

of being the first to carry home tidings of the victory, ran the whole way—a distance of ten or twelve miles—and with such overhaste that on his arrival at the market-place he dropped with fatigue, and, barely able to shout that the Swiss were victorious, immediately expired. A twig of lime-tree, which he carried in his hand, was planted on the spot in commemoration of this event; and till the present day are seen, in the market-place of Friburg, the aged and propped-up remains of the venerable tree which grew from this twig. In most of the towns of Switzerland a “tree of Liberty” is preserved, which came from scions of the original tree at Friburg.

Chapter 4
CHAPTER IV.

BRUCE AND BANNOCKBURN.

1. Six hundred years ago the duty of defending freedom fell to King Robert Bruce and the Scotch. And this is how it happened. The time was during the crusades, when all Europe was marching to the East, and engaging in battle with the Moslems. Scotland had been an independent country for many years, but some of her princes were too weak for those troublous times. The witches that deceived Macbeth seem to have cast a spell upon the prosperity of the country. Clan was at enmity with clan, and one great chieftain waged relentless war with another. The fierce nobles paid little heed to the king, and showed no regard for the rights of the people. It seemed that peace and liberty had departed forever.

2. Alexander III died, leaving no direct heir. The Scottish nobles assembled to elect who should be their king. The choice lay between Robert Bruce and John Balliol. As the nobles could not agree, the matter was referred to King Edward I, of England, who decided in favor of Balliol. The new prince was weak, and, when he resented the interference of King Edward in some of his affairs, he was easily defeated and driven from the kingdom. Scotland was now regarded as a conquered country, and the people were terribly oppressed. The nobles were deprived of their estates, and the poor peo-

ple were taxed to the verge of starvation. For fifteen years King Edward held on to his usurped power, while the weak king Balliol was wandering in foreign lands, paying no attention to the distracted state of his country.

3. At last the oppression became so great that conflicts took place almost daily between the Scotch peasants and the English soldiery. On one occasion, a young man named William Wallace was out a-fishing with a boy to carry the fish. Two or three English soldiers came along and insisted on taking the fish. Wallace offered to divide with them, but they insisted on taking the whole, when he flew in a rage, killed one with his fishing-pole, and, seizing a sword, put the others to flight. He then fled, and concealed himself in the mountains until the matter blew over. On another occasion he killed an Englishman who insulted him at a fair, and fled to his home, where he was pursued by the soldiers. He escaped by the back door, but the cruel English leader, Hazelrigg, put his wife and servants to death. From that time Wallace devoted himself to fighting the English. He soon collected a band of outlaws and attacked the English wherever he found a favorable opportunity. He soon had the satisfaction of killing Hazelrigg, and of capturing many important places.

4. The Scotch rose everywhere and joined Wallace, who soon found himself at the head of a formidable army. With this he captured the English fortresses, and finally defeated the chief English army under Earl Warren. Scotland was now free, but the English king hastened back from Flanders to punish the Scotch. The battle of Falkirk was fought July 22, 1298, and the Scotch were entirely defeated. Wallace again became a fugitive, but was betrayed into the hands of Edward,

and was beheaded and quartered, according to the barbarous custom of the times.

5. The eyes of all Scotland were now turned to Robert Bruce as the only remaining champion who would be likely to make head against the English, and he accepted the proffered leadership. His principal rival was a powerful noble called the Red Comyn, and with this rival Bruce sought to make friends. The two met in a church, and Comyn flatly refused to join the Scottish cause, but openly proclaimed his adherence to the English. A quarrel arose, and, in the excitement, Bruce stabbed Comyn. Almost paralyzed at his act, he rushed out of the house and called for his horse. His friends eagerly inquired what was the matter. "I doubt," said Bruce, "that I have slain the Red Comyn." "Do not leave the matter in doubt," said Kirkpatrick; "I will make it certain." He and his companions then rushed into the church and soon dispatched Comyn with their daggers.

6. This deed is the one great blot upon the name of Bruce, and bitterly did he repent of his rashness. It called down upon his devoted head the anathema of the church for sacrilege in committing violence before the holy altar. It arrayed against him the kinsmen and friends of the Red Comyn, and it produced distrust in the minds of many true friends of Scotland, who could never have confidence in such an impetuous leader. Bruce made a vow that, if he succeeded in securing the freedom of Scotland, he would do penance for his crime by entering upon a crusade and fighting for the holy sepulchre.

7. On the 29th of March, 1306, Bruce was crowned king. His enemies immediately attacked and defeated him, and he was obliged to take refuge in the mountains of the Highlands. Here he was hunted like a wild

animal, and was obliged to flee from one fastness to another. One of the most malignant of his enemies was Lord Lorn, a kinsman of the Red Comyn. At one time Bruce and his few followers were retreating through a narrow pass, when he was set upon by Lorn and a much superior force. Sending his followers ahead, he stopped his horse in the narrow way, and covered their retreat. Upon seeing the king thus alone, three powerful highlandmen—a father and two sons—set upon him, determined to kill him or take him prisoner for their master, Lord Lorn. Bruce struck the first man who came up and seized his bridle such a blow with his sword as to cut off his hand and free the bridle. The man bled to death. The other brother seized him by the leg and attempted to throw him from his horse. The king, setting spurs to the horse, made the animal spring forward so that the Highlander fell under the horse's feet, and, as he endeavored to rise, the king cleft his head in two with his sword. The father, seeing his two sons thus slain, flew at Bruce and grasped him in his mantle so close to his body that he could not have room to wield his long sword. But, with an iron hammer which hung at his saddle-bow, Bruce dashed out the brains of this new assailant. The dying man still clung to the king's mantle, so that, to get free, Bruce was obliged to undo the brooch by which it was fastened, and leave it with the mantle behind. This brooch fell into the hands of Lorn, and was kept in the family for many generations as a memorial of Bruce.

8. But Bruce was soon reduced to greater straits, and, without followers, was obliged to conceal himself in stables and caves. In all his misfortunes he never gave up the cause of his country, and he sacredly devoted his life to the freedom of Scotland. After one of his defeats he

was lying one night on a wretched bed in a rude hut, while debating in his own mind whether it were not best to enlist in a crusade, when his attention was directed to a spider on the rafters overhead. He saw that the little spinner was trying to swing from one rafter to another, so as to fix his thread across the space. Time and again it tried and failed. Admiring the perseverance of the creature, Bruce began to count the number of times he tried. One, two, three, four, five, six. It suddenly occurred to Bruce that this was just the number of times he had failed in his attempts against the enemy. He then made up his mind that if the spider succeeded in the next trial he would make one more endeavor to recover his kingdom, but if it failed he would start at once for Palestine. The spider sprang into the air, and this time succeeded, so the king resolved upon another trial, and never after met with a defeat.

9. Many a wild story is told of his feats of arms and hairbreadth escapes while he wandered about without a country. Sir Walter Scott, in his poem, "The Lord of the Isles," records one of these legends. It is reported that, on one occasion, with his brother Edward and sister Isabel in a boat, he was driven by stress of weather to take refuge in one of the Hebrides upon the western coast, the home of Roland, the Lord of the Isles. It happened to be a festive occasion, a large assembly having met to celebrate the marriage of the Lord of the Isles with the sister of the Lord of Lorn. As Bruce entered the banquet-hall, Lorn recognized him:

10. "Now, by Columba's shrine I swear,
And every saint that's buried there,
'Tis he himself!" Lorn sternly cries;
"And for my kinsman's death he dies!"

As loudly Roland calls, "Forbear!
 Not in my sight while brand I wear,
 O'ermatched by odds shall warrior fall,
 Or blood of stranger stain my hall!
 This ancient fortress of my race
 Shall be misfortune's resting-place,
 Shelter or shield of the distressed,
 No slaughter-house of shipwrecked guest!"

11. "Talk not to me," fierce Lorn replied,
 "Of odds or match! When Comyn died,
 Three daggers clashed within his side!
 Talk not to me of sheltering hall,
 The church of God saw Comyn fall!
 On God's own altar streamed his blood,
 While o'er my prostrate kinsman stood
 The ruthless murderer—e'en as now—
 With armèd hand and scornful brow!
 Up, all who love me! blow on blow,
 And lay the outlawed felons low!"

12. Then waked the wild debate again,
 With brawling threat and clamor vain,
 Vassals and menials thronging in,
 Lent their brute rage to swell the din;
 When far and wide a bugle clang
 From the dark ocean upward rang.
 "The abbot comes!" they cried at once,
 "The holy man whose favored glance
 Hath sainted visions known;
 Angels have met him on the way,
 Beside the blessed martyr's bay,
 And by Columba's stone.

He comes our feuds to reconcile,
 A sainted man from sainted isle;
 We will his holy will abide,
 The abbot shall our strife decide!"

13. The abbot on the threshold stood,
 And in his hands the holy rood;
 Back on his shoulders flowed his hood,
 The torch's glaring ray
 Showed, in its red and flashing light,
 His withered cheek and amice white,
 His blue eye glistening cold and bright,
 His tresses scant and gray.
 "Fair lords," he said, "our lady's love,
 And peace be with you from above,
 And benedicite!
 But what means this? no peace is here!
 Do dirks unsheathed suit bridal cheer?
 Or are these naked brands
 A seemly show for churchman's sight,
 When he comes summoned to unite
 Betrothèd hearts and hands?"
 Then, cloaking hate with fiery zeal,
 Proud Lorn answered the appeal:
 "Thou comest, O holy man,
 True sons of blessed church to greet,
 But little deeming here to meet
 A wretch, beneath the ban
 Of pope and church, for murder done
 Even on the sacred altar-stone!
 Well may'st thou wonder we should know
 Such miscreant here, nor lay him low,
 Or dream of greeting, peace, or truce,
 With excommunicated Bruce!"

Yet will I grant, to end debate,
Thy sainted voice decide his fate."

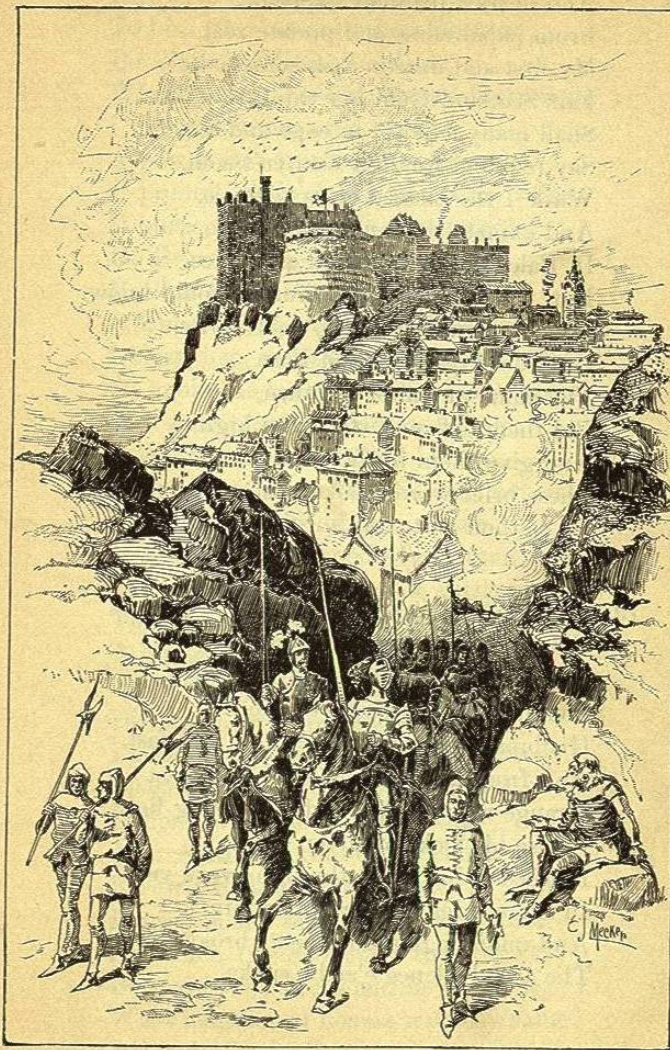
14. Then Roland pled the stranger's cause
And knighthood's oath and honor's laws;
And Isabel on bended knee
Brought prayers and tears to back her plea;
And Edith lent her generous aid,
And wept, and Lorn for mercy prayed.
15. Then Argentine, in England's name,
So highly urged his sovereign's claim,
He waked a spark, that, long suppressed,
Had smoldered in Lord Roland's breast;
And now, as from the flint the fire,
Flashed forth at once his generous ire:
"Enough of noble blood," he said,
"By English Edward had been shed,
Since matchless Wallace first had been
In mockery crowned with wreaths of green,
And done to death by felon hand,
For guarding well his native land.
Where's Nigel Bruce? and De la Haye,
And valiant Seaton—where are they?
Where Somerville, the kind and free?
And Fraser, flower of chivalry?
Have they not been on gibbet bound,
Their quarters flung to hawk and hound,
And hold we here a cold debate
To yield more victims to their fate?
What! can the English leopard's mood
Never be gorged with Northern blood?
Was not the life of Athole shed
To soothe the tyrant's sickened bed?"

Nor must his word, till dying day,
Be nought but quarter, hang, and slay?"

16. "Nor deem," said Dunnegan's knight,
"That thou shalt brave alone the fight!
By saints of isle and mainland both,
By woden wild—my grandsire's oath—
Let Rome and England do their worst;
Howe'er attainted and accursed,
If Bruce shall e'er find friends again,
Once more to brave a battle-plain,
If Douglas couch again his lance,
Or Randolph dare another chance,
Old Torquil will not be to lack
With twice a thousand at his back;
Nay, chafe not at my bearing bold,
Good abbot! for thou knowest of old,
Torquil's rude thought and stubborn will
Smack of the wild Norwegian still:
Nor will I barter freedom's cause
For England's wealth or Rome's applause!"
17. The abbot seemed with eye severe,
The hardy chieftain's speech to hear;
Then on King Robert turned the monk,
But twice his courage came and sunk,
Confronted with the hero's look;
Twice fell his eye, his accents shook;
At length resolved in tone and brow,
Sternly he questioned him, "And thou
Unhappy, what hast thou to plead,
Why I denounce not on thy deed
That awful doom which canons tell
Shuts paradise and opens hell?"

Anathema of power so dread,
 It blends the living with the dead,
 Bids each good angel soar away,
 And every ill one claim his prey;
 Expels thee from the church's care,
 And deafens Heaven against thy prayer;
 Arms every hand against thy life,
 Bans all who aid thee in the strife;
 Nay, each whose succor, cold and scant,
 With meanest alms relieves thy want;
 Haunts thee when living; and, when dead,
 Dwells on thy yet devoted head,
 Rends honor's 'scutcheon from thy hearse,
 Stills o'er thy bier the holy verse,
 And spurns thy corpse from hallowed ground
 Flung like vile carrion to the hound;
 Such is the dire and desperate doom
 For sacrilege, decreed by Rome;
 And such the well-deserved meed
 Of thine unhallowed, ruthless deed."

18. "Abbot!" the Bruce replied, "thy charge
 It boots me not to dispute at large;
 This much, howe'er, I bid thee know,
 No selfish vengeance dealt the blow,
 For Comyn died his country's foe.
 Nor blame I friends whose ill-timed speed
 Fulfilled my soon-repentent deed,
 Nor censure those from whose stern tongue,
 The dire anathema has rung.
 I only blame my own wild ire,
 By Scotland's wrongs incensed to fire.
 Heaven knows my purpose to atone,
 Far as I may, the evil done,



Edinburgh Castle.