

He was allowed the merest form of a trial at Westminster Hall, and doomed to death. Wallace asked for a confessor, which Edward scornfully refused. The Bishop of Canterbury boldly stepped forth, and offered his service, after the performance of which he rode away to the country, unwilling to witness the cruelty about to be enacted in the name of the state. Edward ordered his arrest, but no sheriff was found to obey his mandate.

The noble and heroic chieftain, William Wallace, to the lasting shame of England, was executed at Smithfield in August, 1305.

CHAPTER VI.

ROBERT BRUCE.

Birth and Parentage—Youthful Employment—Ambitious Designs of his Father—Trouble with Baliol—Disappointed by King Edward—Enters a Conspiracy against Edward—Betrayed—Flying from the English Court—Crowned King of Scotland—Preparing for War—Defeated—Calamities in Scotland—His Queen Captured—Bruce imprisons Lord Percy in Turnberry Castle—Retreat—Pursued by Bloodhounds—Dangerously Ill—Captures Aberdeen—Invades Lorn—Meeting King Edward's Army at Bannockburn—In Ireland—In Scotland—Fighting his Enemies—Retreats—Last Illness—Observations on Life and Character.

THE names of the Scottish heroes, William Wallace and Robert Bruce, are names that awaken memories of daring deeds by heroic soldiers—memories that will find an echo in centuries yet to come, and, reverberating down the pages of history, cease not to stir to action the ever-present elements of liberty.

Robert Bruce, the hero of this sketch, was born at Carrick, in 1274. He early evinced a desire for distinction by bursts of sudden enterprise, which were taken up and abandoned in such rapid succession as to afford little hope of stability for the future. The first quarter century of any man's life is not only initiative and preparatory, but in it usually can be traced those characteristics which, in after years, distinguish the individual. But in Robert Bruce this was not so. The

hint sufficient that his liberty was in danger. He instantly hastened toward Scotland, fully realizing who had betrayed his secret to the king, and, meeting a messenger of Comyn's, killed him, securing his despatches, thus enabling him to show the full extent of Comyn's treachery to Edward. As yet Bruce, unprepared for an open rupture with England, found Comyn at Dumfries, and having invited him to a private interview in a church, where they were alone, accused him of the treachery. Comyn giving him the lie, Bruce stabbed him with his dagger and hastened out from the sanctuary, when two of his friends, noticing his bloody appearance, inquired the cause. "I doubt I have slain the red Comyn," answered Bruce. "Do you trust to that doubt?" "I make sure," was the reply, and, rushing into the sanctuary, Kirkpatrick, of Closeburn, despatched the wounded man. Sir Robert Comyn, an uncle, vainly interfered, and was slain with him. The English justiciaries, hearing the tumult, barricaded themselves in the hall where they administered justice; Bruce compelled them to surrender, by putting fire to their place of retreat, and dismissed them in safety.

This act of Bruce cut off his last chance of reconciling affairs with Edward, who was now aware (through Comyn) of schemes of insurrection, and regarded Comyn as a victim to fidelity to him or the English government. The circumstance of Comyn's death occurring in a sacred place rendered it sacrilege, and an act to be abhorred by every one. Those alone who, from a strong feeling of interest, might be inclined to make common cause with the perpetrator of this homicide, could excuse the act. Among Scottish patriots

only could such interest exist, and who might see in Bruce the vindicator of his country's liberty and his own rights to the crown—claims so sacred as to justify him for enforcing them against the treacherous confidant who had betrayed him to the foreign usurper, even at the foot of the altar. Bruce stood in a critical position. It was as if he were midway up a mountain precipice, with the path behind cut off! He could but go on! Scotland's crown hung just above him; there was hope that he might reach it; there was great risk of failure; yet retreat was certain ruin—inevitable destruction!

Quite aware of the perils of his choice, he resolved to claim the throne of Scotland, determined to achieve success or perish in the attempt.

He retired into the adjoining wilds of Nithsdale, to the hut of an obscure peasant, near the hill called the Dun of Tynron. Sending messengers in every direction, he collected followers and warned such nobles as he knew to be favorable to his cause. But they were few, and by no means prepared for a hasty appearance on the battle-field. His own family supplied four brave men of skill in arms and most vigorous constitutions.

With his nephew, afterwards the celebrated Thomas Randolph, Abbot of Scone, and fourteen barons, he proceeded to Dumfries, thence to Glasgow, whither he was joined by James of Douglas. Devoted to the cause of Scottish independence, Douglas remained till death his best and most disinterested friend; and on March 26th Bruce was crowned at Scone with a slight coronet of gold, hastily made to supply the place of the royal crown of Scotland, which had been carried

off by Edward. For placing this crown on his head, as, in the absence of her husband, was her duty, Isabella, Countess of Buchan, was afterwards cruelly punished by Edward.

On taking the field many of Wallace's old followers joined him. Edward, then so ill as to be scarcely able to sit his horse, made a vow that he would forthwith set out for Scotland to punish the rebels and avenge the death of John Comyn. He adjured his son that, should he die on the expedition, his bones should be borne at the head of the army till Scotland should be fully subdued.

Bruce in the meantime was unsuccessfully engaged in strengthening his army. His enterprise was regarded as desperate. Even his wife said to him: "You are indeed a summer king, but you will scarcely be a winter one." Bruce sought an encounter with the Earl of Pembroke, who, with an English army, held the town of Perth. He arrived before the town with a force inferior to that of the English earl, and challenged him to come forth to fight. Pembroke replied that he would meet him on the morrow. Bruce retired to the neighboring wood, making a bivouac for the night. But the treacherous Pembroke, sallying forth from Perth, attacked the Scots, who were taken unawares, at ease. They fought long and well; Bruce was thrice unhorsed—once he was taken prisoner by Lord Seaton, who shouted aloud that he had captured the king; but his brother struck Seaton to the earth, rescuing Bruce.

Now that his small army was almost broken up by this defeat at Methvyn Woods, our hero was obliged for a time to get subsistence for himself and his family

by the chase. From Athol Bruce took his followers to Aberdeen, thence to Argyle. In a hostile country, battle was daily expected. Winter was drawing near, and Bruce was guided in his plans by Sir Neil Campbell, of Loch-awe, founder of the house of Argyle, who had undertaken to procure refuge for his force on the land of Cantire. The female portion of Bruce's family were no longer able to endure the rigors of the cold season.

John of Lorne, who was an uncle of the "Red Comyn," full of ardent desire to avenge the death of his nephew, attacked Bruce's little band at a place called "Dalry" (near the head of Strathfillan), when the knights, being unable to manage their horses, were compelled to fall back. Bruce himself protected the retreat personally, killing a father and two sons who had attacked him. John of Lorne said, in unwilling admiration: "Look at him—he guards his men from us as Gaul, the son of Moni, protected his host from the fury of Fingal." Forced to turn back, Bruce sent his queen and her attendants, under charge of his younger brother, to his strong castle of Kildrammie, in Aberdeenshire. Reaching the banks of Loch Lomond, he was obliged to cross his force of two hundred men in a boat which would only carry three persons at a time. Here, while waiting, he met the Earl of Lenox (who recognized the bugle blast), by whose guidance and assistance they were able to reach the province of Cantrym, subject to Arago, Lord of the Isles, who had been in advance propitiated by Sir Neil Campbell, the founder of the house of Argyle.

Received kindly by the Lord of the Isles, he could but be aware that his residence might draw upon his pro-

lector the vengeance of Edward. Therefore he resolved to bury himself in the remote Isle of Rachrin, where he lurked in concealment during the winter of 1306. By this means he effected his purpose of concealing himself from the search made for him by the creatures of Edward of England. His friends and adherents were suffering all the miseries which the rage of a malicious and exasperated king could inflict. His wife and daughter were seized and confined in separate prisons, where for eight years they remained. Some gallant and accomplished gentlemen, whose only crime was adherence to Bruce, were subjected to a mock trial and executed. The Earl of Athol suffered the same fate. Simon Fraser, being defeated at Kirk-in-Cliffe, near Stirling, was made prisoner, exposed on London bridge loaded with iron chains, and executed with every possible ignominy and cruelty of treason law. Bruce, deprived of all civil and religious rights, was patiently biding his time.

Thus passed the winter of 1306. With the return of spring new hope sprung up in the dauntless soul of Bruce. Crossing to Arran, he had arranged with a faithful vassal in his earldom to watch when a landing could with success be made. A lighted beacon on a headland was to be the signal, which at length appeared to his longing eyes. But the beacon had been lighted by some one else, and Bruce learned that the English had been reinforced, and nothing like success could now be hoped for.

Robert Bruce hesitated, but his brother Edward, a man whose courage amounted to temerity, protested that he would not again go to sea, but that having arrived in his native country, he would take his

chances, good or bad—anything which heaven might send him. Robert was easily persuaded to the same bold course, when a sudden attack by the English, who were quartered near the town, gave them an easy victory and rich booty. Lord Percy lay in the castle near by, but did not dare to venture forth to the relief of his men.

This advantage was followed by others. It seemed, actually, as if heaven regarded Bruce as having been sufficiently punished for the murder of Comyn, and that fortune had exhausted her spite on him.

He was at once joined by friends and followers, compelling the English to keep their garrisons, until Lord Percy deemed it wiser to evacuate Turnberry Castle and retreat to England.

The dauntless James Douglas, who had been visiting his own country in disguise, collected his ancient followers about him, and, surprising the English garrison, he slaughtered the inmates, set fire to the mingled mass of provisions and bodies, and then marched away. There ensued a most terrible conflagration, and to this day the place is known as "The Douglas Larder."

Edward, having for nearly twenty years exerted to the utmost his bold and crafty faculties, now poured out his wealth with lavish hand to accomplish the one darling object of his ambition—the subjection of Scotland. Stung with the most acute sense of wounded pride, mortified ambition, and goaded by the constant reports of the increasing reputation of Bruce, and the rumor of his wonderful exploits, the English king, who had been detained the whole winter at Carlisle, was now doomed to see from his sick-bed the hills

of Scotland, and know that they were still free. Apparently trusting to rage and resentment to return to him the strength that age and disease had destroyed, he hung up in the cathedral his litter, deeming that he should no longer need it, and, mounting his war-horse, proceeded northward. He only succeeded in reaching Burgh-on-the-Sands, where he expired July 7, 1307.

In 1310 Edward, aroused to action, assembled a large army at Berwick and entered Scotland; but his wily antagonist avoided a general engagement and contented himself with harassing their march, cutting off their provisions, and thus augmenting the distress of their progress through a hostile and desolate country, until the patience of Edward and the supplies of his army were alike exhausted. A second, third and fourth army met with no better success, and the Scots pushed boldly after them into England, where, after a fifteen days' sojourn, the northern provinces were glad to purchase—instead of attempting to force—their retreat.

King Robert, presenting himself before Perth, which was strongly fortified, and finding a shallow place in the moat, after a pretended retreat, suddenly appeared at the head of a chasm with a storming party. Completely armed, and bearing a scaling ladder, he waded through the water up to his chin, and was the second man to mount the wall. A French knight, who was with the Scotch army, exclaimed, at sight of this daring action: "Oh, heaven! What shall we say of the delicacy of our French lords, when so gallant a king hazards his person to win such a paltry hamlet?"

On the eve of Shrove Tuesday, when the garrison were full of a drunken wassail, Douglas and his followers, approaching the castle, crept in on hands

and feet—simulating a herd of cattle; nor did the revellers discover their error until the shout of "Douglas! Douglas!" announced that they were prisoners!

The success of Bruce and his followers was not limited to the mainland of Scotland. He pursued the McDougeel of Galloway to the Isle of Man, where he defeated him, stormed his castle, and subjected the island to Scottish rule.

Bruce now made (1314) preparations for a decisive engagement. He took great precaution to avoid the trouble entailed on him by his lack of cavalry, as compared with his antagonist. He was also much inferior in number, and in respect to his archers, whose long shafts were the artillery of that period, he was especially deficient.

Imperishably associated with one of the most memorable events in English history is the village of Bannockburn. In its immediate vicinity, on the 24th of June, 1314, was fought the great battle, between the English under Edward II. and the Scotch under Robert Bruce, which secured the permanent independence of Scotland, and established the family of the conqueror on its throne. The forces of the English were 100,000, while that of the Scots was less than one-third that number. A detailed account of the combat, however pleasant, is not here permitted. Suffice that the engagement resulted in disaster to the English, who lost many prominent leaders and, falling into inextricable confusion, fled. The loss of the Earl of Gloucester and the flight of Edward, the depletion of forces by death and imprisonment, together with the spoils of warfare, seriously crippled the forces of

Edward. The victory of Bannockburn was followed by consequences which show how entirely the energies of a kingdom depend upon the manner in which its government is administered and its resources directed. The indolence of Edward II. is beyond all record in history, and it was a relief to all when his successor, Edward III., was called to the throne. The ambition of Edward Bruce was too impatient to wait until the succession to the Scottish crown should become open to him by the death of his brother.

A party of Irish chiefs, discontented with the rule of the English, sent to Edward Bruce to come and expel the English from Ireland. By consent of Robert, Edward invaded Ireland at the head of 6,000 Scots. He threatened Dublin, went as far as Limerick, until, compelled by scarcity of provisions, he retired, convinced that he was engaged in a fruitless enterprise.

Bruce seemed only to wait for the final deliverance of his country to close his heroic career. At this time, however, a disease not unlike leprosy began to prey upon his strength.

He summoned his barons and affectionately commended his son to their care. Of the good Sir James Douglas he entreated that he would cause his heart to be taken from his body after death, conjuring him to take charge of transporting it to Palestine, in redemption of a vow which he had made to go thither in person when disentangled from the cares of English wars. At the early age of fifty-five Robert Bruce died. He was buried at Dunfermline.

In glancing over the life and character of Robert Bruce, we may see that his life is divided into three distinct parts. His youth was thoughtless, hasty, fickle,

and from the moment when he began to appear in public until the slaughter of "The Red Comyn" he seemed to have no thought above the other barons around him—to drift with the shifting tide.

Again, in a short period of life he displayed the utmost steadiness, firmness and constancy, sustaining with unabated patience and determination the loss of battles, death of friends, disappointment of hopes, and an uninterrupted series of disasters.

Can we doubt that the misfortunes of the second period of his life had taught him lessons of prudence and constancy which were unknown to his early years? Happy is the man whose middle and later life can thus be guided by lessons learned from the vicissitudes of earlier years!

The third and latest period of the life of King Robert Bruce was passed upon the broad tableland. Secure in the possession of an independent throne, he planned and labored for the good of that country for which he had been content to pass his life in turmoil and conflict, happy if, at life's close, he saw the fruition of his hopes.

fickleness, so prominent while he was in his teens, entirely disappeared before his twenty-fifth year, and in middle and later life we find a man persistent in purpose and bold in action; not overcome by obstacles, but, dashing every impediment from his path, he rushes bravely on to victory and renown.

The inheritors and representatives of the Baliol family in Scotland bore the name of Comyn. Bruce, naturally influenced by a spirit of ill-will toward the conservators of the Baliol interests, allowed his zeal to cool whenever it was apparent that success to Scotland would aid the Comyns.

About this time (1293) Baliol (of Scotland) declared war against England, but none of the Bruce family joined him. The elder Bruce had hoped that Edward would have preferred him to the crown on the deposition of Baliol; but, checked by the scorn with which Edward met his pretension, he retired to his estates in Yorkshire, leaving to his grandson, a youth of twenty-two, his earldom of Carrick. Edward, noticing that self-interest was the key-note to Bruce's actions, and allowing nothing for those strong impulses which often change the whole character, gave comparatively little thought or notice to Bruce; however, he enjoyed a fair share of the royal favor. The sagacious monarch fancied that through Bruce he might secure Scotland forever. Far from this were the intentions of the young earl. From this point in his life we begin to note the change from an impetuous, fickle youth—a being of impulse—to a man with a purpose—a man governed by a ruling motive, to which all else was subordinate.

In the insurrection of Sir William Wallace the name of Baliol had been used as the sovereign of Scot-

land, in whose behoof the nation were in arms, and for whom they defended their lands against the English. The Comyns kept the claims of Baliol before the public. But Baliol, in his disgraceful submission to Edward, had lost all respect of the people, who named him "Toom Tabard" (empty coat). It was now true that Scotland's crown lay open to any claimant brave enough to defy the king. The middle classes in Scotland were now ready to enlist under almost any banner raised against Edward of England, the weight of whose yoke became more galling day by day.

Bruce now entered into a secret treaty with William Lambreyton, the primate of Scotland, binding each to stand by the other against all enemies. It was considered needful to discover this league to John Comyn, and he was given to understand that its purpose was the destruction of the English power in Scotland. Bruce and Comyn were leaders of two great factions, and therefore stood directly opposed each to the other. Two standards were raised, and there seemed to flock about them many adherents.

The natural question asked by those whom they would have for followers was, "What king do you mean to propose?" and Bruce proposed to Comyn that, if he would support his (Bruce's) title to the crown, Bruce should make over to Comyn all his patrimonial estates. Comyn ostensibly agreed to this proposal, but in secret resolved to betray the whole intrigue of Bruce to the king. Bruce was still in attendance at the English court. On a favorable occasion, soon after the above events transpired, Bruce received from his kinsman, the Earl of Gloucester, a piece of money and a pair of spurs, which to a man of his acuteness was a