtue, which she could only admire, but had not courage to taste? Might she not in the end be Wallace's wife?

These wicked meditations passed even at the side of her husband: and with a view to further every wish of her intoxicated imagination, she determined to spare no exertion to secure the support of her own family, which, when agreeing in one point, was the most powerful of any in the kingdom. Her father, the Earl of Strathearn, was now a misanthropic lunatic in the Orkneys; but with this design, she resolved on requesting Wallace to put the names of her cousins Athol and Badenock in the exchange of prisoners; for by their means she expected to accomplish all she hoped. On Mar's probable death she had so long thought, that she now regarded it as a matter of certainty; and so pressed forward to the fulfilment of her love and ambition with as much eagerness as if he were already in his grave.

She recollected that Wallace had not this time thrown her from his bosom, when in the transports of her joy she had, even unrestrained by the croud around, cast herself upon it: he only gently whispered, "Beware, lady! There are present, who may think my services, by this, too richly paid." With these words he had relinquished her to her husband. But in them she saw nothing inimical to her wishes; it was a caution, not a reproof: and had not his warmer address to Helen conjured up all the fiends of jealousy in her mind, she would have been perfectly satisfied with her grounds of hope.

Eager, therefore, to break away from Lord Mar's projects relating to his daughter, at the first decent opportunity, she said,—"We will consider more of this hereafter Donald. I now resign you to the duties of your office, and shall pay mine to our dear Helen."

Lord Mar pressed her hand to his lips, and they parted.

CHAP. IV.

The fame of these victories, the seizure of Stirling, the conquest of above 60,000 men, and the Lord Warden with his late deputy taken prisoners; all spread through the country on the wings of the wind.

Messengers were dispatched by Wallace, not only to the nobles who had already declared for the cause by sending him their armed followers; but to the clans who yet stood irresolute. But to the chieftains who had taken the side of Edward, he sent no exhortation. And when he was advised to do so, by Lord Ruthven, his answer was "No, my lord; we must not spread a snare under our feet. If these men could be affected by the interest of their country; as they have the power to befriend her, they would not now colleague with her enemies. They remember her happiness under the rule of our Alexanders; they see her sufferings beneath the sway of an usurper: and if they can know these things and be unmoved, and require arguments to bring them to their duty; should they then come to it, it would not be to fulfil, but to betray. Ours, my dear Ruthven, is a commission from Heaven. The truth of our cause is God's own signet; and is so clear that it need only be seen to be acknowledged. And shall we seek to persuade those who err against the evidence of their own senses, and their own true interests. By what arguments could we turn such perverted judgments? All honest minds will come to us of themselves: and those who are not so had better be avoided, than shewn the way by which treachery may effect what open violence cannot attain."

This simple reasoning, drawn from the experience of nature; neither encumbered by the subtilties of policy, nor the sophistry of the schools; was evident to every understanding, and decided the question.

Lady Mar, unknown to any one, again applied to her fatal pen; but with other views than for the ruin of the cause, or the destruction of Wallace. It was to strengthen his hands with the power of all her kinsmen; and finally, by the crown which they should place on his head, exalt her to the dignity of a queen. She wrote first to John Cummin Earl of Buchan, enforcing a thousand reasons why he should now leave a sinking cause and join the rising fortunes of his country.

"You see," said she, "that the happy star of Edward is setting. The king of France not only maintains possession of that monarch's territory of Guienne, but he now holds him in check on the shores of Flanders. Baffled abroad, an insurrection awaits him at home; the priesthood, whom he has robbed, cover his name with anathemas; the nobles whom he has insulted, trample on his prerogative; and the people, whose privileges he has invaded, call aloud for redress. The proud barons of England are now ready to revolt. And the lords Hereford and Norfolk, those two earls whom, after madly threatening to hang, he sought to bribe to their allegiance by leaving them in the full power of constable and mareschal of England; they are conducting themselves with such domineering consequence, that even the Prince of Wales submits to their directions, and the throne of the absent tyrant is shook to its centre.

"Sir William Wallace has rescued Scotland from his yoke. The country now call for her ancient lords; those who made her kings, and supported them. Come then, my cousin! espouse the cause of right; the cause that is in power; the cause that may aggrandize the house of Cummin and my paternal Strathearn, with still higher dignities than any with which they have hitherto been honoured."

With arguments such as these; and with others which she knew were yet more adopted to his Belial mind, she tried to bring him to her purpose; to awaken what ambition he possessed; and to entice his baser passions, by offering that security in his redeemed country, which would afford him the amplest opportunities for indulging in the gratifications of those senses to which he had already sacrificed the best properties of man. She dispatched her letter by a trusty messenger whom she bribed to secrecy; and added in her postscript, that "the answer she should hope to receive, would be an offer of his services to Sir William Wallace."

While the Countess of Mar was devising her plans, (for the gaining of Lord Buchan was only a preliminary measure;) the dispatches of Wallace had taken effect. Their simple details, and the voice of fame, had roused a general spirit throughout the land; and in the course of eight and forty hours after the different messengers had left Stirling, the plain around the city was covered with a mixed multitude: all Scotland seemed thronging to throw themselves at the feet of their preserver. A large body of men, brought from Mar, by Murray, according to his uncle's orders, were amongst the first encamped on the carse. And that part of Wallace's own particular band, which he had left at Dumbarton to recover of their wounds, now, under the command of Fergus and of Stephen

## The Scottish Chiefs

Ireland, rejoined their lord at Stirling.

Neil Campbell, the brave Lord of Lochawe, and Lord Bothwell, the father of Lord Andrew Murray, with a strong reinforcement, arrived from Argyleshire. The Chiefs of Ross, Dundas, Gordon, Frazar, Scot, Lindsay, and of almost every noble family in Scotland, sent their sons at the head of detachments from their clans, to swell the victorious ranks of Sir William Wallace.

When this patriotic host assembled on the carse of Stirling, every inmate of the city, who had not duty to confine him within the walls, turned out to view the glorious sight. Mounted on a rising ground, they saw the leaders of each little army, shining in mail, and waving their gorgeous banners which, blazoned with all the chivalry of Scotland, floated afar over the lengthened ranks.

At the moment when the lines which guarded the outworks of Stirling opened from right to left, and discovered Wallace armed cap-a-pee, and mounted on a white charger, whose flowing mane streamed to the air as his proud head tossed up and down in conscious pride of his heroic rider; when the conqueror of Edward's hosts appeared; the deliverer of Scotland; a mighty shout from the thousands around rent the skies, and seemed to shake the firm earth on which they stood.

Wallace raised his helmet from his brow; as by an instinctive motion every hand bent the sword and banner it contained.

"He comes in the strength of David!" cried the venerable bishop of Dunkeld, who, at the head of his church's tenantry had brought his sacred person to the field. "Scots, behold the Lord's anointed!"

The exclamation, which burst like inspiration from the lips of the bishop, struck to every heart. "Long live King William!" was echoed with transport by every follower on the ground; and while the reverberating heavens seemed to ratify the voice of the people, the lords themselves, now believing that he who won had the best right to enjoy, joined in the glorious cry; and galloping up from the front of their ranks, threw themselves from their steeds; and before Wallace could recover from the surprise into which this unexpected salutation had thrown him, Lord Bothwell and Lord Lochawe, followed by the rest, had bent their knees and acknowledged him to be their sovereign. The bishop of Dunkeld at the same moment drawing from his breast a small chalice of sacred oil, which he ever bore about him for holy purposes, poured it upon the unbonnetted head of Wallace:—"Thus, O king!" cried he, "do I consecrate on earth, what has already received the unction of heaven!"

Wallace, at this action, was awe-struck, and raising his eyes to that heaven; his soul, in silence, breathed forth his unutterable devotion. Then looking on the bishop: "Holy father," said he, "this unction may have prepared my brows for a crown; but, it is not of this world. Rise lords!" and as he spoke he flung himself off his horse, and taking Lord Bothwell by the hand, as the eldest of the band; "Kneel not to me," cried he, "I am to you, what Gideon was to the Israelites, your fellow soldier. I cannot assume the sceptre you would bestow; for he who rules us all has yet preserved to you a lawful monarch:—Bruce lives. And were he extinct, the blood royal flows in too many noble veins in Scotland for me to usurp its rights."

"Surely the rights of the crown lie with the only man in Scotland who knows how to defend them! else reason is blind, or the people abandon their own prerogative! What we have this moment vowed is not to be forsworn. Baliol has abdicated our throne; the Bruce desert it; all our nobles slept till you awoke: and shall we bow to men who may follow, but will not lead?—No, bravest Wallace; from the moment you drew the first sword for Scotland, you made yourself her lawful king!"

Wallace turned to the veteran Lord of Lochawe, who uttered this with a blunt determination that meant to say that the election which had passed should not be recalled. "I made myself her champion, to fight for her freedom, not my own aggrandizement. Were I to accept the honour with which this too grateful nation would repay my service, I should not bring it that peace for which I now contend. Struggling for liberty, the toils of my brave countrymen would be redoubled; for they would have to maintain the rights of an unallied king, against a host of enemies. The simple circumstance of a man from the private stations of life, being elevated to such a dignity, would be felt as an insult by every royal house, and both foes and friends would arm against us. Our old enemies, the monarchs of Scandinavia: even Philip of France, our ancient ally, the proud descendant of a long race of kings, would then unite with the usurper Edward, to drive what they would call an interloper, from the crown. On these grounds of policy, were I not loyal to the vows of my ancestors, I should repel the mischief you would bring upon yourselves by making me your King: as it is my conscience, as well as my judgment, compels me to reject it. As your general, I may serve you gloriously:—As your monarch, that title alone would incur, perhaps, your

ultimate destruction."

"From whom? noblest of Scots!" asked the Lord of Bothwell.

"From yourselves, my friends," answered Wallace, with a gentle smile. "Could I take advantage of the generous enthusiasm of a grateful nation; could I forget the duty I owe to the blood of our Alexanders, and leap into the throne; there are many who would soon revolt against their own election. You cannot be ignorant that there are natures who would endure no rule, did it not come by the right of inheritance; a right by which they hold their own pre-eminence over others; and therefore will not dispute, lest they teach their inferiors the same refractory lesson. But to bend with voluntary subjection; to obey a power raised by themselves; would be a sacrifice abhorrent to their pride. After having displayed their efficiency in making a king, they would prove their independence by striving to pull him down the moment he made them feel his sceptre.

"Such would be the fate of my election. Jealousies and rebellions would mark my reign, till even my closest adherents, seeing the miseries of civil war, would fall from my side, and leave the country again open to the inroads of her enemies.

"These, my friends and countrymen, would be my reasons for rejecting the crown, did my ambition point that way. But as I have no joy in titles; no pleasure in any power that does not spring hourly from the heart, let my reign be in your bosoms, and with the appellation of your fellow-soldier, your friend! I will fight for you, I will conquer for you,—I will live or die!"

"This man," whispered Lord Buchan, who having arrived in the rear of the troops on the appearance of Wallace, advanced within hearing of what might be said: "This man takes more pains to repulse a crown, than many are capable of exerting to obtain one."

"Aye, but let us see," returned the Earl of March, who accompanied him, "whether it be not a little of Cesar's coyness: he thrice refused the purple, and yet he died Emperor of the Romans!"

"He that offers me a crown," returned Buchan, laughing, "shall never catch me playing the coquet with its charms. I warrant you I would embrace the lovely mischief in the first presentation." A shout now rent the air.—"What is that?" cried Buchan, interrupting himself.

"He has followed your advice," answered March, with a satirical smile—"It is the preliminary trumpet to long live King William the great!"

Lord Buchan spurred forward, and coming up to Scrymgeour, whom he knew, inquired where the new king was to be crowned? "we have not yet to thank him for the possession of Scone!"

"True;" cried Sir Alexander, comprehending the drift of this remark; "but did Sir William Wallace accept the prayers of Scotland to become her monarch, neither Scone nor any other spot in the kingdom should refuse the place of his coronation."

"Not accept them!" replied Buchan, "then why that shout? Do the changelings rejoice in being refused?"

"When we cannot gain the altitude of our desires," returned the knight, "it is yet subject for thankfulness that we reach a step towards it. Sir William Wallace has consented to be considered as the Protector of the kingdom; to hold it for the rightful sovereign under the name of Regent."

"Aye!" cried March, "he has only taken a mistress instead of a wife:—And trust me, when once he has got her into his arms, it will not be all the grey-beards in Scotland that can wrest her thence again. I marvel to see how men can be cajoled, and call the deception virtue!"

Scrymgeour had not waited for this reply of the insolent earl; and Buchan answering him, "I care not," cried he, "whoever keeps my castle over my head, and my cellars full, is welcome to reign over John of Buchan. So onward, my gallant Cospatrick, to make our bow to royalty in masquerade!"

When these scorers approached, they found Wallace standing, uncovered, in the midst of his happy nobles. There was not a man present to whom he had not given proofs of his divine commission; each individual was snatched from a state of oppression and disgrace, and placed in security and honour. With overflowing gratitude they all thronged around him: And the young, the isolated Wallace, found a nation waiting on his nod; the hearts of half a million of people offered to his hand to turn and wind them as he pleased. No crown sat on his brows: but the bright halo of true glory beamed from his god-like countenance, and checked the arrogant smiles with which the haughty March, and the voluptuous Buchan came forward to pay him their mocking respects.

As the near relations of Lady Mar, he received them with courtesy; but one glance of his eye penetrated to the hollowness of both. And then remounting his steed, the stirrups of which were held by Edwin and Ker, he touched

## The Scottish Chiefs

the head of the former affectionately with his hand; "Follow me, my friend, I now go to pay my duty to your mother. For you, my lords," said he, turning to the nobles around; "I shall hope to meet you at noon in the citadel, where we shall consult together on future movements. Nothing with us can be considered as won, till all is gained."

The chieftains, with bows, acquiesced in his mandate, and fell back towards their troops. But the foremost ranks of those brave fellows, having heard much of what had past, were so enflamed with admiration of their Regent, that they rushed forward, and collecting in crowds around his horse, and in his path, some pressed to kiss his hand, and others his garments; while the rest ran in his way, shouting and calling down blessings upon him, till he stopped at the gate of Snawdoun. He alighted amid the acclamations of Long live our sovereign Regent, our Protector, and Prince! And with difficulty extricating himself, with many a gracious word, from the throng of men, women, and children which pressed around him, he entered the palace.

## CHAP. V.

Owing to the multiplicity of affairs which engaged Wallace's attention after the capture of Stirling, the ladies of Lord Mar's family had not seen him since his first visit to the citadel. The Countess had passed this time in writing her dispatches to the numerous lords of her house, both in Scotland and in England: and by her subtle arguments she completely persuaded her husband of the cogency of putting the names of Lord Athol and Lord Badenoch into the list of noble prisoners he should demand.

Wallace, when this was proposed to him, being alone with Lord Mar, and recollecting the behaviour of Athol at Montrose, made some objections against inviting him back into the country. But the Earl, who was prepared by his wife to overcome every obstacle in the way of her kinsman's return, answered, "That he believed from the representations he had received of the private opinions both of Badenoch and Athol, that their treason was more against Baliol, than the kingdom; and that he irretrievably removed, he understood they would be glad to take a part in its recovery."

"That may be the case with the Earl of Badenoch;" replied Wallace, "but something less friendly to Scotland must be in the breast of the man who could betray the brave Lord Douglas into the hands of his enemies."

"So I should have certainly thought," replied the Earl, "had not the earnestness with which my wife pleads their cause, convinced me that she knows more of their minds than she chuses even to intrust me with; and therefore I must suppose that his conduct to Douglas arose from personal pique."

Though these explanations did not at all raise the absent lords in his esteem, yet to appear hostile to the return of Lady Mar's relations, was a violence to her, which, in proportion as Wallace shrunk from the guilty affection she was eager to lavish upon him, he was averse to committing. He wished, by shewing her every proper respect, to lead her to apprehend the turpitude of her conduct. By supposing that his abhorrence of her advances had its origin rather in principle, than from personal repugnance to herself, she might see the foulness of her crime, and be recalled to a sense of virtue. He was therefore not displeased to have this opportunity of obliging her; and as he concluded that amongst so many warm friends, a few cool ones could not do him much injury, he gave in the names of Badenoch and Athol, with those of Lord Douglas, the Earl of Ross, Sir William Maitland the only son of the venerable knight of Thirlestane, Sir John Monteith, and of many other brave Scots.

For these the Earls De Warenne, De Valence, and Montgomery, Baron Hilton, and others of note were to be exchanged. Those of lesser consequence, man for man, were to be returned for Scots of the same degree.

The morning after the victory, when the list of prisoners was put into Wallace's hand, Edwin, who stood by him at the time, observed him as he read it over; and when his eye drew near the column, at the head of which was the name of Montgomery, Edwin laid his finger upon the writing, "That," said he, "is the name of a person you already esteem: But how will you regard him when I tell you who he was?"

Wallace turned on him an inquiring look.

"You have often spoken to me of Sir Gilbert Hambledon."

"And this is he!"—interrupted Wallace in a mournful voice.

Edwin now recounted the manner of the Earl discovering himself, and how he came to bear that title. Wallace listened in silence, and as his young friend ended, sighed heavily.—"I will thank him," was all he said, and rising, he proceeded to the chamber of Montgomery, who was, even at that early hour, surrounded by several of his officers, come to inquire after his health. Wallace advanced to the couch side, and the Southrons drew back. The expression in his countenance told the Earl that he now knew him.

"Noblest of Englishmen!" cried Wallace, in a low tone of voice, "I come to express a gratitude to you as lasting as the memory of the action which gave it birth. Your generous conduct to all that was dearest to me on earth, was that night, in the garden of Ellerslie, witnessed by myself. I was in the tree above your head, and nothing but a conviction that I should embarrass the honour of my wife's protector, could at that moment have prevented my springing from my covert and declaring my gratitude on the spot.

"Receive my thanks now, inadequate as they are to express all I feel. But you offered me your heart on the field of Cambuskenneth: I will take that as a generous intimation of how I may best acknowledge my debt. Receive, then, my never-dying friendship as a pledge of that gratitude which Marion herself will teach me to



## The Scottish Chiefs

repay when we all meet in the peaceful home of heaven."

The answer of Montgomery, by presenting the tender form of his wife and her devoted love, almost visibly before him, nearly forced open the fountain of tears which he had buried deep in his heart, and rising suddenly, for fear his emotions might betray themselves, he warmly pressed the hand of his English friend, and for a few minutes left the room.

When he returned, De Warenne and De Valence were there; and he immediately entered on subjects which they laid before him, respecting the time of their removal to England, and the general exchange of prisoners.

In the course of the same day the Southron nobles were transported into the citadel, while the family of Mar were removed from that fortress to take up their residence in the palace of Snawdoun.

In arranging preliminaries to effect the speedy return of the Scots from England, who must be known to have arrived on the borders before the English would be permitted to cross them; in writing dispatches on this subject, and on others, and in sending them off, had passed the time between the surrender of Stirling and the hour when Wallace was called to the plain to receive the offered homage of his grateful country.

Lady Mar, impatient to behold again the object of her fond machinations, hastened to the window of her apartment when the shouts in the streets informed her of the approach of Wallace. The loud huzzas, accompanied by the acclamations of Our Protector and Prince! seemed already to bind her brows with her anticipated diadem; and for a moment vanity lost the image of love in the purple with which she would have enveloped it.

Her ambitious vision was disturbed by the crowd rushing forward: The gates were thronged with people of every age and sex, and Wallace himself appeared on his white horse, with his helmet off, bowing and smiling upon the populace. There was a mild effulgence in his eye; a divine benevolence in his countenance as his parted lips shewed the brightness of his smile, which seemed to speak of happiness within, of joy to all around. She hastily threw back the casement of her window: Wallace looked up; his bow and his smile were then directed to her; but they were altered. The moment he met the gratulation of her eager eyes, he remembered what would have been the soft welcome of his Marion's under the like circumstance! But that tender eye was closed; that ear was shut, to whom he would have wished these plaudits to have given rapture, and they were now as nothing to him. The Countess saw not what was passing in his mind, but kissing her hand to him, disappeared from the window, and he entered the palace.

Another eye besides that of the Countess had witnessed the triumphant entry of Wallace. Triumphant in the true sense of the word; for he came a victor over the hearts of men; he came, not attended by his captives won in the war, but by the people he had blessed; by throngs calling him preserver, father, friend, and prince! By every title which can inspire the soul of man with the happy consciousness of fulfilling his embassy here below.

Helen was this witness. She had passed the long interval since she had seen Wallace in the state of one in a dream. The glance had been so transient, that every succeeding hour seemed to lessen the evidence of her senses that she had really beheld him. It appeared impossible to her that the man whom her thoughts had ever dwelt on as the widowed husband of Marion, as the hero whom sorrow had wholly dedicated to patriotism and to heaven, should ever awaken in her breast feelings which would seem to break like a sacrilegious host upon the holy consecration of his. Whenever he had lately occupied her thoughts, she contemplated his lovely idea with the pensive impressions of one leaning over the grave of a hero. She would then turn, as if emerging from the deep glooms of sepulchral monuments, to the upper regions of day; and recalling the image of her unknown knight, he to whom her conscious heart did indeed give the name of Bruce, she would recollect the matchless graces of his figure; the noble soul that breathed from his every look, word, and action; and the sweet though thoughtful serenity that sat on his brow. "There," whispered she to herself, "are the lofty meditations of a royal mind, devising the freedom of his people—when that is effected, how will the perfect sunshine break out from that face. Ah! how blest will Scotland be under his reign, when all will be light, virtue, and joy." Bliss hovered like an angel over the one idea; and sorrow, in mourning weeds, seemed ever dropping tears when any circumstance presented the other.

Thus was the state of Helen's thoughts, when, in the moment of her first beholding Wallace, she recognised in his expected melancholy form the noble person and resplendent countenance of her fancied Bruce! That two images so opposite should at once unite in one; that in one bosom should be mingled all the virtues with which heaven she believed had enriched both, struck her with an overwhelming amazement. But when she recovered, and found that the admiration her gentle soul had conceived for Bruce, and the gratitude which such admiration

## The Scottish Chiefs

had raised into a more animated sentiment, was to be still more augmented; that all the devotion her heart, ever enamoured of the sublimest virtue, used to pay to the bare idea alone, would now be attracted to that glorious mortal in whom all human excellence appeared summed up: And that to deepen the sentiment to fix it there with the most binding cords, pity was so blended as to have created a sentiment which now seemed to have robbed her of herself, and to have placed a new principle of being within her. All seemed so extraordinary, was so unlooked for, so amazing, so bewildering, that from the moment in which she had retired in such a paroxysm of highly wrought feelings from her first interview in the saloon with Wallace, she was altogether like a person in a trance, and hardly answering her aunt when she led her up stairs, she complained she was ill, and threw herself upon a couch.

At the very time that her heart told her, in a language she could not misunderstand, that she irrevocably loved this too glorious, too amiable Wallace, it as powerfully denounced to her that she had devoted herself to one who would ever be to her as a being of air. All that was in her breast was hopeless; no word of sympathy would ever raise her to that pitch of felicity which turned her head giddy to think on; the flame that was within her, which she found would be as immortal as the vestal fires which resembled its purity, must burn there unknown, hidden, but not smothered.

"Were this a God," cried she to herself, as she laid her throbbing head upon her pillow, "how gladly should I feel these emotions! For could I not fall down and worship him? Could I not think it a world of bliss to live for ever within the influence of his virtues: Looking at him, listening to him, rejoicing in his praises, happy in his happiness, though I should be invisible, and he not know that Helen Mar even existed! And I may live thus," said she, "I may steal some portion of the rare lot that was Lady Marion's—to die for such a man! Ah, that I could be in Edwin's place, and wait upon his smiles, and with my bosom shield his breast! But that may not be: I am a woman, and formed to suffer in silence and seclusion. But even at a distance, brave Wallace, my spirit shall watch over you in the form of this Edwin; I will teach him a double care of the light of Scotland: And my prayers shall follow you, so that when we meet in heaven, the blessed Virgin shall say with what hosts of angels her intercessions, through my vigils, have surrounded you!"

Thus did Helen commune with her own strangely affected heart; sometimes doubting the evidence of her eyes; then convinced of their fidelity; and striving to allay the tumults in her mind. She seldom appeared from her own rooms; and such retirement was not questioned, her father being altogether engaged at the citadel; the Countess absorbed in her own speculations; and Lady Ruthven alone interrupted the solitude of her niece by frequent visits. Little suspecting the cause of Helen's prolonged indisposition, she generally selected Wallace for the subject of her conversation. She descanted with enthusiasm on the rare perfection of his character, told her all that Edwin had related of his actions from the taking of Dumbarton to the present moment, and then she bade Helen remark the miracle of such wisdom, valour, and goodness, being found in one so young and handsome.

"Why, my dear," added she, "depend on it, before he was Lady Marion's husband, he must have heard sighs enough from the love-sick damsels about him to have addled the brains of half the male world. There is something in his very look, did you meet him on a heath without better garb than a shepherd's plaid, sufficient to declare him the noblest of men; and would excuse the gentlest lady in the land for leaving hall and bower to share his sheep-cote. But alas!" and then the playful expression of her countenance altered; "he is now for none on earth!"

With these words she turned the subject to the confidential hours which he had passed with the adopted brother of his heart. Every fond emotion seemed then centered in his wife and child. When Lady Ruthven repeated his pathetic words to Edwin, she wept: she even sobbed, and paused to recover; while the deep and silent tears which flowed from the heart to the eyes of Lady Helen, bathed the side of the couch on which she leaned.

"Alas!" cried Lady Ruthven, "that a man so formed to grace every relation in life; so noble a creature in all respects; so fond a husband, so full of parental tenderness; that he should be deprived of the wife on whom he doated; that he should be cut off from all hope of posterity: that when he shall die, nothing will be left of William Wallace, breaks my heart!"

"Ah, my aunt," cried Helen, raising her head with animation, but still covering her face with her hand, "will he not leave behind him the liberty of Scotland? That is an offspring worthy of his god-like soul."

"True, my dear Helen: But had you ever been a parent, you would know, that no achievements, however great, can heal the wound made in a father's heart by the loss of a beloved child. And though Sir William Wallace never

## The Scottish Chiefs

saw the infant ready to bless his arms, yet it perished in the bosom of its mother; and that circumstance must redouble his affliction: Horribly does it enhance the cruelty of the deed!"

"He has in all things been a direful sacrifice:" returned Helen, "and with God alone dwells the power to wipe the tears from his heart."

"They flow not from his eyes," answered her aunt, "but deep, deep is the grief that my Edwin says is settled there."

While Lady Ruthven was uttering these words, shouts in the streets made her pause; and soon recognising the name of Wallace sounding from the lips of the rejoicing multitude, she turned to Helen: "Here comes our deliverer!" said she, taking her by the hand, "we have not seen him since the first day of our liberty. It will do you good, as it will me, to look on his beneficent face!"

Helen obeyed the impulse of her aunt's arm, and reached the window just as he passed the court-yard. All the blood in Helen's body was now in motion: it rushed through her veins; it beat in her heart; it throbbed in her temples; it burnt in her cheeks. "Ah! it is indeed he!" thought she, "no dream, no illusion, but his very self."

He looked up: but his eyes fell not on her side of the building; it was to the opening window of Lady Mar she saw them directed: and as he bowed, he smiled. All the charms of that smile struck upon the soul of Helen; and hastily retreating from the window, she sunk breathless into a seat.

"O no! that man cannot be born for the isolated state I have just lamented. It cannot be that he is for ever to be cut off from communicating that happiness to which he would give so much enchantment!" Lady Ruthven ejaculated this with fervour; her matronly cheeks flushing with a sudden and more forcible admiration of the person and mien of Wallace. "There was something in that smile, Helen, which tells that all is not chilled in his heart. And indeed, how should it be otherwise? That generous interest in the happiness of all, which seems to flow in a tide of universal love, cannot spring from a source incapable of dispensing the softer streams of it again. I will venture my life, Helen, that Sir William Wallace loses his heart before he is aware of it, to some lovely creature—yourself, perhaps—and is married before the expiration of the year!"

Helen, whose well poised soul was not affected by the agitations of her body, agitations she was determined to conquer, calmly answered; "Such an idea little agrees with all you have been telling me of his conversations with Edwin. Sir William Wallace will never love woman more. And even to name the expectations, aunt, is an offence against the sacredness of his sorrow that I cannot bear to hear."

"Blame me not, Helen," returned Lady Ruthven, "that I forgot probability in grasping at the possibility that fate would give me one day such a nephew as Sir William Wallace, and you a husband worthy of your merits! I had always in my own mind fixed on your unknown knight for your liege lord; and now that I find he and the deliverer of Scotland are one, I am not to be looked grave at for wishing to reward him with the most precious heart that ever beat in a female breast."

"No more of this, if you love me, my dear aunt!" returned Helen; "it neither can, nor ought to be. I revere the memory of Lady Marion too much, not to be agitated by the subject; so, no more!—" she was agitated. But at that instant Edwin throwing open the door, put an end to the conversation.

He came to apprise his mother that Sir William Wallace was in her saloon; being come purposely to pay his respects to her, not having even been introduced to her, when the illness of Helen in the castle had made them part so abruptly.

"I will not interrupt his introduction now," said Helen, "I am indisposed. A few days retirement may strengthen me, and then I shall see our protector as I ought."

"I will stay with you," cried Edwin, "and I dare say Sir William Wallace will have no objection to see my mother as soon as possible; for, as I came along, I met my aunt Mar hastening into the saloon: and between ourselves, my sweet coz, I do not think my noble friend quite likes a tete-a-tete with your good step-mother."

Lady Ruthven had withdrawn before he made this observation.

"Why, Edwin; surely she would not do any thing ungracious to one to whom she has acknowledged such a weight of obligations?" When Helen asked this, she remembered the spleen Lady Mar had once cherished against him; and she feared that it might now have shewn itself.

"Ungracious! O no! the reverse of that. I am sure she teizes him with her gratitude. Once or twice I thought she would have taken my head off, for only seconding his wish to get away from all the fooleries with which she thought to detain him at Bute. And now, heaven knows what is in her fancy, but this moment I met her on the

## The Scottish Chiefs

stairs, flying instead of walking, and as she passed me, she exclaimed, 'Is Lord Buchan arrived?' I answered, Yes. 'Ah! then he has made him king!' cried she; and into the saloon she darted."

"You do not mean to say," demanded Helen, turning her eyes with an expression which seemed confident of his answer; "that Sir William Wallace has accepted the crown of Scotland?"

"Certainly not:" replied Edwin, "but as certainly it has been offered to him, and he has refused it."

"I could have sworn it!" returned Helen, rising from her chair, "all is loyal, all is great and consistent there, Edwin!"

"He is, indeed, the perfect exemplar of all nobleness," rejoined Edwin, "and, I believe, I shall even love you better, my dear cousin, because you seem to have so clear an apprehension of his real character." He then proceeded with all the animation of the most zealous affection, to narrate to Helen the particulars of the late scene in the castle of Stirling; and while he deepened still more the profound impression the virtues of Wallace had made on her heart; he re-opened its more tender sympathies, by repeating, with even minuter accuracy than he had done to his mother, details of those hours of friendship which he had passed with his adopted brother. He spoke of the Beacon-hill: of moon-light walks in the camp, when all but the sentinels, and his general, and himself, were sunk in sleep.

These were the seasons when the suppressed feelings of Wallace would by fits break from his lips, and at last pour themselves out unrestrainedly to the ear of sympathy. As the young narrator described all the endearing qualities of his friend's heart; the cheerful heroism with which he quelled every tender remembrance, to do his duty in the day; "For it is only in the night," said Edwin, "that my general remembers Ellerslie." Helen's tears again stole silently down her cheeks: Edwin perceived them, and throwing his arms gently around her, kissed them off. "Weep not, my sweet cousin; for with all his sorrow, I never saw true happiness till I beheld it in the eyes, and heard it in the voice of Sir William Wallace. He has talked to me of the joy he should experience in giving liberty to Scotland, and in establishing her in peace, till his enthusiastic soul, grasping hope as if it were possession, he has looked on me with a consciousness of enjoyment that seemed to say, that all bliss was summed up in a patriot's breast.

"And then at other times, when after a conversation on his beloved Marion, when a few natural regrets would pass his lips, and my tears tell him how deep was my sympathy; then he would turn to comfort me.—Then he would shew me the world beyond this; that world which is the aim of all his deeds, the end of all his travails: and lost in the rapturous ideas of meeting his Marion there, a foretaste of all would seem to seize his soul: and were I then called upon to point out the most enviable felicity on earth, I should say it is that of Sir William Wallace. It is this enthusiasm in all he believes and feels that makes him what he is. It is this eternal spirit of hope, infused into him by heaven itself, that makes him rise from sorrow like the sun from a cloud, brighter, and with more ardent beams. It is this that bathes his lips in the smiles of paradise; that throws a divine lustre over his eyes; and makes all dream of love and happiness that look upon him."

Edwin paused:—"Is it not so, cousin?"

Helen raised her down-cast and thoughtful face.—"He is not a being of this earth, Edwin. We must learn to imitate him, as well as to—" She hesitated, and then added, "as well as to revere him. I do revere him: With such a sentiment as fills my heart when I bend before the altars of the saints. But not to worship;" said she, interrupting herself, "that would be a crime. To look on him as a glorious example of patient suffering, and of invincible courage against all that militates against truth and mercy! This is the end of my reverence of him. And this sentiment, my dear Edwin, you partake."

"It possesses me wholly," cried the energetic youth; "I have no thought, no wish; nor ever move or speak, but with the intent to be like him. He calls me his brother! and I will be so in soul though I cannot in blood: And then, my dear Helen, you shall have two Sir William Wallaces to love!"

"Sweetest, sweetest boy!" cried Helen, putting her quivering lips to his forehead; "You will then always remember that Helen so dearly loves Scotland, as to be jealous, above all earthly things, for the Lord Regent's safety. Be his guardian angel. Edwin, watch treason from man and woman, from friend and kindred. It lurks, my cousin, under the most specious forms; and as one, beware of Lord Buchan; in short, have a care of all whom any of the house of Cummin may introduce. Watch over your general's life in the private hour. It is not the public field I fear for him; his valiant arm will there be his own guard! But in the unreserved day of confidence, envy will point its dagger, and then be as eyes to his too trusting soul; as a shield to his too confidently exposed breast!"

## The Scottish Chiefs

As she spoke, she strove to conceal her, perhaps, too eloquent face, in the silken ringlets of her hair.

"I will be all this;" cried Edwin, who saw nothing in her tender solicitude but the ingenuous affection which glowed in his own heart; "and I will be your eyes too, my cousin; for when I am absent with Sir William Wallace, I shall consider myself as your representative, and so will send you regular dispatches of all that happens to him."

Thanks would have been a poor means of imparting what she felt at this assurance; and rising from her seat with some of Wallace's own resigned and enthusiastic expression in her face, she pressed Edwin's hand to her heart; and bowing her head to him in token of gratitude, withdrew into an inner apartment.

## CHAP. VI.

From the glance Wallace had caught of the Countess at the window, he anticipated her company in his visit to Lady Ruthven; and on finding the saloon lonely, he dispatched Edwin for his mother, that he might not be distressed by the unchecked advances of a woman whom he was obliged to see, as being the wife of Lord Mar; and whose weakness, he pitied, as she belonged to that sex, for all of whom, in consideration of the felicity one of it had once brought him, he felt a peculiar tenderness. Respect the Countess he could not; nor indeed could he feel any gratitude for a preference which seemed to him to have no foundations in the only true basis of love, in the virtues of the object. For as she acted against every moral law, against his declared sentiments, it was evident that she placed little value on his esteem; and therefore he despised, while he pitied, a human creature so ungovernably yielding herself to the criminal sway of her passions.

In the midst of thoughts so little to her advantage, Lady Mar entered the room. Wallace turned to meet her, while she, hastening towards him and dropping on one knee, exclaimed; "Let me be the first woman in Scotland to acknowledge its king!"

Wallace put forth his hand to raise her, and smiling, replied; "Lady Mar, you do me an honour I can never claim. I am not king of Scotland."

"How?" cried she, starting on her feet, "What then was that cry I heard? Did they not call you prince and sovereign? Did not my Lord Buchan—" Confused, disappointed, overpowered, she left the unfinished sentence, sunk on a seat, and burst into tears. At that moment she saw her anticipated crown fall from her head; and having united the gaining of Wallace with his acquisition of this dignity, all her hopes seemed at sea again. She felt as if Wallace had eluded her power; for it was by the ambition-serving acts of her kinsman, that she had meant to bind him to her love; and now all was rejected, and she wept in despair. He gazed at her with amazement: What these emotions and his elevation had to do with each other, he could not guess; but recollecting her manner of mentioning Lord Buchan's name, he answered, "Lord Buchan I have just seen. He and Lord March came upon the carse at the time I went thither to meet my gallant countrymen; and they, though so lately the friends of Edward, united with the rest in proclaiming me regent."

This word dried the tears of Lady Mar. Again she saw the shadow of royalty behind it; and summoning those clouds of artifice, which had lately been so ready at her command, to cover the joy of her countenance, she calmly said, "Blame not this weakness: But it is not that of vain wishes for your aggrandizement. You are the same to Joanna Mar, whether as a monarch or a private man; as long as you possess that supremacy in all excellence which first gained her esteem. It is for Scotland's sake alone that I wish you her king. You have taught me to forget all selfish desires; to respect myself;" cried she, "and from this hour I conjure you to regard me as a sister! wipe from your memory all my folly—all my love—" With the last word her bosom heaved tumultuously, and she rose in agitation. Wallace now gazed on her with redoubled wonder. She saw it, and as she heard a foot in the passage, she turned towards him, but covering her face with one hand, while she put the other into his, she said in a soft and hurried tone, "Forgive, that what is entwined with my heart should cost me some pangs before I quite wrest it thence; only respect me, and I am comforted!" Wallace in silence pressed her hand, and the door opened.

Lady Ruthven appeared; and the Countess, (whose present aim was to throw the virtue of Wallace off its guard, and to take that by sap which she found resisted her open attack) slid out of the room by another passage. Edwin's gentle mother was followed by the same youth who had brought Helen's packet to Berwick. It was Walter Hay, anxious to be recognised by his benefactor, to whom his recovered health had rendered his person strange. Wallace received him with kindness, and told him to bear his grateful respects to his lady for her care of her charge. Lord Ruthven, with others, soon entered; and at the appointed hour they attended their chief to the citadel. The council-hall was already filled with the lords who had brought their clans to the Scottish standard. On the entrance of Wallace they all rose; and Mar coming forward, followed by the heralds and other officers of ceremony, saluted him with the due forms of Regent, and led him to the throne. Wallace ascended, but it was only to take thence a packet which was deposited for him on its cushion; and coming down again, he laid the parchment upon the council-table; "I can do all things best," said he, with a smile, "when I am upon a level with my friends." He then broke the seal of the packet. It was from the Prince of Wales: and agreed to Wallace's

## The Scottish Chiefs

proposed exchange of prisoners, but in severe language denounced him as the instigator of rebellion, and bade him expect future judgment from his incensed king for the mischief he had wrought by his violence in the realm of Scotland. The letter was finished by a demand, that the town and citadel of Berwick should be surrendered to England as a gage for the quiet of the borders till Edward should return.

Kirkpatrick, as he listened to this letter, expressed vehement displeasure at the audacious threatenings of the young prince. "He should come amongst us like a man," cried Sir Roger, "and we would soon shew him who it is by whom Scotland suffers: Aye, even on his back we would write the chastisement due to the offender."

"Be not angry with him, my friend;" returned Wallace, "these threats are merely words of course from the son of Edward. Did he not fear both our rights and our arms he would not so readily accord with our propositions. You see every Scottish prisoner is to be on the borders by a certain day: and, meanwhile, to satisfy that impatient valour which I never check but when it loses itself in a furor too nearly resembling that of our enemies; I intend to make your prowess once again the theme of their discourse. You shall retake your castles in Annandale,"

"Give me but the means," cried he, "to recover those stout gates of my country, and I will warrant you to keep the keys in my own hands till doomsday! sooner than again give them up, I will gripe them even in death."

Wallace resumed: "You shall have 3000 men under your command; and as soon as both hosts of prisoners pass each other on the cheviots, the armistice will terminate. You may then fall back upon Annandale, and that night light your own fires in Torthorald; send the expelled garrisons into Northumberland, and shew this haughty prince that we know how to replenish his depopulated towns. We return him those men to be his bees, which he sent to be our locusts."

"But first I will set my mark on them!" cried Kirkpatrick, with one of those laughs which ever precluded some savage proposal.

"I can guess it would be no gentle one," returned Wallace, "Why, brave knight, will you ever sully the fair field of your fame with an ensanguined tide?"

"It is the fashion of the times:" replied Kirkpatrick roughly, "you only, my victorious general, who perhaps had most cause to go with the stream, have chosen a mode of your own. But look around! see our burns, which the Southrons made run with Scottish blood; our hillocks, swoln with the cairns of our slain; the highways blocked up with the graves of the murdered; and our lands filled with our maimed vassals, who were glad to purchase, with the loss of eyes and of limbs, a miserable existence from their ruthless tyrants! and shall we talk of gentle methods with such as these? Sir William Wallace, you would make women of us."

"Shame, shame! Kirkpatrick!" resounded from every voice at once, "you insult the Lord Regent!"

Kirkpatrick stood proudly frowning, with his left hand on the hilt of his sword. Wallace, by a motion, hushed the tumult, and spoke; "No chieftain of Scotland can offer me greater respect than frankly to trust me with his sentiments."

"Though we disagree in some points," cried Kirkpatrick, "I am ready to die for you at any time, for I believe a truer Scot treads not the earth; but I repeat, why by this mincing mercy seek to turn your soldiers into women?"

"I seek to make them men," replied Wallace, "to be aware that they fight with fellow-creatures with whom they may one day be friends; and not like the furious savages of old Scandinavia, drink the blood of eternal enmity. I would neither have my chieftains set examples of cruelty, nor degrade themselves by imitating barbarities of our enemies. That Scotland bleeds at every pore, is true; but let peace be our aim, and we shall heal all her wounds."

"Then I am not to cut off the ears of the freebooters in Annandale?" cried Kirkpatrick with a good-humoured smile; "Have it as you will; only I believe you must new christen me, to wash the war-stain from my hand; for my fount was my father's helmet; and the first pap I sucked was off the point of his sword."

"You have not shamed your nurse!" cried Murray.

"Nor will I," answered Kirkpatrick, "while the arm that slew Cressingham remains unwithered."

While he spoke Ker entered to ask permission to introduce a messenger from Earl de Warenne. Wallace gave consent. It was Sir Hugh le de Spencer, a near kinsman of the Earl of Hereford the tumultuary constable of England. He was the envoy who had brought the Prince of Wales's dispatches to Stirling. Wallace was standing when he entered, and so were most of the chieftains, but at his appearance they all sat down. Wallace retained his position.

"I come," cried the Southron knight, "from the Lord Warden of Scotland, who, with my prince, too greatly

## The Scottish Chiefs

condescends to do otherwise than command, where now he treats; I come to the leader of this rebellion, William Wallace, to receive his answer to the terms granted by the clemency of my master, the son of your liege lord, to this misled kingdom."

"Sir Knight," replied Sir William Wallace, "when the Southron lords delegate a messenger to me who knows how to respect the representative of the nation to which he is sent, and the honour of his senders, I shall give them my reply. You may withdraw."

The Southron stood, resolute to remain where he was; "Do you know, proud Scot," cried he, "to whom you dare address such imperious language? I am the nephew of the lord high-constable of England."

"It is pity," cried Murray, looking coolly up from the table, "that he is not here to take his kinsman into custody!"

Le de Spencer fiercely half drew his sword; "Sir, this insult—"

"Must be put up with" cried Wallace, interrupting him, and motioning Edwin to lay his hand on the sword; "you have insulted the nation to which you were sent on a peaceful errand; and having thus invited the resentment of every chief in the kingdom, you cannot justly complain against their indignation. But, in consideration of your youth, and probable ignorance of what becomes the character of an ambassador, I grant you the protection your behaviour has forfeited. Sir Alexander Scrymgeour," said he, turning to him, "you will guard Sir Hugh le de Spencer to the Earl of Warrene, and tell him that I am ready to answer any proper messenger."

The young Southron, frowning, followed Scrymgeour from the hall; and Wallace turning to Murray, "My friend," said he, "it is not well to stimulate insolence by repartee. This young man's speech, though an insult to the nation, was directed to me; and by me only ought it to have been answered, and that seriously. We should in all transactions, whether great or small, never give a needless irritation to our enemy. The haughty spirit of this man should have been quelled, not incensed; and had you proceeded one word farther, you would have given him an apparently just cause of complaint against you; and of that, my friend, I am most sensibly jealous. It is not either policy or virtue to be rigorous to the extent of justice."

"I know," returned Murray blushing, "that my wits are too many for me, and are ever throwing me, like Phaeton's horses, into the midst of some fiery mischief or other. But pardon me now, and I promise you I will bridle them well when next I see this prancing knight."

"Bravo, my Lord Andrew!" cried Kirkpatrick, in an affected whisper, "I am not always to be bird alone under the whip of our Regent; you have had a few stripes, and now look a little of my feather!"

"Like as a swan to a vulture, good Roger;" answered Murray, "so prithee compare not my Tyrtæus pipe, with your war-whoop, else I shall appeal to Apollo, and have you flayed for sacrilege against the muses."

"Whenever Apollo, or any other bequivered god, or mortal, catches me affecting such maudling company," returned Kirkpatrick, "he is welcome to transfix me with his sharpest arrow. Wisdom is too dainty for me, wit too contemptible; and so, once for all, I glory in being known as the sturdy knight, who swears eternal enmity against all Scotland's foes!—And had I had my will, that saucy cur should have been sent howling to his masters, instead of being dispatched in safety to laugh at clemency he cannot understand."

While these chieftains amused themselves with this badinage, Wallace was engaged in close discourse with the elder nobles at the higher end of the hall. In half an hour Scrymgeour returned, and with him Baron Hilton. He brought an apology from De Warrene, for the behaviour of his ambassador; and added his persuasions to the demands of England, that the Regent would surrender Berwick, not only as a pledge for the Scots keeping the truce on the borders, but as a proof of his confidence in Prince Edward.

Wallace answered, that he had no reason to shew extraordinary confidence in one who manifested by such a requisition that he had no faith in Scotland; and therefore, neither as a proof of confidence, nor as a gage of her word, should Scotland, a victorious power, surrender to the vanquished, the eastern door of her kingdom. Wallace declared himself ready to dismiss the English prisoners to the frontiers, and to maintain the armistice till they had reached the south side of the Cheviots; "But," added he, "my word must be my bond, for, by the honour of Scotland, I will give no other."

"Then," answered Baron Hilton, with an honest flush passing over his cheek, as if ashamed of what he had next to say, "I am now constrained to lay before you the last instructions of the Prince of Wales to Earl De Warrene."

He pulled a royally sealed roll of vellum from his breast, and read aloud:



## The Scottish Chiefs

"Thus saith Edward Prince of Wales, to Earl De Warenne Lord Warden of Scotland. If that arch-rebel William Wallace, who now assumeth to himself the rule of all our royal father's hereditary dominions north of the Cheviots, refuseth to give unto us the whole possession of the town and citadel of Berwick upon Tweed, as a pledge of his faith to keep the armistice on the borders from sea to sea, we command you to tell him that we shall detain, under the ward of our good lieutenant of the Tower in London, the person of William the Lord Douglas, as a close captive, until our prisoners, now in Scotland, arrive safely at Newcastle upon Tyne. This mark of supremacy over a rebellious people we owe as a pledge of their homage to our royal father; and as a tribute of our gratitude to him for having allowed us to treat at all with so undutiful a part of his dominions."

"Baron," cried Wallace, "it would be beneath the dignity of Scotland to retaliate this act with the like conduct. The exchange of prisoners shall yet be made, and the armistice held sacred on the borders. But, as I hold the door of war open in the interior of the country, before the Earl De Warenne leaves this citadel, (and it shall be on the day engaged for) please the Almighty Lord of Justice, the Southron governors of all our castles on the eastern-coast, to the Murray Frith, shall be our hostages for the safety of Lord Douglas!"

"And this is my answer, noble Wallace!"

"It is, and you see no more of me till that which I have said, is done."

Baron Hilton bowed and withdrew. And Wallace turning to his peers, rapidly made dispositions for a sweeping march from Frith to Frith; and having sent those who were to accompany him, to prepare for departure next day at dawn-light, he retired with the Lords Mar, Bothwell, and Ruthven, to arrange affairs relative to the prisoners.

## CHAP. VII.

The sun next morning rose on Wallace and his brave legions as they traversed the once romantic glades of Strathmore; but now the scene was changed. The villages were abandoned, and the land lay around in uncultivated wastes. Sheep without a shepherd, fled wild from the approach of man; and wolves ran howling from the cloisters of depopulated monasteries. The army approached Dumblane; but the town was without inhabitant; the grass grew in the streets; and the birds which roosted in the deserted dwellings, flew scared from the windows, as the trumpet of Wallace sounded through the town.—Loud echoes were repeated from the hollow walls, but no other voice was heard, no human face appeared; for the ravening hand of Cressingham had been there!—Wallace sighed as he looked around him. "Rather smile," cried Murray, "that heaven hath given you the power to say to the tyrants who have done this, Here shall your proud waves be staid!"

They proceeded over many a hill and plain, and found that the same withering touch of desolation had burnt up and overwhelmed the country. Wallace saw that his troops were faint for want of food; but he promised that Ormesby should provide them a feast in Perth; and with reawakened spirits they took the river Tay at its fords, and were soon before the walls of that well armed city. But it was governed by a coward. Ormesby fled to Dundee at the first sight of the Scottish army. His flight might have warranted the garrison to surrender without a blow; but a braver man being his lieutenant, sharp was the conflict before Wallace could compel that officer to abandon the ramparts and to sue for the mercy which he had at first rejected.

After the fall of Perth, the young Regent made a rapid progress through that part of the country; driving the Southron garrisons out of Scone, and all the embattled towns; expelling them from the castles of Kincairn, Elcho, Kinfaun, and Doune; and then proceeding to the more marine fortresses, (those avenues by which the ships of England had poured their legions on the eastern-coast) he compelled Dundee, Cowper, Glamis, Montrose, and Aberdeen, all to acknowledge the power of his arms. He seized most of the English ships in these ports, and manning them with Scottish sailors, soon cleared the seas of the rest, taking some, and putting others to flight; in one of the latter of which, was the fugitive Ormesby

This enterprise achieved, Wallace, with a host of prisoners, (amounting to several thousands,) turned his steps to wards the Forth. But ere he left the banks of the Tay, he detached 3000 men, and putting them under the command of Lord Ruthven, gave him a commission to range the country from the Carse of Gowrie to remotest Sutherland, and in all that tract reduce every town and castle which had admitted a Southron garrison. Wallace took leave of Lord Ruthven at Hunting-tower; and that worthy nobleman, when he assumed with the government of Perth this extensive command, said, as he grasped the Regent's hand, "I say not, bravest of Scots, what is my gratitude for thus making me an arm of my country, but deeds will shew!"

"You shall next hear of me, my friend," returned Wallace, "from the fertile plains of Northumberland. They who have impoverished our fields, must expect that our famishing people shall be carried to gather food on theirs."

Lord Ruthven bade a father's adieu to his son, counselling him to regard Wallace as the light in his path; and then embracing the chief, they parted with increased affection on all sides.

A rapid march round by Fifeshire, through which victory followed their steps, and the hard fought battle of Black Ironside will record for ever, brought the conqueror and his troops within sight of the towers of Stirling. It was on the eve of the day in which he had promised Earl de Warenne that the English prisoners should depart for the borders. No doubt of his arriving at the appointed time was held either by the Scots, or the Southrons in the castle. The one knew the sacredness of his word; and the other, having felt his prowess, would not so far disparage their own, as to suppose that any could withstand him by whom they were beaten.

De Warenne, as he stood on the battlements of the keep, beheld from afar the long line of Scottish soldiers as they descended the Oichil-hills. When he pointed it out to De Valence, that nobleman, who in proportion as he wished to check the arms of Wallace, had flattered himself that it might happen, against the evidence of his eye-sight, contradicted the observation of the veteran Earl.

"Your sight deceives you," said he, "it is only the sunbeams playing on the cliffs."

"Then those cliffs are moving ones, which I fear have already ground our countrymen on the coast to powder!"

## The Scottish Chiefs

We shall find Wallace here before sun-set," continued De Warenne, "to shew us how he resents the affront which our ill-advised young Prince has cast on his jealous honour."

"His honour," returned De Valence, "is like that of his countrymen's, an enemy alike to his own happiness and to that of others. Had it allowed him to accept the crown of Scotland, and to have fought Edward with the concentrating arm of a king; or would he now offer peace to our sovereign, granting his prerogative as Liege Lord of the country, all would go well; but as his honour prevents his using these means of ending the contest, destruction must be the end of his career."

"And what quarrel," demanded De Warenne, "can you, my Lord de Valence, have against this nice honour of Sir William Wallace, since you allow it will secure the final success of our cause?"

"His honour and himself are hateful to me!" impatiently answered De Valence, "he crosses me in my wishes, public and private; and for the sake of my King and myself, I might almost be tempted—" He turned pale as he spoke, and met the penetrating glance of De Warenne. He paused.

"Tempted to what?" asked De Warenne.

"To a Brutus mode of ridding the state of an enemy."

"That might be noble in a Roman citizen," returned De Warenne, "which would be villainous in an English lord, treated as you have been by a generous victor, not the usurper of any country's liberties, but the Brutus who has taken up arms against our Cæsar. Which man of us all, from the general to the meanest follower in our camps, has he injured?"

Lord Aymer frowned: "Did he not expose me, threatened with an ignominious death, on the walls of Stirling?"

"But was it before he saw the Earl of Mar, with his hapless family, brought with halters round their necks, to be suspended from this very tower?—Ah! what a tale has the lovely Countess told me of that direful scene!—And did he not expose you, merely to check the sanguinary Cressingham from embrewing his hands in the blood of female and infant innocence?"

"I care not," cried De Valence, "what are, or are not the offences of this domineering Wallace, but I hate him, and my respect for his advocates cannot but be lessened." As he spoke, that he might not be farther molested by the arguments of De Warenne, he abruptly turned away and left the battlements.

His pride would not allow him to confess his private reasons for this vehement enmity against the Scottish Chief. A conference which De Valence had held the preceding evening with the Earl of Mar, had aroused all his hatred; and from that moment the haughty Southron vowed his destruction by open attack, or secret treachery. Ambition and the base counterfeit of love, those two master passions in untempered minds, were the springs of this antipathy. The instant in which he knew that the young creature, whom at a distance he saw clinging round the Earl of Mar's neck in the streets of Stirling, was the same Lady Helen on whose account Lord Soulis had poured on him such undeserved invectives in Bothwell castle, curious to have a nearer view of one, whose transcendent beauty he had often heard celebrated by others, he ordered her to be immediately conveyed to his apartments in the citadel.

On his first interview with her, he was more struck with her personal charms than he had ever been with any woman's, although he was the most noted for gallantry of all the lords in the English court. He could hardly understand the nature of his feelings while discoursing with her. To all others of her sex he had declared his enamoured wishes with as much ease as vivacity; but when he looked on Helen, the admiration her loveliness inspired was checked by an awe of the celestial purity which seemed to beam from every part of her body. No word of passion ever breathed from his lips; but seeking to win her by a deportment consonant with her own dignity of manners, he treated her with every respect, and obeyed all her wishes, excepting when they pointed to any communication with her parents. He feared the wary eyes of the Earl of Mar; and therefore he decided at once, to keep him out of the way. With all this reverence of Helen, it was not grounded on any principle within the heart of De Valence: He had so erroneous an idea of virtue, that he believed, by putting on its semblance, he might so far steal on the confidence of his victim, as to induce her to forget all the world, nay heaven itself, in his sophistry and blandishments. To facilitate this end, he at first designed to precipitate the condemnation of the Earl, that he might the sooner be rid of a father's existence, holding, in dread of his censure, the perhaps otherwise yielding heart of his lovely mistress.

The unprincipled and impure can have no idea that virtue or delicacy are other than vestments of disguise or ornament to be thrown off at will; and therefore to reason with such minds, is to talk to the winds; to tell a man

## The Scottish Chiefs

who is born blind, to decide between two colours. De Valence expected that the moment he could gain a sufficient interest in the heart of Lady Helen, and convince her of the folly of living to the world's opinion, that she would fall at once into his snare. But seeing the anguish of her fears for her father, the fervour with which, even on her knees, she implored for his life, the wily lover comprehended that the death of so endeared a parent would paralyze every tender feeling in her breast, and that instead of a fond beauty, he should clasp a piece of living marble in his arms, cold, and insensible to every outward object. When aware of this, he adopted the plan of granting the Earl reprieves from day to day; and, in spite of the remonstrances of Cressingham, he intended, after having worked upon the terrors of Helen, to grant to her her father's life on condition of her yielding herself to be his. He had even meditated that the accomplishment of this device and of all his wishes, should have taken place the very night in which Wallace's first appearance before Stirling had called its garrison to arms.

De Valence, impelled by vengeance against the man who had driven him from Dumbarton and from Ayr, and irritated at being delayed in the moment when his passion was ready to seize its object, thought to end all by a coup de main, and rushing out of the gates, was taken prisoner.

Now that the whole of the English army were in the same captivity with himself, that he saw the lately proscribed Lord Mar, governor of Stirling, and that the Scottish cause seemed triumphant on every side, he changed his former illicit views on Helen, and bethought him of making her his wife. Ambition as well as love impelled him to this resolution; for, he aspired to the dignity of Lord Warden of Scotland; and he foresaw that the vast influence which his marriage with the daughter of Mar must give him in the country, would be a decisive argument with the King of England.

To this purpose, not doubting the Scottish Earl's glad acceptance of such a son-in-law, on the very day that Wallace had marched out of the town towards the coast, De Valence sent to request an hour's private audience of the Lord Mar. The Earl could not grant it till next morning; but at noon the next day they met in the governor's apartments.

Being seated, the Southron, without much preface, opened his wishes to Lord Mar, and proffered his hand for his daughter. "I will make her the proudest lady in Great Britain," continued he, "for she shall have a court in my province in Wales, little inferior to that of Edward's queen."

"Pomp would have no sway with my daughter," replied the Earl, "it is the royal mind she values, not its pageantry. Whom ever she prefers, the tribute will be paid to the merit of the object, not to his rank; and therefore, Earl, should it be you, the greater will be your pledge of happiness. I shall repeat to her what you have said, and to-morrow deliver her answer."

De Valence, not deeming it possible that it should be otherwise than favourable, allowed his imagination to roam over every anticipated delight. He exulted in the pride with which he would shew this perfection of northern beauty to the fair of England: How would the simple graces of her seraphic form, which looked more like a being of air than of earth, put to shame the laboured beauties of the court! And then it was not only the artless charms of a wood-nymph he would present to the wondering throng, but a being whose majesty of soul, at every step, proclaimed her high descent and peerless virtues. How did he congratulate himself, in contemplating this unsullied temple of virgin innocence, that he had never, by even the vapour of one impassioned sigh, contaminated her pure ear, or broken the magic spell which seemed to him to have enshrined an angel who was fated to crown him with happiness unknown, with honour unexampled. To be so blessed, so distinguished, so envied, was to him a dream of triumph that wafted away all remembrance of his late defeat; and he believed in taking Helen from Scotland, he should bear away a richer prize than any he could leave behind.

Full of these anticipations he attended the governor of Stirling the next day, to hear his daughter's answer. But unwilling to give the Earl that advantage over him, which a knowledge of his views in the marriage might occasion, he affected a composure he did not feel, and with a lofty air entered the room, as if he were rather come to confer than to beg a favour. This deportment did not lessen the satisfaction with which the brave Scot opened his mission.

"My Lord, I have just seen my daughter. She duly appreciates the honour you would confer on her; she is grateful for all your courtesies to her whilst she was your prisoner; but beyond that sentiment, her heart, attached to her native land, cannot sympathize with your wishes."

De Valence started at this. He did not expect any thing in the shape of a denial; but supposing that perhaps a little of his own art was tried by the father to enhance the value of his daughter's yielding, he threw himself into a

## The Scottish Chiefs

chair and affecting chagrin at a disappointment, (which in his own mind he did not believe was seriously intended) exclaimed with vehemence, "Surely, Lord Mar, this is not meant as a refusal? I cannot receive it as such; for I know Lady Helen's gentleness; I know the sweet tenderness of her nature would plead for me, were she to see me at her feet, and hear me pour forth the most ardent passion that ever burnt in a human breast. Oh, my gracious lord, if it be her attachment to Scotland which alone militates against me, I will promise that her time shall be passed between the two countries. Her marriage with me may facilitate that peace with England which must be the wish of us all; and perhaps the Lord Wardenship, which De Warrenne now holds, may be transferred to me: I have reasons for expecting that it will be so; and then she, as a queen in Scotland, and you as her father, may claim every distinction from her fond husband, every indulgence for the Scots which your patriot heart can dictate. This would be a certain benefit to Scotland; while the ignis fatuus which you are now following, however brilliant may be its career during Edward's absence, must, on his return, be extinguished in disaster and infamy."

The silence of the Earl of Mar, who, willing to hear all that was in the mind of De Valence, had let him proceed uninterrupted, encouraged the Southron lord to speak more than he had at first intended to reveal; but when he made a pause, and seemed to expect an answer, the Earl spoke:—

"I am fully sensible of the honour you would bestow upon my daughter and myself, by your alliance; but, as I have said before, her heart is too devoted to Scotland to marry any man whose birth does not make it his duty to prefer the liberty of her native land, even before his love for her. That hope, to see our country freed from a yoke unjustly laid upon her; that hope which you, not considering our rights, or weighing the power that lies in a just cause, denominate an ignis fatuus, is the only passion I believe that lives in the gentle bosom of my Helen; and therefore, noble Earl, not even your offers can equal the measure of her wishes."

At this speech, De Valence bit his lip with real disappointment, and starting from his chair in unaffected disorder; "I am not to be deceived Lord Mar," cried he, "I am not to be cajoled by the pretended patriotism of your daughter; I know the sex too well to be cheated with these excuses. The ignis fatuus that leads your daughter from my arms is not the freedom of Scotland, but the handsome rebel who conquers in its name! He is now fortune's minion; but he will fall, Lord Mar, and then what will be the fate of his mad adherents?"

"Earl de Valence," replied the veteran, "sixty winters have checked the tides of passion in my veins, but the indignation of my soul against any insult offered either to my daughter's delicacy, or to the name of the Lord Regent of Scotland, is not less powerful in my breast. But you are my prisoner, and I pardon what I could so easily avenge. I will even answer you, and say, that I do not know of any exclusive affection subsisting between my daughter and Sir William Wallace; but this I am assured of, that were it the case, she would be more ennobled in being the wife of so true a patriot, and so virtuous a man, than were she advanced to the bosom of an emperor. And for myself, were he to-morrow hurled by a mysterious decree of Providence, from his present height of nobly-won elevation, I should glory in my son, were he such, and would think him as great on a scaffold as on a throne."

"It is well that is your opinion," replied De Valence, stopping in his wrathful strides, and turning on Mar with vengeful irony, "cherish these heroics, for you will assuredly see him so exalted, before another month passes over his head. Then where will be his triumphs over Edward's arms, and Pembroke's heart?—Where your daughter's patriot husband, your glorious son?—Start not old man, for by all the powers of hell I swear, that some eyes which now look proudly on the Southron host, shall close in blood!"

"If they do," replied Mar, shuddering at the demoniac fire that lightened from the countenance of De Valence, "it must indeed be by the agency of devils; and their minister, vindictive Earl, must soon meet the vengeance of the eternal gulph!"

"These dreams," cried De Valence, "cannot terrify me. You are neither a seer, nor I a fool, to be taken by such prophecies. But had you been wise enough to have embraced the advantage I offered, you might have been a prophet of good, greater than he of Ercildoun, to your nation; for all that you would have promised, I would have taken care should be fulfilled. But you have cast from you your peace and safety. I rely not on oracles of heaven nor hell, but what I devote shall be condemned. I have pronounced the doom of my enemies; and though you now see me a prisoner, tremble haughty Scot, at the resentment which lies in this head and heart! This arm needs not the armies of Edward to pierce you in your boast!"

He left the room as he spoke: and Lord Mar, shaking his venerable head as he disappeared, said to himself—"Impotent rage of passion and of youth, I pity and forgive you!"

## The Scottish Chiefs

It was not, therefore, so extraordinary that De Valence, when he saw Wallace descending the Oichil hills, with the flying banners of new victories, should break into curses of his fortune, and swear inwardly the most determined revenge.

Fuel was added to this fire, when at sunset the almost measureless defiles of prisoners, marshalled under the walls of Stirling, and taking the usual oath to Wallace, met his view.

"To-morrow we quit these dishonouring walls," cried he to himself, "but ere I leave them, if there be power in gold, or strength in my arm, he shall die!"

CHAP. VIII.

The time of the regent's re-entrance into the citadel of Stirling, being the evening before the day which he had promised should see the English lords depart for their country, De Warenne, as a mark of respect to a man whom he could not but regard with increasing admiration, went to the Barbican gate to bid him welcome.

Wallace appeared; and as the cavalcade of noble Southrons who had lately commanded beyond the Tay, followed him, he glanced his eye around, and said with a smile to De Warenne, "You see, my lord, I keep my word;" and then he added, "you leave Stirling to-morrow, but these remain till Lord Douglas opens their prison doors."

"I cannot but acquiesce in the justice of your determination: and to comfort these gentlemen under their captivity, I can only tell them, that if any thing can reconcile them to the loss of liberty, it will be being the prisoners of Sir William Wallace."

After having transferred his captives to the charge of Lord Mar, Wallace went alone to the chamber of Montgomery, to see whether the state of his wounds would allow him to march on the morrow.— While he was yet there, an invitation was brought to him from the Countess of Mar, requesting his presence at an entertainment which, by her husband's consent, she meant to give that night at Snaw don, to the chief of the Southron lords, before their departure for England."

"I fear you dare not expend your strength on this party?" inquired Wallace, turning to Montgomery.

"Certainly not," returned he, "but I shall see you amidst your noble friends at some future period. When the peace your arms will win, is established between the two nations, I shall then revisit Scotland, and openly declare my soul's friendship for Sir William Wallace."

"As these are your sentiments," replied Wallace, "I shall hope that you will unite your influence with that of the brave Earl of Gloucester, to persuade your king to stop this bloodshed; for it is no vain boast to declare, that he may bury Scotland beneath the corpses of her slaughtered sons, but they will never again consent to acknowledge any right in an usurper."

"Sanguinary have been the instruments of my sovereign's rule in Scotland; and; replied Montgomery; "but such cruelty is foreign from his gallant heart; and without offending that high-souled patriotism which would make me revere its possessor, were he the lowliest man in your legions, allow me, noblest of Scots, to plead one word in vindication of him to whom my allegiance is pledged! Had he come hither conducted by war alone, what would Edward have been worse than any other conqueror? But on the reverse, was not his right to the supremacy of Scotland acknowledged by the princes who contended for the crown? and besides, did not all the great lords swear fealty to England the day he nominated their king?"

"Had you not been under these impressions, brave Montgomery, I believe I never should have seen you in arms against Scotland; but I will remove them by a simple answer. All the princes whom you speak of, excepting Bruce of Annandale, did assent to the newly-offered claim of Edward on Scotland; but who amongst them had any probable chance for the throne, but Bruce and Baliol? Their ready acquiescence was meant to create them one. Bruce, conscious of his inherent rights, rejected the iniquitous demand of Edward; Baliol accorded with it, and was made a king. All who were base enough to worship the rising sun, and I may say condemn the God of Truth, swore to the falsehood; others remained gloomily silent; and the bravest of the lords retired to the Highlands, where they dwelt amongst their mountains till the cries of Scotland called them to fight her battles.

"Thus did Edward establish himself as the liege lord of this kingdom. And whether the oppressions which followed were his or his agent's immediate acts, it matters not, for he made them his own by his after-conduct: When remonstrances were sent to London, he neither punished nor reprimanded the delinquents, but marched an armed force into our country to compel us to be trampled on! It was not a conqueror, like Alexander or Charlemagne, coming in his strength to subdue antient enemies; or to aggrandize his name by vanquishing nations far remote, with whom he could have no particular affinity! Terrible as such ambition was, it is innocence to what Edward has done. He came in the first instance to Scotland as a friend: the nation committed its dearest interests to his virtue; they put their hands into his, and he bound them in shackles. Was this honour? Was this the right of conquest? The cheek of Alexander would have blushed deep as his Tyrian robe, and the face of Charlemagne

## The Scottish Chiefs

turned pale as his lilies, at the bare suspicion of being capable of such a deed.

"No, Lord Montgomery, it is not our conqueror we are opposing; it is a traitor, who, under the mask of friendship, has attempted to usurp our rights, destroy our liberties, and make a desert of our once happy country. This is the true statement of the case: and though I wish not to make a subject outrage his sovereign, yet truth demands of you to say to Edward, that to withdraw his pretensions from this exhausted country is the restitution we may justly claim, is all that we wish. Let him leave us in peace, and we shall no longer make war upon him. But if he persist, which the ambassadors from the Prince of Wales denounce, if need be, even as Samson drew the temple on himself to destroy his enemies, all Scotland will discharge itself upon the valleys of England, and there compel them to share the fate in which we may be doomed to perish."

"I will think of this discourse," returned Montgomery, "when I am far distant; and rely on it, noble Wallace, that I will assert the privilege of my birth, and counsel my king as becomes an honest man."

"Highly would he estimate such counsel," cried Wallace, "had he virtue sufficient to know that he who will not be unjust to his sovereign's enemies, must be of an honour which will bind him with double fidelity to his king. Such proof give your sovereign; and if he have one spark of that greatness of mind which you say he possesses, though he may not adopt your advice, he must respect the adviser."

As Wallace pressed the hand of his friend to leave him to repose, a messenger entered from Lord Mar to request the Regent's presence in his closet. He found him with Lord de Warrene.

The latter presented him with another dispatch from the Prince of Wales. It was to say that news had reached him of Wallace's design to attack the castles garrisoned by England on the eastern coast; and that should this information prove true, he, the prince, declared that as a punishment for the increasing audacity of the Scots, he would put Lord Douglas into closer confinement; and while the Southron fleets should baffle all Wallace's attempts against the castles, the moment the exchange of prisoners was made on the borders, an army from England should enter Scotland and ravage it with fire and sword.

When Wallace had heard this dispatch, he smiled and said; "The deed is done, my Lord de Warrene. Both the castles and the fleets are taken; and what punishment must we now expect from this terrible threatener?"

"Little from him and his headlong counsellors;" replied de Warrene, "but Thomas Earl of Lancaster, the king's nephew, is come from abroad with a numerous army. He is to conduct the Scottish prisoners to the borders, and then to fall upon Scotland with all his strength; unless you previously surrender, not only Berwick, but Stirling, and the whole of the district between the Forth and Tweed, into his hands."

"You cannot, my Lord de Warrene," replied Wallace, "expect but one return to these absurd demands. I shall accompany you myself to the Scottish borders, and there make my reply."

De Warrene, who did indeed look for this answer, replied; "I anticipated that such would be your determination. And I have to regret that the wild counsels which surround the young prince, precipitate him into conduct which must draw much blood on both sides, before his royal father can be able to regain what he has lost."

"Ah, my lord," replied Wallace, "is it to be nothing but war, war? Have you now a strong hold of any force in all the Highlands? Is not the greater part of the Lowlands free? And before this day month, not a rood of land shall your monarch possess in Scotland. We conquer, but it is for our own. Why then this unreceding determination to invade us? not a blade of grass would I disturb on the other side of Cheviot, if we might but have peace. Let Edward yield us that, and though he has pierced us with many a wound, we will yet forgive him."

De Warrene shook his head: "I know my king too well to expect pacific measures. He may die with the sword in his hand, but he will never grant an hour's repose to this country till it submits to his sceptre."

"Then," replied Wallace, "the sword must be the portion of him and his. Mine shall reap the harvests of his country, to replenish the ravaged fields of Scotland. Ruthless tyrant! If the blood of Abel called for vengeance on his murderer, what must be the phials of wrath which are reserved for thee!"

A flush overspread the face of De Warrene at this apostrophe, and then forcing a smile, "This strict notion of right," said he, "is very well in declamation; but how would it crop the wings of conquerors, and shorten the warrior's arm, did they measure by this rule!"

"How would it indeed!" replied Wallace, "and that they should, is most devoutly to be wished. All warfare that is not defensive, is criminal: and he who draws his sword to oppress, or merely to aggrandize, is a murderer and a robber. This is the plain truth Lord de Warrene."



## The Scottish Chiefs

"I have never considered it in that light;" returned the Earl, "nor shall I turn philosopher now. I revere your principle, Sir William Wallace, but it is too sublime to be mine. Nay, nor would it be politic for one who holds his possessions in England by the right of conquest, to question the virtue of the deed. By the sword my ancestors gained their estates, and with the sword I have no objection to extend my territories.

Wallace now saw that De Warenne, though a man of honour, was not one of virtue. Though his amiable nature made him gracious in the midst of hostility, and his good dispositions would not allow him to act disgracefully in any concern either of public or of private life, yet duty to God seemed a poet's flight to him. Educated in the forms of religion without knowing its spirit, he despised them, and believed the Deity too wise to be affected by the mummeries of the Romish ritual: ignorant of the sublime benevolence which disdains not to provide food even for the sparrow ere it falls, he thought the Creator of all, too great to care about the actions of men: hence, being without the principles of good, virtue as virtue was nonsense to him.

Wallace did not answer his remark, and the conference was soon closed.

CHAP. IX.

Earl de Valence, though burning with stifled passions, accepted the invitation of Lady Mar. He hoped to see Helen, to gain her ear for a few minutes; and above all, to find some opportunity during the entertainment of taking his meditated revenge on Wallace. The dagger seemed the surest way; and could he render the blow effectual, he should not only destroy the rival of his wishes, but by ridding his monarch of so dreaded a foe, deserve every honour at the royal hands. Love and ambition again swelled his breast; and with recovered spirits, and a glow on his countenance which re-awakened hope had planted there, he accompanied De Warenne to the palace.

The feast was spread in a superb hall, and disposed with all the magnificence of the times. The most costly meats were served up in silver and gold, and wines of the rarest quality in crystal vases, sparkled on the board. Benches covered with highly wrought velvets, surrounded the room; and in a tapestried-hung gallery at the end, sat two choice minstrels to sing the friendship of King Alfred of England with Gregory the Great of Scotland.

De Valence, on entering this grand apartment, (for resentful in his disappointment, he had hitherto refused to accompany De Warenne in his visits to Snawdoun) was surprised to see such regal taste in the woman who had so lately been his prisoner at Dumbarton; and whom, because she resembled an English lady who had once behaved to him with scorn, he had treated with the most rigorous contempt. Lady Mar, forgetting De Valence's indignities in her present power, came forward, habited in cloth of gold, and blazing with jewels, to receive her illustrious guests. De Warenne followed her goddess form, as she moved from him, with his eyes, and whispered De Valence, "What a land is this, where all the women are fair and the men brave!" "I wish that it, and all, were in the flat sea sunk!" returned De Valence in a surly tone. Lady Ruthven entering with a group of lovely young women, the daughters of the neighbouring chieftains, checked the further expression of his spleen; and he now sought amongst them, but sought in vain, for Helen.

The chieftains of the Scottish army, with the Lords Buchan and March, were assembled around the Countess at the moment a shout from the populace without, announced the arrival of the Regent. His noble figure was now disencumbered of armour; and with no more sumptuous garb than the simple plaid of his country, he appeared effulgent in manly beauty and the glory of his recent deeds. De Valence frowned heavily as he looked on him, and thanked his fortunate stars that Helen was absent from sharing the admiration which seemed to animate every breast. The eyes of Lady Mar at once told to the ibertine De Valence, who was well-read in the like expressions, what were her sentiments towards the young Regent; and the blushes and eager civilities of the ladies around, displayed how much they were struck with the now fully-discerned, unequalled graces of his person. Lady Mar forgot all in him. And, indeed, so much did he seem the idol of every heart, that from the two venerable lords of Lochawe and Bothwell, to the youngest man in company, all ears hung on his words, all eyes upon his countenance.

The entertainment was conducted with every regard to feudal precedence, and that chivalric courtesy which a noble conqueror always pays to the vanquished. Indeed from the wit and pleasantry which passed from the opposite side of the tables, and in which the ever gay Murray was the leader, it rather appeared a convivial meeting of friends, than the assembling together of mortal foes. During the banquet, the bards sung legends of the Scottish worthies who had brought honour to their nation in days of old; and as the board was cleared, they struck at once into a full chorus. Wallace caught the sound of his own name, accompanied with epithets of the most extravagant praise; he rose hastily from his chair and motioned them with his hand to cease. They obeyed immediately; but Lady Mar remonstrating with him, he gaily said, that it was an ill omen to sing a warrior's actions till he were incapable of performing any more, and therefore he begged she would excuse him from hearkening to his.

"Then let us change their strains to a dance?" replied the Countess, rising.

"I have no objection;" answered he, and putting the hand she presented to him into that of Lord de Warenne, he added, "I am not of a sufficiently gay temperament to grace the change; but this Earl may not have the same reason for declining so fair a challenge!"

Lady Mar blushed with mortification, for she had thought that Wallace would not venture to refuse before so

## The Scottish Chiefs

many; but following the impulse of De Warenne's arm, she proceeded to the other end of the room, where the younger lords of both countries, by Murray's quick arrangement, had already singled out ladies, and were marshalled for the dance.

As the hours moved on towards midnight, the spirits of Wallace subsided from their usual tone into a sadness which he thought might be noticed; and wishing to escape such observation, (for he could not explain to those gay ones, who had never felt the loneliness of a widowed heart, why scenes like these ever made him sorrowful) and whispering to Mar, that he would go for an hour to visit Montgomery, he withdrew unnoticed by all but his watchful enemy.

De Valence, who had before heard him inquire of Lady Ruthven why Helen was not present; and who hovered uneasily about his steps, was within hearing of this whisper also, and with a satanic joy the dagger shook in his hand. He knew that Wallace had many a solitary place to pass through between Snawdown and the citadel; and the company being too pleasantly absorbed to attend to who entered or disappeared, he took an opportunity, and stole out after him.

But for once the impetuous fury of hatred met a temporary disappointment. While De Valence was cowering, like a thief, under the eaves of the houses, and prowling along the lonely paths to the citadel; while he started at every noise, as if it came to apprehend him for his meditated deed; or rushed forward at the sight of any solitary passenger, whom his eager vengeance almost mistook for Wallace; Wallace himself had taken a different track.

As he walked through the illuminated archways which led from the great hall, he perceived a darkened passage. Hoping by that avenue to get out of the palace unobserved, he immediately struck into it; for he was aware, that should he go the usual way, and the crowd at the gate recognise him, he should not escape their acclamations. He followed this passage for a considerable time, and at last was stopped by a door. It yielded to his hand, and entering whither it led, he found himself at the entrance of a large building. He advanced, and passing a high screen of carved oak, by a dim light which gleamed from the waxen tapers on the altar, he perceived it was the chapel.

"A happy transition," said he to himself, "from the gay scene I have now left, from the grievous scenes I have lately shared! Here, gracious God!" thought he, "may I, unseen by any other eye, pour out my whole soul to thee. And here will I, before thy footstool, declare my thanksgiving for thy mercies; and with my tears wash from my soul the stains of the blood I have been compelled to shed!"

While he yet advanced with a holy composure towards the altar, he was startled by a voice which proceeded from the quarter whither he was going, and with low, and gently breathed fervour, uttered these words: "Defend him, my Heavenly Father! Oh, defend him by day and night from the devices of this wicked man: and above all, during these hours of revelry and confidence guard his unshielded breast from treachery and death." The voice faltered, and added with greater agitation, "Ah, unhappy me, that I should be the cause of danger to the hope of Scotland, and I should pluck peril on the head of William Wallace!" A figure, which had been hidden by the rails of the altar, with these words rose suddenly, and stretching forth her clasped hands, fervently exclaimed, "But thou who knowest I had no blame in this, wilt not afflict me by his danger! Thou wilt deliver him, O God, out of the hand of this cruel foe!"

Wallace was not more astonished at hearing that some one near him was his secret enemy, than at seeing Lady Helen in that place at that hour; and addressing heaven for him. There was something so celestial in the maid as she stood in her white robes, true emblems of her own innocence, before the footstool of God, that although her prayers were delivered with a pathos which told they sprang from a heart more than commonly interested in their object, yet every word and look breathed so eloquently the virgin purity of her soul, the hallowed purpose of her petitions, that Wallace, drawn by the sympathy with which kindred virtues ever attract spirit to spirit, did not hesitate to discover himself. He stepped from the shadow which involved him: the pale light of the tapers shone upon his advancing figure. Helen's eyes fell upon him as she turned round. She was transfixed and silent. He moved forward. "Lady Helen," said he, in a respectful and even tender voice. At the sound, a fearful rushing of shame seemed to overwhelm all her faculties; for she knew not how long he might have been in the church, and that he had not heard her beseech heaven to make him less the object of her thoughts. She sunk on her knees beside the altar, and covered her face with her hands.

The action, the confusion, might have betrayed her secret to Wallace. But he only thought of her pious invocations for his safety; he only remembered that it was she who had given a holy grave to the only woman he

## The Scottish Chiefs

could ever love; and full of gratitude, as a pilgrim would approach a saint, he drew near her. "Holiest of earthly maids," said he, kneeling down beside her, "in this lonely hour, in the sacred presence of almighty purity, receive my soul's thanks for the prayers I have this moment heard you breathe for me! They are more precious to me, Lady Helen, than the generous plaudits of my country; they are a greater reward to me, than would have been the crown, with which Scotland sought to endow me; for, do they not give me what all the world cannot, the protection of Heaven!"

"I would pray for it!" softly answered Helen, but not venturing to look up.

"And the prayers of the virtuous, we know, avail much! what then may I not expect from thine? Continue to offer up that incense for me," added he, "and I shall march forth to-morrow with redoubled strength; for, I shall yet think, holy maid, that I have a Marion to pray for me on earth as well as in heaven!"

Lady Helen's heart beat at these words; but it was with no unhallowed emotion. She withdrew her hands from her face, and clasping them, looked up:—"Marion will indeed echo all my prayers. And He who reads my heart, will, I trust, grant them! They are for your life, Sir William Wallace," added she, turning to him with agitation, "for it is menaced."

"I will inquire by whom," answered he, "when I have first paid my duty at this altar for guarding it so long. And dare I, daughter of goodness, to ask you to unite the voice of your gentle spirit with the secret one of mine? I would beseech Heaven for pardon on my own transgressions; I would ask of its mercy to establish the liberty of Scotland. Pray with me, Lady Helen, and the invocations our souls utter, will meet the promise of him who said, Where two faithful hearts are, there am I in the midst of them!"

Helen looked on him with a holy smile, and pressing the crucifix which she held, to her lips, bowed her head on it in mute assent. Wallace threw himself prostrate on the steps of the altar; and the fervour of his sighs alone, breathed to his companion the deep devotion of his soul. How the time past he knew not; so was he absorbed in the communion, which his spirit held with the sublimest of beings. But the bell of the palace striking the matin hour, reminded him that he was yet on earth; and looking up, his eyes met those of Helen. His devotional cross hung on his arm: He kissed it.—"Wear this, holy maid," said he, "in remembrance of this hour!" She bowed her fair neck, and he put the consecrated chain over it: "Let it bear witness to a friendship," added he, clasping her hands in his, "which will be cemented by eternal ties in heaven!"

Helen bent her face upon his hands: He felt the sacred tears of so pure a compact upon them; and while he looked up, as if he thought the spirit of his Marion hovered near to bless a communion so remote from all infringement of the dedicated sentiment he had vowed ever to maintain for her. Helen raised her head—and with a terrible shriek, throwing her arms around the body of Wallace, he that moment felt the assassin's steel in his back, and she fell senseless on his breast. He started on his feet, and a dagger fell from his garments to the ground, but the hand which had struck the blow he could no where see. To search further, he could not then, for Helen lay on his bosom like one dead. Not doubting that she had seen his assailant, and so had fainted, he was laying her on the steps of the altar that he might bring some water from the bason of the chapel to recover her, when he saw that her arm was not only stained with his blood, but streamed with her own. The dagger had pierced through it in reaching him.

"Execrable villain!" cried he, turning cold at the sight; and instantly comprehending that it was to defend him she had thrown her arms around him, he exclaimed in a voice of agony, "are two of the most matchless women the earth ever saw, to die for me!" Trembling with terror and with renewed grief, for the terrible scene of Ellerslie was now brought in all its horrors before him, he tore off her veil to staunch the blood; but the wound was too deep for his surgery; and insensible as she was, losing every other consideration in fears for her life, he took her up in his arms, and carried her out of the chapel. He hastened through the dark passage, and almost flying along the lighted galleries, entered the grand hall. The noise of the servants, as he broke through the pressing ranks at the door, alarmed the revellers, and turning round, what was their astonishment to behold the Regent pale and bloody, bearing in his arms a lady apparently lifeless, and covered with the same ensanguined tide!

Mar instantly recognised his daughter, and rushed towards the bleeding group with a cry of horror. Wallace sunk with his breathless load upon the nearest bench, and while her head rested on his bosom, ordered that assistance should be brought. Lady Mar gazed on the spectacle before her with a benumbed dismay. None present durst ask a question, till a priest coming in, unbound the arm of Helen, and discovered the deep wound from which the blood now gushed afresh, streaming over its polished surface, and dripping on the hands which held

## The Scottish Chiefs

her.

"Who has done this?" cried Mar, turning to Wallace, with all the anguish of a father in his countenance.

"I know not;" replied he, "but I believe some villain who aimed at my life."

"Where is Lord de Valence?" exclaimed Mar, suddenly recollecting his menaces against Wallace.

"I am here:" replied he, in a composed voice; "would you have me seek for the assassin?"

"No, no;" cried the Earl, ashamed of his suspicion; "but here has been some foul work,—and my daughter is slain."

"Oh, not so!" cried Murray, who, from her first appearance had hurried towards her, and knelt at her side; "she will not die—so much excellence cannot die." A stifled groan from Wallace, accompanied by a look, told Murray that he had known the loss of similar excellence; and with this unanswerable appeal, the young chieftain dropped his head on the other hand of Helen; and could any one have seen his face, buried as it was in her robes, they would have beheld tears of agony drawn from that ever gay heart.

The wound was closed after a few minutes, and Helen sighed convulsively. At this intimation of recovery, the priest made all, excepting those who supported her, stand back. But as Lady Mar, reluctant to withdraw, lingered near Wallace, she saw the paleness of his countenance turn of a more deadly hue, and the next moment, his eyes closing, without a gasp he sunk lifeless on the couch. Her shrieks now resounded through the hall, and falling into violent hysterics, she was taken into the anti-room, while the more collected Lady Ruthven remained, to attend to the two victims before her.

Lord de Valence, at the instant Wallace fell, losing all self-command, caught hold of De Warenne's arm, and whispering, "I thought it was sure;—Long live King Edward!" rushed out of the hall. These words revealed to De Warenne who was the assassin; and though struck to the soul with the turpitude of the deed, he thought the honour of England would not allow him to accuse the perpetrator, and he remained silent.

The inanimate body of Wallace was now drawn from under that of Helen; and in the act, another priest who had arrived, discovered the draperies of the couch clotted with blood, and that the chieftain's back was also bathed in the same vital stream. Having found his wound, the priests laid him on the ground, and were pouring in their balsams when Helen opened her eyes. Her mind was too strongly possessed with the horror which had entered it before she became insensible, to lose the consciousness of her fears, and immediately looking around her with an aghast countenance, her sight met the outstretched body of Wallace. "Oh! is it so?" cried she, throwing herself into the bosom of her father. He understood what she meant:—"He lives, my child! but he is wounded like yourself. Have courage; revive for his sake, and for mine!"

"Helen! Helen! dear Helen!" cried Murray, clinging to her hand, "while you live, what that loves you can die!"

While these acclamations surrounded her couch, Edwin, in wordless apprehension supported the insensible head of Wallace; and De Warenne, inwardly execrating the perfidy of De Valence, knelt beside him, and bathed his temples.

A few minutes longer, and the staunch blood refluxing to the chieftain's heart, he too opened his eyes, and instantly starting on his arm—"What has happened to me?" demanded he, "where is Lady Helen?"

At his voice, which aroused Helen, who, believing that he was indeed dead, was relapsing into her former state, she could only press her father's hand to her lips, as if he had given the life she so valued, and bursting into a shower of relieving tears, breathed out her rapturous thanks to God. Her low murmurs reached the ears of Wallace, and looking round to Edwin, whose colourless cheek told the depth of his fears; "We both live:" said he, "your cousin speaks; and it restores me to hear her voice once more. Let me pour out my gratitude to my sweet preserver."

The dimness having left his eyes; and the blood (the extreme loss of which had alone caused him to swoon) being stopped by an embalmed bandage, he felt no further inconvenience from his wound; and rising, proceeded with Edwin to the side of Helen. Lord Mar softly whispered his daughter: "Sir William Wallace is at your feet, my dearest child; look on him, and tell him that you will live."

"I am well, my father," returned she, in a faltering voice, "and O! may it indeed please the Almighty to preserve him!"

"I am alive and well:" answered Wallace, "but thanks to God and to you that I am so! Had not that lovely arm received the greater part of the dagger, it must have reached my heart."

An exclamation of horror at what might have been, burst from the lips of Edwin. Helen could have re-echoed

## The Scottish Chiefs

it, but she now held her feelings under too severe a rein, to allow them to speak.

"Thanks to the guardian of the just," cried she, "that it happened so! for when I raised my eyes, I saw the assassin with his gown so held before his face, that I could not discern who he was; but the dagger was aimed at the back of Sir William Wallace; how I caught it, I cannot tell, for I seemed to die on the instant."

Lady Mar, having recovered, re-entered the hall just as Wallace had knelt down beside Helen. Inflamed with jealousy, and maddened with the sight of the man on whom her soul doted, in such a position before her rival, she advanced hastily, and in a voice which she vainly attempted to render composed and gentle, sternly said, "Alarmed as I have been by your apparent danger, I cannot but be uneasy at the attendant circumstances: Tell me, therefore, and satisfy this good company, how it happened that you should be with the Regent, when I supposed you were an invalid in your own room, and that he was gone to the citadel?"

A crimson blush overspread the cheeks of Helen at this question; for it was delivered in a tone which insinuated that something more than accident had occasioned their meeting: but, as innocence dictated, she answered;—"I was in the chapel at prayers—Sir William Wallace entered with the same design; and at the moment he desired me to mingle mine with his, this assassin appeared. I saw his dagger raised against our protector, and I saw no more."

There was not a heart present that did not give credence to this account, but the polluted one of Lady Mar. She smiled incredulously, and turning to the company, said, "Our noble friends will accept my apology, if in so delicate an investigation, I should beg that my family may be left alone."

Wallace, who perceived the tendency of her words, and doubting the impression they might make on the minds of men ignorant of the virtues of Lady Helen, hastily rose. "For once," cried he, "I must counteract a lady's orders. It is my wish, lords, that you will not leave this place till I explain how I came to disturb the devotions of Lady Helen. Wearied with the scene, the festivities of which my alienated heart can so little share, I thought to pass an hour with Lord Montgomery in the citadel; and in seeking to avoid the crowded avenues of the palace, I entered the chapel. To my surprise I found Lady Helen there. I heard her pray for the happiness of Scotland, and the safety of her defenders; and my mind being in the frame to join in such petitions, I apologized for my unintentional intrusion, and begged permission to mingle my devotions with hers. Nay, impressed with the sacredness of the place in which we both stood, I presumed still further, and before the altar of the God of purity, poured forth my gratitude to her for the duties she had paid to the remains of my murdered wife. It was at this moment, while clasping the sweet saint's hands in mine, that the assassin appeared. I heard Lady Helen scream; I felt her fall senseless on my breast, and at that instant the dagger entered my back.

"This is the history of our meeting: and the assassin, whomever he may be, and how long soever he was in the church before he sought to perpetrate the nefarious deed, were he to speak, and capable of uttering the truth, could declare no other."

"But where is he to be found?" intemperately demanded Lady Mar.

"If his testimony be necessary to validate my words," returned Wallace with calm dignity, "I believe Lady Helen can name him."

"Name him, Helen, name him, my best cousin;" cried Murray, "that I may at least have some link with thee, O! let me avenge this deed! Tell me his name, and so yield me all that thou canst now bestow on Andrew Murray!"

There was something in the tone of Murray's voice that penetrated to the heart of Helen. "I cannot name him whom I suspect, to any but Sir William Wallace. And I would not do it to him," replied she, "were it not to warn him against future danger. I did not see the assassin's face; therefore how can I dare to set you to take vengeance on one who perchance may be innocent?—I forgive him my blood, since Heaven has spared to Scotland its protector's."

"If he be a Southron," cried Baron Hilton, coming forward, "name him, gracious lady; and I will answer for it, that were he the son of the king, he should meet death from our monarch, for this unknighly outrage."

"I thank your zeal, brave chieftain;" replied she, "but I would not abandon to certain death even the wicked man. May he repent!—I will name him to Sir William Wallace alone; and then trusting in God, I should hope that when he knows his secret enemy, he will guard against him and his emissaries. Meanwhile, my father, I would withdraw." Then whispering something to him, she was lifted in his arms and Murray's, to be carried to her chamber.

As she moved away, she cast her eyes on Wallace. He rose, and would have spoken, but she waved her hand to

## The Scottish Chiefs

him with an expression in her countenance of an adieu so heroic, yet so tender, that feeling as if he were parting with a beloved sister who had just risked her life for him, and whom he might never see again, he uttered not a word; but turning another way, left the hall by an opposite door.

CHAP. X.

Day-break gleamed over the sky, before the wondering spectators of the late extraordinary scene had dispersed to their different quarters.

De Warenne was so well convinced, by what had dropped from De Valence, of his having been the assassin, that when they met at sun-rise to take horse for the borders, he said nothing more to him than that he "Was surprised not to find him under an arrest for the last night's work."

"The wily Scot knew better," replied De Valence, "than so to expose the reputation of the lady. He knew that she received the wound in his arms; and he durst not seize me, for fear I should proclaim it."

"He cannot fear that," replied De Warenne, "for he has proclaimed that himself. He has told every particular of his meeting with Lady Helen in the chapel, of her sheltering him with her arms; and so there is nothing for you now to declare, but your own infamy. For infamous I must call it, Lord Aymer; and nothing but the respect I have for my country, prevents me pointing the eyes of the indignant Scots to you; nothing but the stigma your exposure would bring upon the English name, could make me pass over the deed."

De Valence laughed heartily at this speech of De Warenne's. "Why, my Lord Warden," said he, "have you been taking private lessons of heroics from this doughty Scot, that you talk thus? It was not with these sentiments that you overthrew the princes of Wales, and made the petty kings of Ireland fly before you! You would tell another story were your own interest in question; and I can tell you that my vengeance is not satisfied. I will yet see the brightness of those eyes, on which the proud daughter of Mar hangs so fondly, extinguished in death. Her voice shall not arouse that now ready ear;—those glittering locks shall be strewn in the dust!—Maid or wife, Helen shall be torn from his arms; and if I cannot make her a virgin bride, she shall at least be mine as his widow,—for I swear not to be disappointed!"

"For shame, De Valence! I should blush to owe my courage to rivalry, or my perseverance in the field to a passion for a woman!"

"Every man according to his constitution," returned De Valence, and shrugging his shoulders, he mounted his horse

The cavalcade of Southrons now appeared. They were met on the plain before Stirling by the Regent, who, quite recovered from any ill effects of his wound, advanced, at the head of ten thousand men, to escort his prisoners to the borders. Lord Mar, by Helen's desire, had informed Wallace what had been the threats of De Valence, and that she suspected him to be the assassin. But this suspicion was put beyond a doubt by the evidence of the dagger, which Edwin sought, and found in the chapel: It bore the martlets on its hilt, which are the arms of De Valence.

At sight of it, a general indignation filled the Scottish chiefs; and assembling round their Regent, with one breath they demanded that the false Earl should be detained, and punished as became the honour of nations, for so execrable a breach of all laws, human and divine. Wallace replied, that he believed the attack to have been instigated by a personal motive; and, therefore, as he alone was the object, not the state of Scotland, he should merely acquaint the Earl that his villainy was known; and let the shame of disgrace be his punishment.

"Ah!" observed Lord Bothwell, "men who trample on conscience, soon get over shame."

"That is true," replied Wallace, "but I suit my actions to my own mind, not to my enemy's. And if he cannot feel dishonour, I will not so far disparage myself as to think so worthless a creature deserving my resentment."

While he was quieting the re-awakened indignation of his nobles, whose blood began to boil afresh at sight of their Regent's enemy, the Southron lords, conducted by Lord Mar, approached. When that nobleman drew near, Wallace's first inquiry was for Lady Helen. The Earl informed him that he had received intelligence of her having slept without fever, and that she was not awake when the messenger came off with his good tidings. That all was then likely to be well with her, was great comfort to Wallace; and, with an unruffled brow, riding up to the squadron of Southrons, which was headed by De Warenne and De Valence, he immediately approached the latter, and drawing out the dagger, held it towards him: "The next time, Lord de Valence," said he, "that you draw this dagger, let it be with a more honourable aim than assassination!"

De Valence, surprised, took it in confusion and without a word; but his countenance told the state of his mind.



## The Scottish Chiefs

He was humbled by the man he hated; and while a sense of the disgrace he had incurred, tore his proud soul, he had not dignity enough to acknowledge the generosity of his enemy in again giving him that life which his treachery had forfeited; but taking the dagger, he wreaked the boiling vengeance of his malice upon the senseless steel, and breaking it asunder, threw the pieces into the air, and turning from Wallace with an affected disdain, said to the shivered weapon, "You shall not betray me again!"

"Nor you betray our honours, Lord de Valence;" exclaimed Earl de Warenne, "and, therefore, though the nobleness of Sir William Wallace is so great as to leave you at large after this outrage on his person, we will at least assert our innocence of any connivance with the deed; and, as your commanding officer, I order you under an arrest, and to be kept under a strong guard till we pass the Scottish lines."

"'Tis well," cried Baron Hilton, "that such is your determination, my lord; else no honest man could have continued in the same company with one who has so tarnished the English name."

De Valence, with an ironical smile, looked towards the squadron which approached to obey De Warenne, and said, "Though it be dishonour to you to march with me out of Scotland, the proudest of you all will deem it honour to be allowed to return with me hither. I have an eye on those who stand with cap in hand to rebellion. And for you, Sir William Wallace," added he, turning to him, as he was reining in his steed, which had been made to plunge by one of the fragments of the dagger, as they fell, sticking its neck; "I hold no terms with a rebel; and deem all honour that would rid my sovereign and the earth of such low-born arrogance."

Before Wallace could answer, he saw De Valence struck from his horse by the Lochaber-axe of Edwin. Indignant at the insult offered his beloved commander, he had suddenly raised his arm, and aiming a blow with all his strength, the Earl was immediately stunned, and precipitated to the ground. Seeing him down, he jumped on his breast, and striking him across the head with the flat part of his sword, exclaimed in a voice of detestation, "Wretch! were I like yourself, I would now take your worthless life;—but let us meet in the field, and we part no more till I have rid the world of such a lawless ingrate!"

At sight of the fall of the Southron chieftain, the Scottish troops, aware of there being some misunderstanding between the Regent and the English lords, uttered a shout. Wallace, on the instant, to prevent accidents, sent to the lines to appease the tumult; and immediately throwing himself off his horse, hastened to the prostrate Earl. A fearful pause reigned throughout the whole of the Southrons. They did not know but that every enraged Scot would now fall on them, and that in spite of the Regent, they might all be exterminated on the spot.—The troops were already running forward, when Wallace's messengers arrived and checked them; and himself calling to Edwin, stopped his farther chastisement of the recovering Earl.

"Edwin, you have done wrong," cried he, as he approached him; "give me that sword which you have sullied by raising it against a prisoner totally in our power."

Edwin, with a vivid blush, resigned the weapon to his general; yet, with his foot still on the breast of De Valence, he said, "But have you not granted life twice to this prisoner? and has he not in return, raised his hand against your life and Lady Helen? You pardon him again!—And in the moment of your clemency, he insults the Lord Regent of Scotland in the face of both nations!—I could not hear him and live, without making him feel that you have those about you who will not forgive such crimes."

"Edwin," returned Wallace, "had not the Lord Regent full power to punish? And if he sees right to hold his hand back from taking vengeance, those who do it for him, invade his dignity.—I should be unworthy the honour of protecting a brave nation, should I stoop to tread on every reptile that stings me in my path.—Leave Lord de Valence to the sentence his commander has pronounced. And, as an expiation for your having offended military and moral law this day, you must remain at Stirling till I return into Scotland."

De Valence, hardly awake from the stupor which the blow of the battle-axe had occasioned, (for indignation had given to the young warrior the strength of manhood) was raised from the ground; and soon after, coming completely to himself, and being made sensible of what had happened, he was taken, foaming with rage and mortification, into the center of the Southron lines.

Lord Montgomery, alarmed at the confusion he saw from the distance of the rear, ordered his litter round to the front; and hearing all that had passed, he joined with De Warenne in pleading for the abashed Edwin.

"His youth and zeal," cried Montgomery, "are sufficient to excuse the intemperance of the deed."

"No!" interrupted Edwin, "I have offended, and I will expiate. Only my honoured lord," said he, approaching Wallace, while he checked the emotion which would have flowed from his eyes; "when I am absent, sometimes

## The Scottish Chiefs

remember that it was your Edwin's love which hurried him into this disgrace!"

"My dear Edwin," returned Wallace, "there are many impetuous spirits in Scotland, who need the lesson I now enforce upon you; and they will be brought to maintain the law of honour, when they see that their Regent spares not its slightest violation, even when done by his best beloved friend.—Farewel till we meet again!"

Edwin kissed Wallace's hand in silence; it was now wet with his tears; and drawing his helmet hastily over his eyes, he retired into the rear of Lord Mar's party. That nobleman soon after took leave of the Regent, who, placing himself at the head of his legions, the trumpets blew the signal of march. Edwin, at the sound, which a few minutes before he would have greeted with so much joy, felt his grief—swoln heart give way; he sobbed aloud, and galloped to a distance to hide from all eyes the violence of his regrets. The trampling of many horses rolled over the ground like departing thunder. Edwin at last stole a look towards the plain; he beheld a vast cloud of dust, but no more saw the squadrons of his friend.

CHAP. XI.

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 alone remained of the castle of Lammington. The scathing of fire embrowned its sides, and the uprooted garden marked where the ravager 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

## The Scottish Chiefs

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 expect 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 watch-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 tracks 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

## The Scottish Chiefs

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 an other 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. "Farewel, gallant Scot;" said he, "if ought could imbitter this moment of recovered freedom, it is, that I leave a man I so revere, still confident in a finally 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 farewel."

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 affecter of regal power. At his approach, Wallace alighted 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, 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

## The Scottish Chiefs

army of great strength had formed behind his camp, and were 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 other 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, compleated 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. XII.

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 expence 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 perishing 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

## The Scottish Chiefs

wardship of Douglas to Sir John Monteith, and himself advance into Annandale to assist Sir Roger Kirkpatrick, who must now have begun 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 hyperbolic 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 reprisal in what I do, and that 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 scantier 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 merchandize of half the world, than the



## The Scottish Chiefs

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, creeked 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 preserver. 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. XIII.

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 ambassadors 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 ambassadors 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 De Lisle.

"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 chieftain," 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,

## The Scottish Chiefs

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 entrusted 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 embassy. 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 irresistible; "keep it with truer faith than did the traitor Baliol; 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

## The Scottish Chiefs

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 waited 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. Farewel, 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 chieftain 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 inviolable; 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 soldier, 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 bestow."

"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!"

## The Scottish Chiefs

"You speak either as a courtier or a traitor!" suddenly 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 conference, 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 rebellion; and, when the puissance of his royal arm lays this kingdom at his feet, the virtues of Sir William Wallace 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 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 he 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 Snawdown 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 step-mother,) 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

## The Scottish Chiefs

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 reveres 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 Edwin! 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 appeared. 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 William 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 governor of Stirling's lady lived 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 condescended 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."

## The Scottish Chiefs

"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 colored 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.

"Farewel, 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 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-Erith 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 every where 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

## The Scottish Chiefs

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. XIV.

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 prophecied 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 scaithing 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."

The like discourse held the friends, till landing at Roseyth castle; they lodged there for the night; and setting off next morning by day-break, crossed the Lomonds 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, begging 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 acclamations 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 sympathetic 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 sacrifice; 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 destruction 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 redoubled 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 Scottish Chiefs

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 every where 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, twelvemonths ago, alone with his Marion! They sat together in the window of the western tower of Ellerslie; and while he listened to the cheerful lilts 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 were 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 were 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 tranquilize 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

## The Scottish Chiefs

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 gaiety 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 acknowledged, that there are more things in heaven and earth than are dreamt of in philosophy.

The morning dawned before the tranquilized, 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,

## The Scottish Chiefs

"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-Urhardt 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 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."

CHAP. XV.

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 embassy.

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 plenitude 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 entrusted 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 warhorse 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 ambassadors 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 foresaw 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 negotiator for an honourable peace.

To prevent this last injury, Wallace dispatched a quick-sailing vessel with Sir Alexander Ramsay, 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

## The Scottish Chiefs

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 Stirling; and Wallace had the satisfaction of seeing himself at the head of thirty thousand well-appointed men, all eager for the fight. On the very evening of his arrival at Bothwell, (for he would not delay an hour) he set forth through a country now budding 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 Sir Eustace Maxwell with great loss, into Carlavorock; had taken several minor forts; and though harassed by Kirkpatrick, (who sent this dispatch) 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 followers;—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 amounting to idolatry.

The day dawned upon Wallace as he crossed the heights over Drumlanrig; and pouring down his thousands 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 Torthorald 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

## The Scottish Chiefs

marched into Cumberland; and having drawn up his array between a river, and a high ground which he covered with archers, 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, 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 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 Douglas, 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 creature to say this was a kingdom. Depart, this is my answer to you; your leader shall receive his at the point of my lance."

Wallace, who did not expect a more temperate reply, had already arranged his men for the onset. Lord Bothwell, and Murray his valiant son, took the lead on the left wing; Sir Eustace Maxwell and Kirkpatrick commanded on the right.—Graham held the reserve behind the woods; and the Regent himself, with Edwin and his brave standard-bearer, occupied the centre. On the return of his ambassadors, he repeated to his troops the message they brought: and while he stood at the head of the lines, he exhorted them to remember that no 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 battle; and in proportion to the danger they confronted, the greater would be their mede 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



## The Scottish Chiefs

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 opponent, was too good a general really to condemn any enemy who had so often proved himself worthy of respect; and, therefore, when he placed himself in the van 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 declaring 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 ingulph 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 Edward, 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.

## CHAP. XVI.

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 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 Badenoch, "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, rushed 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!" returned Edwin. "These dispatches," added he, laying them on the table before his uncle, who stood in speechless 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 heaven 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 disgrace your royal blood."

The younger chieftains crowded round to congratulate Edwin, and to ask him many questions. Lord Mar opened the dispatches, and finding a circumstantial narrative of the battle, with accounts of the previous embassies, he read them aloud. Their contents excited a variety of emotions. When the nobles heard that Edward had offered Wallace the crown; when they found that he had, by vanquishing that powerful monarch, subdued even the soul of the man who had hitherto 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 restrain or to elevate, that an envy, dark as Erebus; a jealousy which at once annihilated every grateful sentiment, 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 dæmon 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 Scotland, rode forth to proclaim to the country the decisive victory of its Regent, Badenoch and Loch-awe hastened to carry the tidings to Snawdoun. The rest of the chiefs dispersed. But,

## The Scottish Chiefs

as if actuated by one spirit, they soon drew 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 birth-right 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 upset 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 Cospatrik "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 instead 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 woman, 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 Snawdown 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 ambassadors. "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 splendour 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 lamentations, excusable in a girl of sixteen; and she loved her for her beauty and gaiety 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 illicit 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 dereliction 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 gaiety, and assuming a high demeanour, which she thought more becoming her royal descent, she resided several years. Gratified by the

## The Scottish Chiefs

admiration which such gravity in one so young, called forth, she changed her ambition for 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 her 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. XVII.

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 caparisoned 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 palfreys, 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 Southron 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 precious 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 distant 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 squadrons thundered over the ground. At this instant every bell in the city began its peals;—and the door of Helen'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, attempted 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 off 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 buz 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

## The Scottish Chiefs

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 Regent, 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," answered 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 dæmon 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 immovable 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



## The Scottish Chiefs

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 overheard 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.

## CHAP. XVIII.

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 Fingal, 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 Wallace, "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

## The Scottish Chiefs

Wallace, he no longer thought of the distant and supine Bruce, but centred 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 strait 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 negociation. He knew that that nobleman would gladly welcome the recal 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, unsuspecting 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 Snawdown, 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

## The Scottish Chiefs

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 step—mother. 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 uninterruptedly 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 entrust 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 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

## The Scottish Chiefs

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 antient 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 god-like 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 honour. 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 chamber 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 blest the arms of Scotland!" With a beating heart she bowed her head without looking up; and Wallace left the room.

END OF THE THIRD VOLUME.

The Scottish Chiefs

**VOL. IV.**

CHAP. I.

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 heathfowl 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 tomorrow; 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

## The Scottish Chiefs

persuaded you to embrace his pernicious treason. You deny it:— That is 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 swordbearer. 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 Southron 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-pee, 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



## The Scottish Chiefs

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 his 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 cause 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 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 Southrons 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,

## The Scottish Chiefs

and a censor from himself, had given orders to his emissaries; and on the moment when the trumpet of Wallace sounded the charge, and 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 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 immoveable 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, descriing 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 assailing 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 moment 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

## The Scottish Chiefs

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 reality 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 inclosure 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 hazles and weeping birch, he blew the Campbell pibroch: the notes reverberated 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 descried 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 Scottish Chiefs

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, inflamed with a vehement indignation he did not attempt to repress; "would thus answer Bruce, not only in reference 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 posterity 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 Lochawe, have fallen beneath the Southron sword and your unnatural arm; and yet do you demand what Scot would dare 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 declamation? I know the motive of all this pretended patriotism. —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 followers 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 before 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 honored 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 will 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

## The Scottish Chiefs

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 garrison; and the miserable inhabitants pillaged, murdered, 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 shelter the mother and the child, to rescue purity from violation, 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 champion of Scotland, Lord of Carrick, blame not my ambition, but rather the supineness of the nobility, and chiefly yourself:—You, who uniting personal merit 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 pusillanimity of those who contend with Edward?) by your valour and their union, you must have surmounted every difficulty 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 surround 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 patriot 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 acknowledge you for their lord, to reign as did your forefathers, untrammelled 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.

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,

## The Scottish Chiefs

"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 dishonours 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 hacqueton 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 crosier, 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 sword 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 neighbouring convents, altogether making a stout and well-appointed legion.

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

Lord Mar and Lord Lennox 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

## The Scottish Chiefs

in again meeting the foe that has thus bereaved me. This dark mantle," cried he, turning towards the breathless corse, 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. II.

The troops of King Edward lay overpowered with wine. Elated with victory, they had drunk 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 warlike 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



## The Scottish Chiefs

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 re-commenced 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

## The Scottish Chiefs

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

## The Scottish Chiefs

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, stretched 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 stedfastly 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 Jesu's help, Lady Helen shall again be in her own country as free

## The Scottish Chiefs

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, and 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 recal 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

## The Scottish Chiefs

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. III.

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 manque potens, et Walli fidus A chates, Conditus hic Gramus, bello interfectus ab Anglis."

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."

## The Scottish Chiefs

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 Badenoch 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 hand, 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 Macdougall 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 perished 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 officer, and withhold from me the papers sent by king Philip to the Regent

## The Scottish Chiefs

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; "you 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 Macdougall, 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 courtyard," 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



## The Scottish Chiefs

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, being soon 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 chose 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 partizans 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 ravager; 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

## The Scottish Chiefs

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, Lochawe, 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. IV.

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 impels 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

## The Scottish Chiefs

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 developement 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

## The Scottish Chiefs

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 his 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 chuse 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 countrymen."

Finding him not 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

## The Scottish Chiefs

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 admonitions 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 centred 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!"

## The Scottish Chiefs

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.

## CHAP. V.

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 hindrance, 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 cassoc; 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



## The Scottish Chiefs

husband—man to his rural toil, and spread the thymy 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 Tweedale 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 behind. 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 banquetting 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 bystanders, 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. 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 of Bruce, by the arms on his coat, gladly saw him drawing towards him. He came to invite the stranger minstrel to

## The Scottish Chiefs

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 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 stair-case, 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 unfeared 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 Cuthullin rolled over the sounding strings: but Bruce heard as

## The Scottish Chiefs

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 vesper-bell 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 Scotland 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 refrained 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 conduct; and then proceeded to animadvert on the characters of the Cummins. He told Wallace that he had met the two sons of the

## The Scottish Chiefs

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 believe, 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 confinement; and to them I may date the premature death of my dear father."

The start of Wallace declared his shock at this information. "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 villany 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 assailed 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 division."

Bruce now proceeded to narrate to Wallace the particulars 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."

"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 Scottish Chiefs

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 artifice!—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 embroe 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 ingrate 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

## The Scottish Chiefs

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 ensure 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 sometime 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 into 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." Bruce perceived the mistake of his servants; and explaining to them that a travelling minstrel had obliged

## The Scottish Chiefs

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. VI.

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 cassoc 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 discoursed 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 northern minstrel, the king's seneschal had at last discovered that he was in the Keep with him. 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 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, give 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

## The Scottish Chiefs

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 diapason 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 determining 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 half an 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

## The Scottish Chiefs

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 and 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 father'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. VII.

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 handkerchief. 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 in 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 seaport, 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

## The Scottish Chiefs

wishes to the queen which are of a nature to ensure 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 Abbey. 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 life time. 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

## The Scottish Chiefs

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 practise: 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 step-mother, 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 heartaches 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.—Gentle 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 court-yard; 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

## The Scottish Chiefs

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 Monthermer, 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 dismissal."

"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."

## The Scottish Chiefs

"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 betrayer!" half-exclaimed Gloucester, turning disappointed away; "O! what it is to be vile, and to trust the vile!—But virtue will not be auxiliary to vice—and so wickedness falls by its own agents!"

The baroness, being raised from her kneeling position by Soulis, began:

"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 traitress!" 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 Castile!' 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 gaiety, 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 descried 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, whither 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 strait 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 Fincklay. 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. Farewel!"

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 Fincklay extremity of the vault.

## CHAP. VIII.

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 assure Edward King of England, upon the word of a knight, that Margaret Queen of England, is in every respect guiltless of the crimes alledged 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 Bruce, (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,

## The Scottish Chiefs

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 livid 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 a lighted,) 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 pallet. 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!

## The Scottish Chiefs

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 new-comer 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 others 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 Baliol: 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!"

## The Scottish Chiefs

"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 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 ingrate 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 before 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

## The Scottish Chiefs

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 revived. 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!"

## CHAP. IX.

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 curtsyed 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.

"Robert Bruce, Earl of Cleaveland, Carrick, and 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

## The Scottish Chiefs

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 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 repressed, 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 minstrel. "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 ground. 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, bravery 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 wanton 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



## The Scottish Chiefs

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 aught 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 magnanimous forgetfulness of

## The Scottish Chiefs

his own safety to ensure 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 Gloucester, 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,

## The Scottish Chiefs

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 smiled, 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 await Robert King of Scots!" "You almost persuade me," returned Bruce. "But let us see Philip and then I will 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

## The Scottish Chiefs

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 host, 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 expended. "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!"

## The Scottish Chiefs

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.

## CHAP. X.

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 lillied 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 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 recal 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 chuse 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

## The Scottish Chiefs

possible. De Valence supposed that this taciturnity was connected with his vow, and did not further remark it: but Bruce (who at Gaen 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 signiory of Valence in Dauphiny; he, in short, after much circumlocution, gave them to understand, 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 abhorrence 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 a 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 met 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 blushing 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 "Farewel, 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 blessing on its consummation, she rose strengthened; and obeying Wallace, the moment she was equipped she laid her hand upon the latch, but the



## The Scottish Chiefs

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 Valence, 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

## The Scottish Chiefs

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 abundance. 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. XI.

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 Crimsby, "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 chuse 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 prowling, 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 publickly 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

## The Scottish Chiefs

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 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, perished 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

## The Scottish Chiefs

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.

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 she 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 overtaking 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 uprise 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

## The Scottish Chiefs

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 ensure 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 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 Ellerslie 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 Flanders. There he was recognised and brought to judgment, 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 representation of the Earl of Lincoln, his punishment was mitigated from death to the infliction of a certain number of lashes. This sentence, which the honest soldier regarded as worse than the loss of life, was executed. On stripping 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 inconsistent 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

## The Scottish Chiefs

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 virtuous 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 super-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

## The Scottish Chiefs

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. Oh! 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. XII.

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 ardor 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 car, 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

## The Scottish Chiefs

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 apostrophized his friend, Wallace and Helen advanced towards him. Bruce held out his hand to her with a cordial smile, "Lady Helen, we are still to be the same! Robes of no kind are ever to separate the affections born 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 perfectly 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 rejoice 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 solitary, and near Helen Mar?" "Perhaps more so then, than at any other time, for her beauties, her excellencies, remind me of what were once mine, and recal every 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 beings, 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

## The Scottish Chiefs

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 throbbings; 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 Philio.

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

## The Scottish Chiefs

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. XIII.

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 gaiety 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 undisputed; 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, straining Wallace to his heart, reproached him in affectionate 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 resentments 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 ambassadors 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 declaring his determination to consolidate Great Britain into one kingdom, or to make the northern part, one universal grave. 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

## The Scottish Chiefs

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 ultimately 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 defending the citadel. Many other places fell; and battles were fought in which the English were every where victorious: "For," added Edwin, "none of your generals would draw a sword under the command of Badenoch; and alarmed at the consequence, the Bishop of Dunkeld is gone to Rome to entreat the Pope to order 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 anointed 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 narrated these disastrous events, and enforced every argument 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 Wallace felt in his newborn 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

## The Scottish Chiefs

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.

## CHAP. XIV.

The eighth morning from the day in which the Red Reaver's ship was relaunched 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 congratulations 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 Low lands; 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 Tweeddale, 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 Roslyn. 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



## The Scottish Chiefs

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.

END OF THE FOURTH VOLUME.

The Scottish Chiefs

**VOL. V.**

CHAP. I.

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 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 mountains, 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, rolled 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 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

## The Scottish Chiefs

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 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, whoever this knight might be, Bruce yet remained undiscovered; "I grant your request.—This brave youth, whose name I share, forgives 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 any thing 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 re-trace 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.

## The Scottish Chiefs

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 the 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, on 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 re-connoitering 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

## The Scottish Chiefs

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, were 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 signal to Ruthven. —That nobleman immediately pointed 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 freemen 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 concealment, finished his career and threw him a breathless corse amongst the plunging feet of his dismayed squadrons. As the ambuscade of Ramsay poured from his caves, the earth seemed teeming with mailed warriors; and the Southrons seeing the surrounding heights and the green defiles filled with the same terrific appearances, gave way on all sides, and almost believing 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 precipitation 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, example 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 in that part of their line, and fighting man to man, would have taken Neville also, had not a follower of that nobleman, wielding a ponderous 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

## The Scottish Chiefs

unencumbered, spread the confusion, and by exposing themselves panic-struck 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 into 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. II.

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 fallen 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 craigs, 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 Scotsman'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, re-appeared 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



## The Scottish Chiefs

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 the unctions he applied. And Bruce himself, as he lay under the healing ministrations, 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 begun 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 rivetted 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

## The Scottish Chiefs

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 rood 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 succours to Berwick, he would find it necessary to begin the conquest of the kingdom anew.

CHAP. III.

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 vigor; 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. The now re-assured Isabella, rejoicing in the glad beams of his brightening eyes, held the standish. As he dipped his pen, he looked up at her with smiles and a grateful tenderness that thrilled to her soul, and made her bend her blushing face to hide emotions which whispered bliss in every beat of her happy heart. 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

## The Scottish Chiefs

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 am 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 transport 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 shewed 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 appalled 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 endurance of her passion aroused her almost drooping hopes; and 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 determined 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 Scottish Chiefs

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 neither the actions nor the words of Lady Mar bore witness that she deserved this appellation. They were the dictates of a passion as impure as it was intemperate. 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 stedfastly 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 alledged 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 herself, and yet maddened that that other

## The Scottish Chiefs

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. IV.

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 dispatches 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 confidant 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 Kinfouns. Lady Helen sits by me on one side, Isabella on the other. Isabella smiles on me like a Hourii. 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 intelligence 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

## The Scottish Chiefs

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 in his stead 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 Badenoch, 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



## The Scottish Chiefs

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 Thaness, 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 the abthanes

## The Scottish Chiefs

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 marvelling at such a panoply of war being called out to induce 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 injunctions 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 better 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 bonnetted 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

## The Scottish Chiefs

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 ground-work 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 beyond 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, "to 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

## The Scottish Chiefs

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 splendor 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 her 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 nuptial 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 an 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

## The Scottish Chiefs

to be happy. His friend, the only confidant 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 reappeared." "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 developement of the treasons for which he is now brought to 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 re-awakened, 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 hypocrite that ever prostituted the name of virtue."

The Countess ceased; and a hundred voices broke out at once, pouring invectives on the murderous ambition 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 moment, 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 Wallace by the consistency of the Countess's narrative; "No mark of dishonour shall be passed on Sir William Wallace

## The Scottish Chiefs

without the strictest scrutiny. Let the mysterious stranger be found and confronted with Lady Strathearn." Notwithstanding the earl's insisting on impartial justice she perceived the doubt in his countenance, and eager to maintain her advantage, she replied—"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 doubtful, 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-awe, "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 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?"

## The Scottish Chiefs

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 acquits 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 curse 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 Scottish Chiefs

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 attempting 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 clamour 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 shrunk 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 ascendancy, fainted away and was carried out of the assembly.



## CHAP. V.

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 chieftains 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 there 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 that 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 compass.—I 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, Lennox 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

## The Scottish Chiefs

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 Ballochgeich; 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

## The Scottish Chiefs

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 alliance 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 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 ambassador 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 east of Edinburgh 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 rivetted 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 emotion continued; "No choral hymns hallow thy bleeding corse;—wolves howl thy requiem, and eagles scream over thy desolate grave: fly, chieftain, fly!" "What venerable father of the harp," cried Wallace, interrupting the

## The Scottish Chiefs

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 obsequies of a man who yet may be destined to a long pilgrimage?" "Who I am," resumed the bard, "will be shewn to thee when thou hast past yon starry firmament. 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 warriors 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 terrible 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 dishonoured life or 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!"

## CHAP. VI.

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 Cistercian monks on the narrow plain of Dalkeith. The two rivers 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 Southron 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 Southrons 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 soothsayers."

## The Scottish Chiefs

The splendor 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 honest 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 Southrons 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 Hawthorndean, 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 abthanes at once, as traitors to their country; "Resume the Regency," added he, "which you only know how to conduct; 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

## The Scottish Chiefs

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 insolence 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 fortune 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 controul 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



## The Scottish Chiefs

could not defend himself, did he think that violence were necessary. Hear my determination once and for ever!" added he, "I acknowledge 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, "Grievous are the alternatives, my friends, which your love for me would persuade you even to welcome. But that which I shall chuse 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 ceremonials which often impede the business they pretend to dignify, entered at once into the hall where the ambassadors 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 unworthy 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

## The Scottish Chiefs

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, *Dico tibi verum, libertas optima rerum Nunquam servilis sub nexu vivitur fili*. 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 phrenzy, 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 ambassadors 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.

## CHAP. VII.

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 remembrance 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

## The Scottish Chiefs

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, "I 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. Edward 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 he not seek to bribe me to betray you?—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 hand 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, and to quiet the tumult which began to murmur amongst the lower orders of the by-standers.

## CHAP. VIII.

A vague suspicion of the Regent and his council, and a panic-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 impresse 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 Scotland's. Me, she rejects.—Mysterious heaven wills that I should quit my post; but for thee, Edwin, as a relic 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; and 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 sanctified, this was the time; and in spite of all that Wallace 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 leader 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 Scotland than William Wallace!" Wallace turned ashy pale as he listened to this vow. At that moment Scrymgeour entered followed by the Lanarkers; and all kneeling at his feet, repeated the oath of Bothwell, and called on him, by the unburied corpse of his murdered Ker, to lead them forth, and avenge them of his enemies.

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, Bothwell, Ruthven, Scrymgeour, my faithful Lanarkers, leave me awhile to compose my

## The Scottish Chiefs

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 Wallace; "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 remained 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 jealousy, 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 people in measures which menaced his life and sacrificed the freedom for which he had so long fought, convinced him, he said, that his warlike 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 exhorted 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 approach 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 kingdom, Wallace advised Bruce. Amidst the natural fortresses 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 political 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

## The Scottish Chiefs

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 farewell, 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 invocations 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 inclosed. 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 Eske'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

## The Scottish Chiefs

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 Strathearn, 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, undeplord.—Undeplord 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 traitoress! Bruce will declare himself!—Bruce will throw himself before his friend, and in his breast receive every arrow meant for that godlike heart! Yes," cried 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 beast, and so carried him slowly back to the castle. The Sage of Ercildoun restored him to life but not to recollection, by letting him bleed." 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.



## The Scottish Chiefs

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, plainly 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.

## CHAP. IX.

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 shew 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 Lammington: 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 sun-lit 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

## The Scottish Chiefs

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, 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 mournfully 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 a 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 exclaimed 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 shall 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 overturned 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 by a ship," returned Edwin, "a fisher's boat shall launch us from a country which is no

## The Scottish Chiefs

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 lying 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

## The Scottish Chiefs

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 passed 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 me 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 cottage."—Wallace was insensible to the pelting of the elements; 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 Menteith, 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 Edwin 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 himself 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 prowess, 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 Menteith, and unbuckling his cuirass, gave it to him, and laying 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 traffick, Aymer de Valence (on being appointed Lord Warden of Scotland in the room of De Warenne, who was incapacitated by the wound he had received in the last battle near Dalkeith,) told his king, that if he would authorize 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 embassy,) to impart to Sir John Menteith the King of England's proposal. Menteith was then

## The Scottish Chiefs

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 chieftain 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 enemies, 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 Scotland, never discovered; and in return for them, an accumulation 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 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 disappearance 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 so 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

## The Scottish Chiefs

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 sprung 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 round.—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 griped 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 informed them was flown.—"O! my best brother that ever I had in the world!" cried he, in a sudden transport, and kissing his pale forehead; "My sincere friend in my greatest need! In thee was truth, manhood, and nobleness; in thee was all man's fidelity, with woman's tenderness. My friend, my brother, Oh! would to God I had died for thee!"

## CHAP. X.

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 consternation 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 abandon his monastic project, lost not an hour, but set off from the nearest port direct for France, hoping to arrive before his friend, and to engage the French monarch 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 divers 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 pitiless 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



## The Scottish Chiefs

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 implacable 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 passion 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 barefoot 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."

Bruce looked stedfastly on the sage: "Then, if thy voice utter holy 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 cloaths 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

## The Scottish Chiefs

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 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 unfurl'd; 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.

## CHAP. XI.

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 one who gave him a free course for traffick. —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 ruth in the recital which shamed the man who had benefitted 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 shew 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

## The Scottish Chiefs

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 chusing 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. XII.

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 stepmother 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 steadfast 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 up to 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 ambassadors," 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 ambassadors, (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,"

## The Scottish Chiefs

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 to 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 innocence." 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 ensuring 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 long 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 ambassadors 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

## The Scottish Chiefs

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 of 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 stedfast 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?" The countenance of Wallace answered her. "Happy Edwin!" cried she, and the tears rained over her cheeks 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 resigned myself to follow him."

"What a desert is 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. XIII.

Though all the furies of the elements seemed let loose to rage around the walls of the dungeon, still Wallace 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 awake, 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 forswear 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 lowered tone his attempts to recal some perception of his consolations to the abstracted and soul-struck Helen. The earl stopped suddenly before 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 ambassadors 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

## The Scottish Chiefs

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, re-appeared 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 in his, and said, "Remember, my Helen, that on no terms but untrammelled 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 splendor 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 behold 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 were 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 pending 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 unessayed 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

## The Scottish Chiefs

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 virgin 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;

## The Scottish Chiefs

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. XIV.

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 tremblingly 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 would'st 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 rite 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 Scottish Chiefs

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.

## CHAP. XV.

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 uttermost, 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 frantically, "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, earl, 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 doubtingly. 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 corse 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



## The Scottish Chiefs

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, shew 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 kness, 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 stedfastly 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 fumes 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 Scottish Chiefs

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 corpse, 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 habitant, 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.

## CHAP. XVI.

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 Menteith, 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 bethought him of the only chance of preserving the power of Edward, and consequently his own, in Scotland. Knowing by past events, that this tempest of the soul, excited by remorse in some, and gratitude in others, could only be maintained to any conclusive 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 apprized 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 shewing 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 instant and effectual measures to disable Bruce from disturbing the quiet of Scotland, or ever again disputing 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 shewed to him the contents 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 Wallace'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 expedient to apprise Bruce of his danger.—To write in the presence-chamber was impossible; to deliver a message 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

## The Scottish Chiefs

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 recognised 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 parting 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.

## CHAP. XVII.

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 zealots 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 Torthorald 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 Torthorald.

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,

## The Scottish Chiefs

had heard the report that the De Longueville, who had been the companion of Wallace, was their rightful prince, now recognised 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 dissension! 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 matins. 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 Southron (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,

## The Scottish Chiefs

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 lawful prince?—Oh! thou archregicide! 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 a 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 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 stedfast 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 approve myself worthy his example—I woo'd 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 himself 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 farthest extremities, and with God's will, would either drive his enemies from the country, or perish with the

## The Scottish Chiefs

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.



## CHAP. XVIII.

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 lowlands, 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 Southrons. Bruce, in his unequal contest, lost not the advantage of chusing 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 Douglas 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 unreceding 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

## The Scottish Chiefs

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 enemies 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 quitted 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 panic-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 removed for ever the prime instigator of Scotland's woes! and with this intelligence as a conclusive argument, he demanded the unconditional surrender of Stirling Castle. The English governor knew the noble nature of the prince who made this proud requisition; and aware that farther opposition would be in vain, he resigned the fortress to his mercy, and opened the gates.—In that hour Bruce entered as a conqueror, 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 forefathers. 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, received in return his gracious assurance of mercy. At this moment all Scottish hearts and wishes seemed rivetted 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 triumph 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 similiar triumph of Wallace into these gates? "Buried, thou martyred hero, in thy bloody grave!" New men and new services seemed to have worn out remembrance of the past; but in

## The Scottish Chiefs

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 Mowbray the English governor, that he would find a lady there who was in a frightful state of mental derangement. A question or two from the victorious monarch soon informed him that this was the Countess of Strathearn. On the revolted abthanes having surrendered 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 farther 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. XIX.

Having dispatched his army, under the command of the Lords Lennox 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 forsworn the vassalage of the Plantagenets; and thus, without title or land, with only a faithful heart, Gilbert Hambleton 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. Hambleton 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 partizans, 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 presence, 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 Hambleton! returned Bruce, "I receive, and will portion thee. My paternal lands

## The Scottish Chiefs

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

## The Scottish Chiefs

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 lips?" added she, laying her hand on the coffin, and looking down on it as if she were conversing with its inhabitant.

"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 farther 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 hedside 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 sunk 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, and in the presence of his royal successor," exclaimed the abbot, "let this mysterious coffer 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.

---