

THE SCOTTISH CHIEFS; OR THE LIFE OF SIR WILLIAM WALLACE

BY MISS JANE FOYER. CHAPTER XV. THE ROCKS OF ARRAN—THE ISLE OF BUTE.

Towards evening the next day, Ker returned with the rest of Lennox's men and brought with him Sir Eustace Maxwell of Carluaroch. That brave knight no sooner saw the Scottish colours on the walls of Dunbarton than 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 Dunbarton, and along the shore, striving to enlighten the understandings of the stupidly satisfied, and to excite the discontented to revolt. With most of the knights he was warmly received, and he would gladly have been the first to lead them to the assault on the castle. But he was not to be so easily won. Some were too great eowards to fight for the rights they would gladly gain by the exertions of others. In short, none but about a hundred, whom outrage and despair had driven to the hazard for so good a cause, could be prevailed on to hold themselves in readiness to obey Sir Eustace, when he should see the moment to conduct them to Wallace.

He was trying his eloquence amongst the clan of Lennox, when Ker, arriving, stamped his persuasions with truth; and about five hundred men arranged themselves under their lord's standard. Maxwell gladly explained himself to Wallace's lieutenant, and summoning his Spring pinnons through the town of Dunbarton. 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, several, who before had held back, now came forward; and nearly eight hundred well-appointed men marched into the fortress.

So large a reinforcement was gratefully received by Wallace; and he welcomed Maxwell with cordiality. A council being held respecting the disposal of the new troops, it was decided that the five hundred Lennox men should remain with their earl in the garrison, and the three hundred from Dunbarton, 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 the unfolding of the plan of warfare which Wallace had conceived. As he first sketched the general outline of his design, and then proceeded to the particulars of each movement, he displayed such comprehensiveness of mind, depth of penetration, clearness of apprehension, facility in expedients, promptitude in perceiving and fixing on the most favorable points of attack, explaining their bearings upon the powers of the enemy, and where a possession of such a castle would compel the neighboring 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.

It was decided that Wallace should attend Lord Mar and his family on the morrow to the Isle of Bute; and, when the dawn broke, Sir William, calling the guard of Lord Mar, told Ireland he should expect to have a cheering account of the wounded when he returned. "And to 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 Dunbarton. It shall be hung up in their sight; and a good soldier's wounds will heal by looking at it." "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 dishonor your hand; for it cut down many a proud Norwegian on the field of Largs."

Wallace took the sword, and turned to meet Murray with Edwin in the portal. When they reached the citadel Lennox and all the officers in the garrison were assembled to bid their chief adieu. Wallace spoke to each separately, and then approaching the countess, led her down the rock to the horses which were to convey them to the Frith of Clyde. Lord Mar, between Murray and Edwin, followed; and the servants and guard completed the suite. Being well mounted, they pursued their way, avoiding all inhabited places and resting in the 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 that she could not advance farther than the eastern bank of the Cart. No shelter appeared in sight, excepting a thick wood of hazels; but the lady being obstinate, and the air mild, Lord Mar became reconciled to his wife and child passing with no other canopy than the trees. Wallace 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.

By sunset the next day they arrived at the point where they were to encamp. The journey ought to have been performed in half the time, but the countess petitioned for long rests—a compliance of gallantry which the younger part of the cavalcade had reluctantly yielded. At Gourack, Murray engaged two small vessels, the one for the earl and countess, with Wallace as 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 favor. The mariners calculated on reaching Bute in a few hours; but, ere they had been half an

hour at sea, the wind veered about, and obliged them to woo its breezes by a traversing motion, which, though it lengthened their voyage increased its pleasantness, till, turning the southern point of the Corval mountains, the scene suddenly changed. The wind blew a violent gale; and the sea began to boisterous, that the mariners began to think they should be driven upon the rocks. Wallace tore down the sails, and laid his arm to the oar. Lady Mar looked with affright at the gathering tempest, and with difficulty was persuaded to retire under the shelter of a little awning. The earl forgot his debility, and tried to reassure the mariners; but a tremendous sweep of the gale drove the vessel toward destruction rocks of Arran. "Here the master of the bark," Lord Mar cried to Wallace, who had seized the helm. "While you keep your men to their duty in clearing the vessel of water, and in rowing, as the less laborious task I will steer."

The earl being acquainted with the coast, Wallace resigned the helm to him; but scarcely had he stepped forward, when a heavy sea carried two of the men overboard. One caught by the rope, and was saved, but the other was seen no more. Wallace and two applied their strength to the oars; the master and another were employed in laying out the water. In a moment, the vessel struck with a great shock; and the next instant it seemed to move with velocity. "The whirlpool!" the whirlpool! resounded from every lip. Wallace leaped from the deck on his hands, and with the same rope in his hand which he saved the life of the man, he called to the men to follow. "Clasp the ropes fasten, like his own, to the head and stern of the vessel; he was obeyed, and they strove, by towing it along, to stem the suction of the current."

At this instant, Lady Mar rushed upon deck. The earl perceived her. "In, for your life, Joanna!" cried he. She answered him not, but looked wildly around her. "Where could I see my Wallace?" "Have I drowned him?" cried she, in a voice of phrenzy. "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. At that moment a huge wave sinking before her, discovered the earl of her fears standing on the rocks, followed by the men, and all tagging the ropes to which the bark was attached. She gazed at them with wonder and affright. When they arrived at the doubling of Cuthon Rock, the rope which Wallace held broke, and he fell backwards into the sea. The foremost man uttered a cry; but, ere it was echoed by his fellows, Wallace had 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!"

At sight of Wallace, Lady Mar forgot everything but him, and perhaps would have thrown herself into his arms, had not the earl caught her in his own. "Are you to die?" cried she, in a voice of horror. "I trust that God has decreed otherwise," was Wallace's reply. "Compose yourself, and all may be well."

As Lord Mar, from his yet unhealed wounds, could not swim Wallace tore up the benches of the rowers, and making a small raft placed on it the earl and countess, with her two maids and the child. While the men were towing it through the breakers, he jumped into the sea, to swim by its side, and be in readiness in case of accident. Having gained the broken rocks that lie at the foot of the crags which surround the Isle of Arran, Wallace and his assistants conveyed the countess and her terrified women up their inclines to a cavern, where Wallace sheltered his dripping charges.

The child whom he had guarded in his own arms during the ascent, he laid on the bosom of his mother. Lady Mar kissed the hand that relinquished it, and gave way to a flood of tears. The earl, as he sank against the side of the cave, had strength enough to press Wallace to his heart. "Ever preserve 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 thanksgiving be directed to Him alone."

"So be it!" returned the earl, and dropping on his knees, he breathed forth a prayer of thanksgiving. Soon he closed his eyes, excepting that of Wallace. A marking anxiety respecting the fate of the other vessel, in which were the brave men of Bothwell and his two dear friends, filled his mind with sad forebodings that they had not outlived the storm.

Morning began to dawn, and all was tranquil and full of beauty. As his companions were yet wrapped in sleep, he stole away, to learn on what spot of the Isle of Arran he saw a cleft in the rock, into which he turned, and soon gained the summit. No trace of human habitation appeared; but, from the size and population of the island, he knew he could not be far from inhabitants; and, thinking it best to send the sailors in search of them, he retraced his steps. As soon as he re-entered the cave, he despatched the seamen, while he watched his sleeping friends. An hour had hardly elapsed before the men returned, bringing with them a large boat and its proprietor, but no tidings of Murray and Edwin. In bringing the boat round to the creek, the men discovered that the sea had driven their wreck between two rocks, where it 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.

"But where, my friend, are my nephews?" inquired he. "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 the women; but the countess still slept. Aware that she would resist trusting herself to the waves again, Lord Mar desired that she might be taken on board without disturbing her. This was done. The earl received her head on his bosom; and all being on board, the rowers struck their oars, and once more they were launched upon the sea.

While they were yet midway between the isles, the countess, heaving a sigh, slowly opened her eyes. She felt the motion of the boat, and saw that she was again embarked on the treacherous element on which she had experienced so many terrors. She grew 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 around with a grateful smile: "Ever generous! How could I for a moment doubt my preserver?" Wallace bowed, but remained silent; and they passed calmly along, till they came in sight of a birling, which was presently so near, that the figures in it could be distinctly seen, and Wallace, to his stupor and surprise, beheld Murray and Edwin. 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. When the birling had drawn close to the boat, Murray shook hands with his uncle and aunt, crying to Wallace, "That urelin adventure of a birling, to see you have such a monopolist, I see you have not a greeting for any one else!" Edwin turned to the affectionate welcome of Lord Mar. Wallace stretched out his hand to Lord Andrew, and inviting him into the boat, soon learnt that, on the night of the storm, Murray and his company made direct to the nearest creek in Bute; not doing as Wallace's clerkman, who, until danger stopped him, continued to aim for Rothesay. By this prudence, the whole party landed safely; and, as his companion kept themselves very easy in a fisher's hut till morning. On an early hour, they put themselves at the head of the Bothwell men, and expecting they should come up with the earl and his party at Rothesay, walked over to the castle. Their consternation was unutterable when they found that Lord Mar was not there, neither had been heard of. Full of terror, Murray and Edwin threw themselves into a birling, to seek their joy of Edwin was so great, that not even the unfaithful gulf could stop him from flying to the embrace of his friend.

While mutual felicitations passed, the boats reached the shore; and the seamen moored their vessels under the towers of Rothesay. Having entered the castle, the steward led them into a room in which he had spread a plentiful feast. Murray, having recounted the history of what had befallen his friends, the earl, with many a glance of gratitude to Wallace, narrated the events of their shipwreck, and their preservation on the Isle of Arran.

All hearts owned the grateful effects of the late rescue. The joy of Edwin burst into a thousand sallies. The high spirits of Murray turned every subject into mirth. The vessel, which seemed restored to health and to youth; 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 brother of his affection was saved from the waves; and his friend, the gallant Murray, was spared! The complacency with which he regarded every one, pouring out of his beneficent spirit, which seemed to embrace all as his kindred, turned every eye and heart towards him, as a being whose smile made to love and be loved by all. Lady Mar looked at him, listened to him, with her wrapt soul in her eye. In his presence all was transport; but when he withdrew for the night, what was the state of her feelings? The overflowing of heart that was felt for all, she appropriated solely to herself. The sweetness of his voice, the expression of his countenance, raised such vague hopes in her bosom, that, he being gone, she hastened to retire to bed, and there muse on the happiness of having touched the heart of the man for whom she would resign all the world.

CHAPTER XVI. LADY MAR AND WALLACE—MASSACRED AT BUTE.

The morning would have brought annihilation to the countess's hopes, had she come from her chamber. At some distance from the castle, on the cliffs, he met Wallace and Edwin. They had been to the haven, and had ordered a boat to come round to convey them back to Gourack. "Postpone your flight, for pity's sake," cried Murray, "if you would not destroy, by discourtesy, what your gallantry has preserved!" He then told them that Lady Mar was preparing a feast in the glen behind the castle; and if you do not stay to partake it," added he, "we may expect all the witches in the isle will be bribed to sink us, before we reach the shore."

The meeting of the morning was not less cordial than the separation of the night before; and, as Lady Mar withdrew to give orders for her banquet, time was left to the earl for the arrangement of matters of more consequence. In a conversation with Murray the preceding evening, he learnt that, before the party left Dunbarton, a letter had been sent to Helen at St. Fillan's, informing her of the taking of the castle, and of the safety of her friends. This having satisfied the earl, he did not mention her to Wallace, as he avoided encumbering his occupied mind with domestic subjects.

While the earl and his friends were marshalling armies, taking towns, and storming castles, the countess was intent on other conquests. When her lord and guests were summoned to the feast, she met them at the mouth of the glen. Having tried the effect of splendour, she now left all to the power of her charms, and appeared clad in green. Mornig, the pretty grandchild of the steward, walked beside her, gaily decorated in all the flowers of spring. "Here is the lady of my cliff reefs, holding her little king in arms!" As the countess spoke, Murray held up the infant of Lady Mar. The babe laughed and cried, and made a spring to leap into Wallace's arms. The chief took him, and pressed his little cheek to his. Though he had felt the repugnance of a delicate mind, and the shading of a man who held his person consecrated to the memory of the only woman he had ever loved, mingle into an abhorrence of the countess when she allowed her head to drop on his breast in the citadel; and though while he remained at Dunbarton he had 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 cooess it reminded him of hopes lost to him for ever.

When the repast was over, the piper appeared, and the young peasants began the dance. Lady Mar watched the countenance of Wallace as he looked upon the happy group; it was placid, and a soft complacency illuminated his eye. How different was the expression in hers! All within her was in tumult, and the characters were but too legibly imprinted on her face; but he did not look on her, for the child began to cry. He resigned it to the nurse, turned into a narrow vista of trees, and walked slowly on, unconscious where he went.

Lady Mar followed him with a light step, till she saw him turn out of the vista, and then 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, to teach him to forget his Marion, in the hope of one day possessing her!—all these thoughts ran in this young woman's head; and, inwardly rejoicing that the shattered health of her husband promised her a ready freedom to become the wife of a man to whom she would gladly belong, in honor or dishonor, she hastened forward. Peeping through the trees, she saw him standing, in golden arms, looking intently into the bosom of a lake surrounded with willows. Having stood for some time, he walked on. Several times she essayed to join him; but a sudden awe, a conviction that purity which would shrink from the guilty vows she was meditating to pour into his ear, made her pause, 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 overstrained delicacy to drive her from the lake. She would have hastened back, had not two or three aged female peasants engaged her to listen 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 reappeared. She sprung for them as he approached—"Where, truant, have you been?"

"In a beautiful solitude," returned he, "amongst a luxuriant grove of willows." "Ay!" cried she, "it is called Glen shaleneh; and a sad scene was acted there. About ten years ago, a lady of this island drowned herself in the lake which hangs 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 despise a woman under those circumstances."

"Then you would not have consigned her to such a fate?" Wallace was startled by the tone in which this question was asked. It recalled the action in the citadel; and, returning a penetrating look on her, his eyes met hers. He need not have heard farther to have learned more. She looked down and colored; and he, wishing to misunderstand a language so disgraceful to her, so dishonouring to her husband, gave some trifling answer, and, making some observation about the earl, advanced to her. Lord Mar was 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 their little pinnace drawn up under the castle. The countess, hastening into the room where the young chieftains sat (for the earl had retired to repose), inquired the reason that that boat been drawn so near the castle. "Only that it may take us from it," replied Murray. The countess fixed her eyes upon Wallace. "My gratitude is ever due to your kindness, my dear madam," said he; "and that we may ever deserve it, we go to keep the enemy from your doors."

"Yes," added Murray, "and to keep a more insidious foe from our own! Edwin and I feel it rather dangerous to bask too long in these sunny bowers." "But surely your chief is not a coward!" 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; "you stir not 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, "and I shall gallop off from your black-eyed Judith, as if by Cupid himself." "So, dear aunt," rejoined Edwin, "if you do not mean to play Circe to our Ulysses, give us leave to go." Lady Mar looked at the boy intently. "Are you indeed my nephew?" Edwin answered gaily—"I hope so; for I am Lord Mar's; and, besides, I hope to be related to all handsome ladies." As he spoke he snatched a kiss from her hand, and darted after Murray, who had disappeared to give some directions respecting the boat.

Left alone with the object of her every wish, she forgot all prudence, all reserve; and laying her hand on his arm, as with a respectful bow, he was away, she rested his steps. She leio him fast; but agitation prevented her speaking; she trembled violently; and, weeping, dropped her head upon his shoulder. He was motionless. He felt the embarrassment of his situation; and, at last he inquired the cause of her uneasiness. "It is for the safety of your nephews,"— "No, no," cried she, interrupting him; "read my fate in that of the Lady of Glen-shaleneh!"

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 uncontrolled that he expected she would swoon in his arms. "Cruel, cruel Wallace!" at last cried she; "your heart is steeled, or it would understand mine; it would at least pity the wretchedness it has created; but I am despaired, and I can yet find the watery grave from which you rescued me."

Wallace took the countess by the arm, and, seating her with gentleness, addressed her:—"Your husband, Lady Mar, is my friend; had I even a heart to give to women, not one sigh should arise in it to his dishonor; 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."

"But were it otherwise," cried she; "only tell me that, had I not been bound with chains which my kinsmen fore-d 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 be shed 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 anything 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 stilled with this?" replied she. "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 throbb of yours. 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 virtue true to me, still memory would speak; still would she urge that the chaste and last kiss, should live there in unblemished sanctity, till again meet her angel embraces in the world to come!"

The countess exclaimed: "What she was, I would be to thee—thy consoler, thine advisor. Time may set me free, Oh! till then, only give me leave to love thee, and I shall be happy." "You dishonor yourself, lady," returned he, "by these petitions. And for what? 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 women; and the voice of love sounds like the funeral knell of her who will never breathe to me more." He rose; and the countess was devising what next to say, when Murray came into the room. Wallace observed that his countenance was troubled. "What has happened?" inquired he. "A messenger from the mainland, with bad news from Ayr."

"Are you of private or public import?" rejoined Wallace. "Of both. There has been a horrid massacre, in which the heads of many noble families have fallen. As he spoke, his countenance revealed to his friend that part of the information he had found himself unable to communicate. "I comprehend my loss," cried Wallace; "Sir Roland Crawford is slain. Bring the messenger in."

Murray withdrew; and Wallace, seeing himself remained with a stern countenance, gazing on the ground. Lady Mar burst not a breath, for fear of disturbing the 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 Southern 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."

On a staff, he was attended by two 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 terms of vassalage unnecessary; and then these fading limbs may sit undisturbed at home under the fig-tree and vine of his planting."

"God grant it!" returned Graham; and he saw Sir Ronald acquitted within the gates. The servants were ordered to remain without. Sir John walked there some time, expecting the re-appearance of the knight; but after an hour's stay he thought his father might be wondering at his delay, and returned his steps towards his own lodgings. As he passed along, he met several Southern detachments hurrying across the streets. In the midst of some of these companies, he saw one or two Scottish men of rank, strangers to him, but who seemed to be prisoners. He did not go far before he met a chieftain whom he knew in these painful circumstances; but as he was hastening towards him, the noble Scot raised his manacled hand, and turned away his head. This was a warning to the young knight; and darting into an obscure alley which led to his father's lodgings, he was hurrying forward, when he saw one of Lord Dundaff's men running towards him. "Waiting with haste, he informed him that a party of armed men had come, under Du Valence's warrant, to seize Lord Dundaff and to take him to prison, there to lie, with others, who 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 that Sir Ronald, his ringleader, with eighteen nobles, his accomplices, had already suffered the punishment of their crime, and were lying headless trunks in the judgment-hall. "Fly, therefore," repeated the man; "fly to Sir William Wallace, and require his warrant, to seize Lord Dundaff and to take him to prison, there to lie, with others, who were charged with having taken a part in a conspiracy with the grandfather of the insurgent Wallace. 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