

THE SCOTTISH CHIEFS; OR THE LIFE OF SIR WILLIAM WALLACE

BY MISS JANE PORTER.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE CITADEL.

When Wallace withdrew, Lady Mar, who had detained Murray, whispered to him that she should like to be present at the planting of the standard. Lord Mar declared his willingness to accompany her, and added, "I can be supported thither by the arm of Andrew; for sorry should I be to be absent from so glorious a sight."

As they approached the citadel, Wallace and Sir Alexander Sorymgeour had gained the summit. The standard of Edward was yet flying. Wallace looked at it for a moment, and then laid 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, he planted the Lion of Scotland in its stead. As the cry of triumph, the loud clashing of victory, burst from every heart, horn, and trumpet below. It was a shout that pierced the skies, and entered the soul of Wallace. "O God!" cried he, "we got not this in possession through our own might; but Thy right hand, and the light of Thy countenance, overthrew the enemy!" Thine conquest, Thine glory!"

"And thus we consecrate the day to Thee, O power of Heaven!" rejoined Sorymgeour. "Let this standard be Thine own, and whithersoever we bear it, the result will be victory!"

Wallace, dropping on his knee, crossed it with his sword, in token that he subscribed to the vow, and, rising, took Sir Alexander by the hand. "My brave friend," said he, "we have here planted the tree of freedom in Scotland. Should its branches, under the hand of God, be watered by the blood of our brave men, 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 is free!"

The colours fixed, Wallace and his colleague descended the tower, and perceiving the earl and countess, who sat on a bench at the end of the platform, approached them. The countess rose, Lord Mar caught his friend by the hand, with a gratulation in his eyes that was unutterable; his lady spoke, hardly conscious of what she said; and Wallace proposed to the earl to retire with Lady Mar into the citadel, where she would be more suitably lodged than in the square tower. Lord Mar was obeying this movement, when, stopping, he exclaimed, "But where is that worthy boy who was your pilot over these perilous rocks? Let me give him a soldier's thanks!"

Happy at so grateful a demand, Wallace 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 earl, "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 wear those of a king," rejoined Lord Mar, unhooking 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 doubts that blessing; he is the son of my heart and soul!"

As he spoke, he would have pressed the young hero to his breast; but Edwin trembling with 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 transient 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 other's embrace. Lady Mar wept; and Wallace, unable to bear the remembrance 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, allowed his cousin Murray to buckle the royal spurs on his feet. The rite over, he kissed Lord Andrew's hand in token of acknowledgment, and called on Wallace to bless the new honours conferred on his knight.

Wallace turned round, and, stretching forth his hand to Edwin, replied, "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 taking his arm, they walked towards the eastern postern.

Agitated with the delightful surprise of thus seeing his favourite sister's son, and exhausted by the variety of his late emotions, the earl acquiesced in a proposal for rest, and leaning on Lord Andrew, proceeded to the citadel.

The countess, lingering at the side of the rough knight of Bothwell, looked back; and when she saw Wallace disappear, she sighed. Murray led the way into the apartment lately occupied by De Valence. Lady Mar cast her eyes round the splendid chamber, and seated herself on one of its tapestried couches. The earl placed himself beside her, and Murray drew a stool towards them, and Kirkpatrick took his leave of the earl.

"My dear Andrew," said the earl, "in the midst of this proud rejoicing, there is yet a canker at my heart. Tell me that, when my beloved Helen disappeared in the tumult at Bothwell, she was under your protection?"

"She was," replied Murray; "and I thank the holy St. Fillan, she is now in the sanctuary of his church." Murray recounted the events which had happened to him from the moment of his withdrawing behind the arras, to his confid-

ing the English soldier, with the iron box, to the care of the priest. Lord Mar sighed heavily when he spoke of this mysterious casket. "Whatever it contains," said he, "it has drawn after it much evil and much good. The domestic peace of Wallace was ruined by it; and the spirit which now restores Scotland to herself was raised by its wrongs! But tell me," added he, "do you think my daughter safe so near the garrison of the enemy?"

"Surely, my lord," said the countess, 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; there she will be safe under the protection of her grandfather."

The earl acquiesced; and, saying that he would consult with Wallace about the safest mode of travel for his daughter, he turned to Lord Andrew to learn further of their late proceedings. But the countess 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!"

"Allow me," resumed Murray, "to be the happy knight that is to bear the surrender of Dumbarton to our sweet cousin. Prevail on Wallace to remain in this garrison till I return; and then full tilt for the walls of old Stirling, and the downfall of Cressingham!"

Both the countess and the earl were pleased with this arrangement. The latter retired into an inner chamber to repose; and the former desired Lord Andrew to inform Wallace, that she should expect to be honoured by his presence at noon, to partake of such fare as the garrison afforded.

On Murray's coming from the citadel, he learnt that Wallace was gone towards the great tower. He followed him; and, under its branches, saw that no enslaved ground shall ever my remains." "I swear," cried Sorymgeour, laying his crossed hands upon the arm of Wallace, "I swear with a double vow: 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 is free!"

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see? Sir Roger Kirkpatrick master of this citadel, and our king's colors flying from its towers! Where is the 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, shall sink into the waves before it again sees the English dragon on its walls."

"And you, noble knight," cried Lennox, "have achieved all this. You are the dawn of a blessed day for Scotland!"

"No," replied Kirkpatrick; "I am but a follower of the man who had struck the blow. Sir William Wallace of Ellerslie is our chief; and, with the power of his virtues, he induces not only friends but enemies to his command." He then narrated the events of the last four and twenty hours. 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 nor slept day nor night for many a month, without thinking or dreaming of some enterprise 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 his clan."

Kirkpatrick gladly turned to obey him, and they mounted the ascent together. Within the barbed-gate stood Wallace, with Sorymgeour and Murray. The earl knee Sorymgeour well, having often seen him in the field as hereditary standard-bearer of the kingdom; of the persons of the others he was ignorant.

"There is Wallace!" exclaimed Kirkpatrick.

"Not one of those very young men?" interrogated the earl.

"Even so," was the answer of the knight; "but his is the youth of the brave Ammon; greybeards are glad to bow before his golden locks, for beneath them is wisdom."

As he spoke, they entered the barbed-gate, and Wallace advanced to meet his guest. "Earl," said he, "you are welcome to Dumbarton Castle."

"Best of my countrymen," returned Lennox, "received 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, warmly straining the earl to his breast, said, "Such support will give sinews to our power. A few months, and, with the blessing of that Arm which has already moved 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 sceptre. But how have you accomplished this? How have you few overturned this English host?"

"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; "I feel the strength of our cause, and from this moment I devote myself to assist it or to die."

"Not to die, my noble lord," said Murray; "we have yet many an eve to dance over the buried fetters of Scotland; and, as a beginning of our jollities, I must remind our leader that my aunt's board awaits him."

Lord Lennox understood, from this address, it was the brave Murray who spoke to him, for he had sullied from Sir Roger Kirkpatrick to explain how the Countess of Mar and her patriot husband came within the castle.

The countess had arrayed herself with all her powers to receive her deliverer, and awaited his arrival with an emotion at her heart which made it bound against her bosom, when she 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 the chiefs entered the porch, she crossed the room to meet them at the door.

The Earl of Lennox stood amazed at the sight of so much beauty and splendour in such a scene. Lady Mar had already attained her thirty-fifth year; but, from the graces of her person, and the address with which she set forth all her charms, the enchanted gazer found it impossible to suppose her more than three or four and twenty. Lennox rather thought that it was some trial, and that she was going to salute, than a wife who had so lately shared captivity with an outlawed husband.

Murray stared at such magnificence in his aunt; but Wallace scarcely observed that it was anything unusual, and, bowing to her, 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 chamber.

Lord Mar had risen from his seat, and, leaning on his sword for his warlike arm refused any of the staff he stood up to 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."

"God armeth the patriot!" was all the reply that Mar made as the tears rolled over his cheek, and he shook him by the hand.

"I have four hundred stout Lennox men," continued the earl, "who, by tomorrow's eve, shall be ready to follow our leader to the very borders."

"Not so soon," interrupted the countess; "our deliverer needs repose."

"I thank your benevolence, Lady Mar," returned Wallace; "but the issue of the night, and the sight of Lord Lennox this day, with the promise of so great a support, are such elements that we must go forward."

"Aye, to be sure," rejoined Kirkpatrick; "Dumbarton was not taken during a sleep, and if we stay loitering here, the devil that holds Stirling Castle may follow the sent of De Valence, and so I lose my revenge."

"What!" said the countess; "and are my lord and I to be left again to our

enemies? Sir William Wallace, I should have thought!"

"Everything, madam," rejoined he, "that is demonstrative of my devotion to your venerable lord; but, with a brave garrison, I hope you will consider yourself safe here until a wider range of security be won, to enable you to retire to Braemar."

As the apostrophe addressed to Wallace, in the latter part of the countess's speech, had been said to himself in a similar tone, so that Lord Mar 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 armed citadel is not the most pleasant abode for a lady; but, at present, excepting perhaps the church, it is the safest; and I would not advise your lady to remove hence, until the plain be made as free as this mountain."

The countess now announced the board in the hall; and the countess leading the way, reluctantly gave her hand to the Earl of Lennox. Lord Mar leaned on the arm of Wallace, and was followed by Edwin and the other chieftains.

CHAPTER XIV.

LADY MAR.

During the repast, the countess fixed her insatiable eyes on the countenance of Wallace. His plumed helmet was laid aside; and the corselet unbuckled from his breast disclosed the symmetry of his fine form, and left his graceful movements to be displayed with advantage by the folds of his 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 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 ruler of peace, the outlaw who she had wished in his grave?

The idea came into her mind, and, bathing them with her tears, have implored his pity and forgiveness. Even as the wish sprung in 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. At that moment, Wallace addressed a few words to her, but she knew not what they were; her soul was in tumult; and a mist passed over her sight, which 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 hers indistinctly. Lady Mar found her situation so strange, and her agitation so inexplicable, that, feeling it impossible to remain longer without giving way to tears, she rose from her seat, and, forcing a smile, courtied to the company, and left the room.

When she had gained the upper apartments, she threw herself along the nearest couch, and, striking her breast, 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! I only twelve hours—hardly twelve—have I seen this William Wallace, and yet my very being is lost in his!"

She was now silent; but thoughts fraught with self-reproach and anguish occupied her mind. Should this god of 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 he had betrayed the cause on which he set his life, she felt that moment would be her last. For now, to save her eyes with gazing on him, to hear the sound of his voice, to receive his smiles, seemed to her a joy she could only surrender with her existence.

What then was the prospect of so soon losing him even to crown himself with a laurel, but to her a living death? To defer his departure was all her study, and, fearing that his restless valor might urge him to accompany Murray in his convey of Helen to the Tweed, she determined to persuade her nephew to set out without the knowledge of his general. She did not allow that it was idolatry which she felt; she felt that the mind of her stepdaughter, which she feared, even to herself, which she could not but feel, was a dangerous element under the plausible excuse of care for the chieftain's safety. Composed by this arrangement, her features became smooth; and, with a sedate air, she received her lord and his friends when they entered the chamber.

But the object of her wishes did not appear. Wallace had taken Lord Lennox to view the dispositions of the fortress. Ill satisfied as she was with his absence, she did not fail to turn it to advantage; and, while her lord and his friends were examining a draft of Scotland, she took Lord Andrew aside, and conversed with him on the subject nearest her heart.

"It certainly belongs to me alone, as her kinsman and friend, to protect Helen to the Tweed," returned Murray; "but, my good lady, I cannot comprehend why I am to lead my fair cousin such a pilgrimage. She is not afraid of heroes. You are safe in Dumbarton; and why not bring her here also?"

"Not for worlds!" exclaimed the countess, thrown on 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 too great a magnet. You must have known that it was the hope of obtaining her which attracted the Lord Soullis and Earl de Valence to Bothwell. The whole castle rung with the quarrel of these two lords on her account, when you effected her escape. Should it be known she is here, the same desire of obtaining her would give double excitement to De Valence to recover the place; and the consequences who can answer for?"

By this argument, Murray was persuaded to relinquish the idea of conveying her to Dumbarton; but remembering what Wallace had said respecting the safety of a religious sanctuary, he

advised that she should be left at St. Fillan's 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 she approved Murray's decision. 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 took up one of the lutes which decorated the apartments of De Valence, and, touching it with exquisite delicacy, breathed the most pathetic air her memory could dictate. Wallace rose from his chair, and walking towards a window, stood with his eyes fixed on the descending sun. "So has set all my joy; so is life to me—a world without a sun—cold, cold, and charmless!"

The countess vainly believed that some sensibility advantageous to her new passion had caused the agitation; and she ran through many a melodious descent, till she saw Wallace start, and with a pale countenance leave the room. There was something in his countenance which excited the alarm of the Earl of Lennox, who arose, and, overtaking the chief at the threshold, inquired what was the matter. "Nothing," answered Wallace, forcing a smile, "but music displeases me. With this reply, he disappeared. The excuse seemed strange; but it was true; for her whose strains user to greet his morning and evening hours were silent in the grave!

Edwin had at intervals cast a glance upon the changing complexion of his commands; and no sooner did he see him hurry from the room, than he also left the apartment. After seeking for a long time, without avail, he was returning, when, attracted by the splendors of the moon which silvered the beacon-hill, he ascended, to tread that activity in light which he had so miraculously passed in darkness. He moved on with a flying step, till a deep sigh arrested him. He listened; it was repeated. He approached the spot, and saw a human figure reclined. 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 drawn very near his friend. "Who goes there?" exclaimed Wallace, starting to 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. "Then some evil has befallen you?" inquired Edwin; "you do not speak?"

Wallace seated himself, 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 you not been good to all—the rescuer of the prisoner 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, it is not written that man was made to mourn?—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 seen my wedded angel clasped 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, brother of my soul, 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 me love you, 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 steadfastly at the young preacher. "Out of the mouth 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 besides.'"

"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 linked than mine."

"What tender affections I can spare from those respectful regions," answered Wallace, pointing to the skies, are thine. The fervours of my ardent soul are Scotland's, or I die; but thou art too young, my brother, to understand all the feelings, all the seeming contradictions of my contending heart."

"Not so," answered Edwin. "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, grief would prey upon your life."

"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 wretched from me, 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; it even now smokes, and the fumes are inextinguishable. Never love as I have loved, and you may be a patriot without tasting of my bitter cup!"

Edwin trembled. "I can love none better than I do you, my general! and is there any crime in that?"

"None, my Edwin; the affections are never criminal when, by their excess, they blind us to superior duties. The offence of mine is judged; and I

advised that she should be left at St. Fillan's 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."

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Wallace seated himself, 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 you not been good to all—the rescuer of the prisoner 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, it is not written that man was made to mourn?—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 seen my wedded angel clasped 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, brother of my soul, 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 me love you, 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 steadfastly at the young preacher. "Out of the mouth 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 besides.'"

"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 linked than mine."

"What tender affections I can spare from those respectful regions," answered Wallace, pointing to the skies, are thine. The fervours of my ardent soul are Scotland's, or I die; but thou art too young