

And hears a penitent's appeal,
 From papal curse and prelate zeal.
 My first and dearest task achieved,
 Fair Scotland from her thrall relieved,
 Shall many a priest in cope and stole
 Say requiem for Red Comyn's soul,
 While I the blessed cross advance,
 And expiate this unhappy chance
 In Palestine, with sword and lance.
 But, while content the church should know
 My conscience owns the debt I owe,
 Unto de Argentine and Lorn
 The name of traitor I return,
 Bid them defiance, stern and high,
 And give them in their throats the lie!
 These brief words spoke, I speak no more,
 Do as thou wilt; my shrift is o'er."

19. Like man by prodigy amazed,
 Upon the king the abbot gazed;
 Then o'er his pallid features glance
 Convulsions of ecstatic trance.
 His breathing came more thick and fast,
 And from his pale-blue eyes were cast
 Strange rays of wild and wandering light:
 Uprise his locks of silver white,
 Flushed is his brow, through every vein
 In azure tides the currents strain,
 And undistinguished accents broke
 The awful silence e'er he spoke.

20. "De Bruce, I rose with purpose dread
 To speak my curse upon thy head,

And give thee as an outcast o'er
 To him who burns to shed thy gore;
 But like the Midianite of old
 Who stood on Zophin, heaven-controlled,
 I feel within my aged breast
 A power that can not be repressed.
 It prompts my voice, it swells my veins,
 It burns, it maddens, it constrains!
 De Bruce, thy sacrilegious blow
 Hath at God's altar slain thy foe;
 O'er-mastered, yet by high behest,
 I bless thee, and thou shalt be blest!"
 He spoke, and o'er the astonished throng
 Was silence, awful, deep and long.
 Again that light has fired his eye,
 Again his form swells bold and high,
 The broken voice of age is gone,
 'Tis vigorous manhood's lofty tone:
 "Thrice vanquished on the battle-plain,
 Thy followers slaughtered, fled, or ta'en,
 A hunted wanderer on the wild,
 On foreign shores a man exiled,
 Disowned, deserted, and distressed,
 I bless thee, and thou shalt be blessed!
 Blessed in the hall and in the field,
 Under the mantle as the shield.
 Avenger of thy country's shame,
 Restorer of her injured name,
 Blessed in thy scepter and thy sword,
 De Bruce, fair Scotland's rightful lord,
 Blessed in thy deeds and in thy fame,
 What lengthened honors wait thy name!
 In distant ages, sire to son
 Shall tell the tale of freedom won,

And teach his infants, in the use
Of earliest speech, to falter Bruce.
Go then, triumphant! sweep along
Thy course, the theme of many a song!
The power, whose dictates swell my breast,
Hath blessed thee, and thou shalt be blessed!"

21. With the faithful islanders Bruce remained for some months, while his friends were making preparations for a rising upon the mainland. At last the time came, and Bruce, at the head of a little force, landed in the night and surprised and captured a castle held by the Lord of Lorn. Holding this as a basis of operations, the king and his principal followers, Douglas and Randolph, went out in different directions to arouse the people against their English oppressors, and to raise forces of sufficient strength to risk their cause in battle. This was a matter of great hazard, as every movement of the Scotch was closely watched by the enemy, and, when any one was suspected of opposing the English rule, he was at once imprisoned and probably executed. The patriots were obliged to move with great caution, and often to secrete themselves in the fastnesses of the mountains or in the lonely huts of the peasants. Blood-hounds were employed to track the fugitives, and it is related that Lorn at one time followed Bruce with a blood-hound that had once been his own. The king, seeing that he was followed by a large body of soldiers, divided his men into three separate parties, hoping to throw the hound off the track. The blood-hound, when he came to the point of separation, would not even notice the two other divisions, but followed that of the king. Finding his last expedient had failed, Bruce ordered his whole party to disperse, keeping with him only his foster-brother as an

attendant. When Lorn discovered the party had broken up, he sent five of his men who were speedy on foot to follow the king and put him to death. They ran so fast that they soon gained sight of Bruce and his companion. The two turned upon the five men of Lorn, who came up one by one, exhausted with running, and put them all to death.

22. By this time Bruce was much fatigued, but he dared not stop to rest, for he could hear every moment the deep bay of the hound. At length they came to a wood through which ran a small stream of water. Into the stream they waded and followed it for a long distance; the blood-hound followed the track to the water, but he could trace the scent no farther, and Lorn gave up the chase. But Bruce's adventures were not at an end. After resting themselves in the woods, the two set out to find some human habitation, or to fall in with some party of their friends. In the midst of the forest they met three men who looked like ruffians. "They were well armed, and one of them bore a sheep on his back, which it seemed he had just stolen. They saluted the king civilly, and he, replying to their salutation, asked them where they were going. The men answered that they were seeking for Robert Bruce, for they intended to join him. The king answered that, if they would go with him, he would conduct them where they could find the Scottish king. Then the man who had spoken changed color, and Bruce, who looked sharply at him, began to suspect that the ruffian guessed who he was, and that he and his companions had some design against his person, in order to gain the reward which had been offered for his life.

23. "So he said to them, 'My good friends, as we are not well acquainted with each other, you must go before us,

and we will follow near to you.' 'You have no occasion to suspect any harm from us,' said the man. 'Neither do I suspect any,' said Bruce, 'but this is the way in which I choose to travel.'

24. "The men did as he commanded, and thus they traveled till they came to a waste and ruinous cottage, where the men proposed to dress down part of the sheep which they were carrying. The king was glad to hear of food, but he insisted that two fires should be kindled, one for himself and foster-brother at one end of the cottage, the other at the other end for the three companions. The men did as he desired. They broiled a quarter of the mutton for themselves, and gave another to the king and his attendant. They were obliged to eat it without bread or salt; but, as they were very hungry, they were glad to get food in any shape, and partook of it heartily.

25. "Then so heavy a drowsiness fell on King Robert that he greatly desired to sleep. But, first, he desired his foster-brother to watch as he slept, for he had great suspicion of his new acquaintances. His foster-brother promised to keep awake, and did his best to so keep his word. But the king had not been long asleep ere his foster-brother fell into a deep slumber also, for he had undergone as much fatigue as the king.

26. "When the three villains saw the king and his attendant were asleep, they made signs to each other, and, rising up, at once drew their swords with the purpose to kill them both. But the king slept but lightly, and, as little noise as the traitors made in rising, he was awakened by it, and, starting up, drew his sword and went to meet them. At the same moment he pushed his foster-brother with his foot to awaken him, and he started up; but, ere he got his eyes cleared to see what was about him, one of the ruffians that were advancing to slay the king killed him

with the stroke of a sword. The king was now alone—one man against three, and in the greatest danger of his life; but his amazing strength, and the good armor which he wore, freed him from this great danger, and he killed the men one by one.

27. "King Robert was now alone, and he left the cottage very sorrowful for the death of his foster-brother, and took himself in the direction toward where he had directed his men to ensemble after their dispersion. It was now near night, and, the place of meeting being a farm-house, he went boldly into it, where he found the mistress, an old true-hearted Scotchwoman, sitting alone. Upon seeing a stranger enter, she asked him who and what he was. The king answered that he was a traveler, who was journeying through the country. 'All travelers,' answered the good woman, 'are welcome here for the sake of one.' 'And who is that one,' said the king, 'for whose sake you make all travelers welcome?' 'It is our lawful King Robert the Bruce,' answered the mistress, 'who is the rightful lord of this country; and, although he is now pursued and hunted after with hounds and horns, I hope to live to see him king over all Scotland.'

28. "'Since you love him so well, dame,' said the king, 'know that you see him before you. I am Robert the Bruce.' 'You!' said the good woman in great surprise; 'and wherefore are you thus alone? Where are all your men?' 'I have none with me at this moment,' answered the Bruce, 'and therefore I must travel alone.' 'But that shall not be,' said the brave old dame, 'for I have two stout sons, gallant and trusty men, who shall be your servants for life and death!' So she brought her sons, and, though she well knew the danger to which she exposed them, she made them swear fealty to the king; and they afterward became high officers in his service.

29. "Now the loyal old woman was getting everything ready for the king's supper, when suddenly there was a trampling of horse heard around the house. They thought it must be some of the English or John of Lorn's men, and the good wife called upon her sons to fight to the last for King Robert. But, shortly after, the voices of James of Douglas and of Edward Bruce, the king's brother, were heard, who had come with a hundred and fifty horsemen to this farm-house, according to the instructions of the king when they parted.

30. "Robert the Bruce was right joyful to meet his brother and faithful friend Lord James, and had no sooner found himself at the head of such a considerable body of followers, than, forgetting hunger and weariness he began to inquire where the enemy who had pursued him so long had taken up their quarters; 'for,' said he, 'as they must suppose we are totally scattered and fled, it is likely they will think themselves quite secure, and disperse themselves into distant quarters, and keep careless watch.'

31. "'That is very true,' answered James of Douglas; 'for I passed a village where there are two hundred of them quartered who had placed no sentinels; and, if you have a mind to make haste, we may surprise them this very night.' Then there was nothing but mount and ride; and, as the Scots came by surprise on the body of the English whom Douglas had mentioned, and rushed suddenly into the village where they were quartered, they easily dispersed and cut them to pieces; thus doing their pursuers more injury than they themselves had received during the long and severe pursuit of the preceding day."

32. On another occasion Bruce, with sixty men, was wandering in the county of Galloway, awaiting the gathering of forces. Now the people of Galloway are mostly

friendly to the Lord of Lorn, and a large number of them collected, determined to capture him. They felt sure of the success of their enterprise, as they had a blood-hound to track the king, and had such superior numbers.

33. "Now Bruce, who was always watchful and vigilant, had received some information of this party to come upon him suddenly in the night. Accordingly, he quartered his party of sixty men on the farther side of a deep and swift-running river, that had very steep and rocky banks. There was but one ford by which this river could be crossed in the neighborhood, and that ford was deep and narrow, so that two men could scarcely get through abreast; the bank on which they were to land on the other side was steep, and the path that led upward from the water's edge extremely narrow and difficult.

34. "Bruce caused his men to lie down and sleep, at a place about half a mile distant from the river, while he, with two attendants, went down to watch the ford, and thinking how easily the enemy might be kept from passing there, providing it was bravely defended—when he heard the distant baying of a hound, which was always coming nearer and nearer. This was the blood-hound which was tracing the king's steps to the ford where he had crossed, and the two hundred Galloway men were along with the animal and guided by it. Bruce thought of going back to awaken his men; but then he thought it might be some shepherd's dog. 'My men,' said he, 'are sorely tired; I will not disturb them by the barking of a cur till I know something more of the matter.'

35. "So he stood and listened; and, by and by, as the cry of the hound came nearer, he began to hear the trampling of horses, and the voices of men, and the ringing and clattering of armor; and then he was sure the enemy were coming to the river-side. Then the king thought,

'If I go back to give my men the alarm, these Galloway men will get through the ford without opposition, and that would be a pity, since it is a place so advantageous to make a defense against them.' So he looked again at the steep path and the deep river, and he thought it gave him so much advantage that he could defend the passage with his own hand until his men came to assist him. His armor was so good and strong that he had no fears of their arrows, and therefore the combat was not so very unequal as it must have otherwise seemed. He therefore sent his followers to waken his men, and remained alone on the bank of the river.

36. "In the meanwhile the noise and the trampling of the horses increased, and, the moon being bright, Bruce saw the glancing arms of about two hundred men, who came down to the opposite bank of the river. The men of Galloway, on their part, saw but one solitary figure guarding the ford, and the foremost of them plunged into the river without minding him. Bruce, who stood high above them on the bank where they were to land, killed the foremost man with a thrust of his long spear, and with a second thrust stabbed the horse, which fell down, kicking and plunging in his agonies, on the narrow path, and so preventing the others from getting out of the river. In the confusion five or six of the enemy were slain, or, having been borne down the current, were drowned in the river. The rest were terrified, and drew back.

37. "But, when they looked again and saw only one man, they themselves being so many, they cried out that their honor would be lost forever if they did not force their way; and encouraged each other with loud cries to plunge in and assault him. But by this time the king's soldiers came up to his assistance, and the Galloway men retreated and gave up their enterprise."

38. These successes of Bruce inspired great confidence, and he soon found himself at the head of a formidable force. With this he marched up and down the country, and compelled the English to keep strictly within their castles and fortified places; and even several of these were captured. King Edward I, of England, heard of these successes of Bruce with astonishment and rage. Though old and sorely diseased, he raised a large army and marched for the north; but he had scarcely crossed the Scottish border when his physician informed him that he had but a few hours to live. He immediately called his son to his bed-side, and made him swear that he would push forward this expedition against the Bruce; and he died cursing the whole Scotch people. He even gave direction that his body should be boiled, and that his bones, wrapped in a bull's hide, should be carried at the head of the army as often as the Scots attempted to recover their freedom.

39. Edward II was a weak prince, neither so wise nor so brave as his father. He marched a little way on to Scotland, but, having no great liking for war, he turned and marched back into England. He disregarded his father's injunction about the disposition of his bones, but took them back to London, and deposited them in Westminster Abbey.

40. From this time the cause of Bruce was a succession of victories. During the winter and spring one English fortress after another surrendered, until there only remained the strong castle of Stirling held by the English power. This castle was besieged, and Sir Philip Mowbray, the commander, agreed to surrender it if it was not reinforced by the English before midsummer. Then came a cessation of hostilities, and a period of rest for the Scots. King Edward had made no arrangement to again interfere in Scottish affairs. But now, when Sir Philip Mowbray,

the governor of Stirling, came to London to tell the king that Stirling, the last Scottish town of importance which remained in possession of the English, was to be surrendered if it were not relieved by force of arms before midsummer, then all the English nobles called out, it would be a sin and shame to permit the fair conquest which Edward I had made to be forfeited to the Scots for want of fighting. It was, therefore, resolved that the king should go himself to Scotland with as great forces as he could possibly muster.

41. King Edward II, therefore, assembled one of the greatest armies which a king of England ever commanded. There were troops brought from all his dominions. Many brave soldiers from the French provinces which the king of England enjoyed in France; many Irish, many Welsh, and all the great English nobles and barons, with their followers, were assembled in one great army. The number was not less than one hundred thousand men.

42. King Robert the Bruce summoned all his nobles and barons to join him, when he heard of the great preparation which the king of England was making. They were not so numerous as the English by many thousand men. In fact, his whole army did not very much exceed thirty thousand men, and they were much worse armed than the wealthy Englishmen; but then Robert, who was at their head, was one of the most expert generals of the time, and the officers he had under him were his brother Edward, his nephew Randolph, his faithful follower the Douglas, and other brave and experienced leaders, who commanded the same men that had been accustomed to fight and gain victories under every disadvantage of situation and numbers.

43. The king, on his part, studied how he might supply, by address and stratagem, what he wanted in num-

bers and strength. He knew the superiority of the English both in their heavy-armed cavalry, which were much better mounted and armed than those of the Scots, and in the archery, in which art the English were better than any people in the world. Both these advantages he resolved to provide against. With this purpose, Bruce led his army down into a plain, near Stirling, called the Park, near which, and beneath it, the English army must needs pass through a boggy country, broken with water-courses, while the Scots occupied hard, dry ground. He then caused all the hard ground upon the front of his line of battle, where cavalry were likely to act, to be dug full of holes, about as deep as a man's knee. They were filled with light brushwood, and the turf was laid on the top, so that it appeared a plain field, while in reality it was all as full of these pits as a honeycomb is of holes. He also, it is said, caused steel spikes, called calthrops, to be scattered up and down in the plain, where the English cavalry were most likely to advance, trusting to lame and destroy their horses.

44. When his army was drawn, the line stretched north and south. On the south it was terminated by the banks of the brook called Bannockburn, which are so rocky that no troops could come on them there. On the left the Scottish line extended near to the town of Stirling. Bruce reviewed his troops very carefully; all the useless servants and drivers of carts, and such like, of whom there were very many, he ordered to go behind a height called the Gillies' Hill—that is, the Servants' Hill. He then spoke to the soldiers, and expressed his determination to gain the victory or to lose his life on the field of battle. He desired that all those who did not propose to fight to the last would leave the field before the battle began, and that none would remain except those who were

determined to take the issue of victory or death, as God should send it.

45. Burns has expressed Bruce's sentiments in his fiery poem.

BRUCE'S ADDRESS.

46. Scots who have with Wallace bled,
 Scots whom Bruce has often led,
 Welcome to your gory bed
 Or to victory!
 Now's the day, and now's the hour;
 See the front of battle lower;
 See approach proud Edward's power,
 Chains, and slavery!

47. Who would be a traitor knave,
 Who would fill a coward's grave,
 Who so base as be a slave,
 Let him turn and flee!
 Who for Scotland's king and law,
 Freedom's sword will strongly draw,
 Freeman stand, or freeman fa',
 Let him follow me!

48. By oppressions, woes, and pains,
 By our sons in servile chains,
 We will drain our dearest veins,
 But they shall be free!
 Lay the proud usurper low!
 Tyrants fall in every foe—
 Liberty at every blow;
 Let us do or die!

49. When the main body of his army was thus placed in order, the king posted Randolph, with a body of horse,

near to the church of St. Mirau's, commanding him to use the utmost diligence to prevent any succorers from being thrown into Stirling Castle. He then dismissed James of Douglas and Sir Robert Keith, the marshal of the Scottish army, in order that they might survey, as nearly as they could, the English force, which was now approaching from Falkirk. They returned with information that the approach of that vast host was one of the most beautiful and terrible sights which could be seen; that the whole country seemed covered with men-at-arms on horse and foot; that the number of standard banners and pennants made so gallant a show, that the bravest and most numerous host in Christendom might be alarmed to see King Edward moving against them.

50. It was upon the 23d of June, 1314, that the King of Scotland heard the news that the English army were approaching Stirling. He drew out his army, therefore, in the order which he had before resolved upon. After a short time, Bruce, who was looking out anxiously for the enemy, saw a body of English cavalry trying to get into Stirling from the eastward. This was the Lord Clifford, who, with a chosen body of eight hundred horse, had been detached to relieve the castle.

51. "See, Randolph," said the king to his nephew, "there is a rose fallen from your chaplet." By this he meant that Randolph has lost some honor by suffering the enemy to pass where he had been commanded to follow them. Randolph made no reply, but rushed against Clifford with little more than half his number. The Scots were on foot. The English turned to charge them with their lances, and Randolph drew up his men in close order to receive them. He seemed to be in so much danger that Douglas asked leave of the king to go and assist him. The king refused permission.