

**The Meeting of Wallace and Bruce  
On the Banks of the Carron**

**By**

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**By**

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THE morn rose bright on scenes renown'd,  
 Wild Caledonia's classic ground,  
 Where the bold sons of other days  
 Won their high fame in Ossian's lays,  
 And fell—but not till Carron's tide  
 With Roman blood was darkly dyed.  
 The morn rose bright—and heard the cry  
 Sent by exulting hosts on high,  
 And saw the white-cross banner float,  
 (While rung each clansman's gathering note)  
 O'er the dark plumes and serried spears  
 Of Scotland's daring Mountaineers,  
 As all elate with hope, they stood,  
 To buy their freedom with their blood.

The sunset shone—to guide the flying,  
 And beam a farewell to the dying !  
 The summer-moon, on Falkirk's field,  
 Streams upon eyes in slumber sealed ;  
 Deep slumber—not to pass away  
 When breaks another morning's ray,  
 Nor vanish, when the trumpet's voice  
 Bids ardent hearts again rejoice ;  
 What sunbeam's glow, what clarion's breath,  
 May chase the still cold sleep of death ?  
 Shrouded in Scotland's blood-stain'd plaid,  
 Low are her mountain-warriors laid ;  
 They fell, on that proud soil, whose mould  
 Was blent with heroes' dust of old,  
 And guarded by the free and brave,  
 Yielded the Roman—but a grave !  
 Nobly they fell—yet with them died  
 The warrior's hope, the leader's pride.  
 Vainly they fell—that martyr-host—  
 All, save the land's high soul, is lost.  
 Blest are the slain ! *they* calmly sleep,  
 Nor hear their bleeding country weep ;  
 The shouts, of England's triumph telling,  
 Reach not their dark and silent dwelling ;  
 And those, surviving to bequeath  
 Their sons the choice of chains or death,

May give the slumberer's lowly bier,  
An envying glance—but not a tear.

But thou, the fearless and the free,  
Devoted Knight of Ellerslie !  
No vassal-spirit, formed to bow  
When storms are gathering, clouds thy brow,  
No shade of fear, or weak despair,  
Blends with indignant sorrow there !  
The ray which streams on yon red field,  
O'er Scotland's cloven helm and shield,  
Glitters not *there* alone, to shed  
Its cloudless beauty o'er the dead,  
But, where smooth Carron's rippling wave,  
Flows near that death-bed of the brave,  
Illuming all the midnight scene,  
Sleeps brightly on thy lofty mien.  
But other beams, O Patriot ! shine  
In each commanding glance of thine,  
And other light hath filled thine eye,  
With inspiration's majesty,  
Caught from th' immortal flame divine,  
Which makes thine inmost heart a shrine !  
Thy voice a prophet's tone hath won,  
The grandeur Freedom lends her son ;  
Thy bearing, a resistless power,  
The ruling genius of the hour ;  
And he, yon Chief, with mien of pride,  
Whom Carron's waves from thee divide,  
Whose haughty gesture fain would seek  
To veil the thoughts that blanch his cheek,  
Feels his reluctant mind controlled  
By thine of more heroic mould ;  
Though, struggling all in vain to war  
With that high mind's ascendant star,  
He, with a conqueror's scornful eye,  
Would mock the name of Liberty.

Heard ye the Patriot's awful voice ?—  
“ Proud Victor ! in thy fame rejoice !  
Hast thou not seen thy brethren slain,  
The harvest of thy battle-plain,

And bathed thy sword in blood, whose spot  
Eternity shall cancel not?  
Rejoice!—with sounds of wild lament,  
O'er her dark heaths and mountains sent,  
With dying moan, and dirge's wail,  
Thy ravaged country bids thee hail!  
Rejoice!—while yet exulting cries,  
From England's conquering host arise,  
And strains of choral triumph tell,  
Her Royal Slave hath fought too well!  
Oh! dark the clouds of woe that rest  
Brooding o'er Scotland's mountain-crest,  
Her shield is cleft, her banner torn,  
O'er martyred chiefs her daughters mourn,  
And not a breeze, but wafts the sound  
Of wailing through the land around.  
Yet deem not thou, till life depart,  
High hope shall leave the patriot's heart,  
Or courage to the storm inured,  
Or stern resolve, by woes matured,  
Oppose, to Fate's severest hour,  
Less than unconquerable power!  
No! though the orbs of heaven expire,  
Thine, Freedom! is a quenchless fire,  
And woe to him whose might would dare,  
The energies of *thy* despair!  
No!—when thy chain, O Bruce! is cast  
O'er thy land's charter'd mountain-blast,  
Then in my yielding soul shall die  
The glorious faith of Liberty.”  
“ Wild hopes! o'er dreamer's mind that  
rise!”

With haughty laugh the Conqueror cries,  
(Yet his dark cheek is flushed with shame,  
And his eye filled with troubled flame;)   
Vain, brief illusions! doomed to fly  
England's red path of victory!  
Is not her sword unmatched in might?  
Her course, a torrent in the fight?  
The terror of her name gone forth  
Wide o'er the regions of the north?  
Far hence, midst other heaths and snows,  
Must freedom's footstep now repose.  
And thou—in lofty dreams elate,  
Enthusiast! strive no more with Fate!  
’Tis vain—the land is lost and won—  
Sheathed be the sword—its task is done.  
Where are the chiefs who stood with thee,  
First in the battles of the free?  
The firm in heart, in spirit high?  
They sought yon fatal field to die.  
Each step of Edward's conquering host  
Hath left a grave on Scotland's coast.”  
“ Vassal of England, yes! a grave  
Where sleep the faithful and the brave,  
And who the glory would resign,  
Of death like theirs, for life like thine?  
They slumber—and the stranger's tread,  
May spurn thy country's noble dead;  
Yet, on the land they loved so well,  
Still shall their burning spirit dwell,  
Their deeds shall hallow Minstrel's theme,  
Their image rise on warrior's dream,  
Their names be inspiration's breath,  
Kindling high hope and scorn of death,  
Till bursts, immortal from the tomb,  
The flame that shall avenge their doom!  
This is no land for chains—away!  
O'er softer climes let tyrants sway!

Think'st thou the mountain and the storm  
 Their hardy sons for bondage form ?  
 Doth our stern wintry blast instil  
 Submission to a despot's will ?  
 No ! we were cast in other mould  
 Than theirs by lawless power controlled !  
 The nurture of our bitter sky  
 Calls forth resisting energy,  
 And the wild fastnesses are ours,  
 The rocks, with their eternal towers !  
 The soul to struggle and to dare,  
 Is mingled with our northern air,  
 And dust beneath our soil is lying  
 Of those who died for fame undying.  
 Tread'st thou that soil ! and can it be,  
 No loftier thought is roused in thee ?  
 Doth no high feeling proudly start  
 From slumber in thine inmost heart ?  
 No secret voice thy bosom thrill,  
 For thine own Scotland pleading still ?  
 Oh ! wake thee yet—indignant claim  
 A nobler fate, a purer fame,  
 And cast to earth thy fetters riven,  
 And take thine offered crown from heaven !  
 Wake ! in that high majestic lot,  
 May the dark past be all forgot,  
 And Scotland shall forgive the field,  
 Where with her blood thy shame was sealed.  
 E'en I—though on that fatal plain  
 Lies my heart's brother with the slain,  
 Though reft of his heroic worth,  
 My spirit dwells alone on earth ;  
 And when all other grief is past,  
 Must *this* be cherished to the last ?  
 Will lead thy battles, guard thy throne,  
 With faith unspotted as his own,  
 Nor in thy noon of fame recall,  
*Whose* was the guilt that wrought his fall."

Still dost thou hear in stern disdain ?  
 Are Freedom's warning accents vain ?  
 No ! royal Bruce ! within thy breast  
 Wakes each high thought, too long sup-  
 press'd,  
 And thy heart's noblest feelings live,  
 Blent in that suppliant word—"Forgive!"  
 "Forgive the wrongs to Scotland done !  
 Wallace ! thy fairest palm is won,  
 And, kindling at my country's shrine,  
 My soul hath caught a spark from thine.  
 Oh ! deem not, in the proudest hour  
 Of triumph and exulting power,—  
 Deem not the light of peace could find  
 A home within my troubled mind.  
 Conflicts, by mortal eye unseen,  
 Dark, silent, secret, there have been,  
 Known but to Him, whose glance can trace  
 Thought to its deepest dwelling-place !  
 —'Tis past—and on my native shore  
 I tread, a rebel son no more.  
 Too blest, if yet my lot may be,  
 In glory's path to follow thee ;  
 If tears, by late repentance poured,  
 May lave the blood-stains from my sword !"  
 Far other tears, O Wallace ! rise  
 From the heart's fountain to thine eyes,  
 Bright, holy, and unchecked they spring,  
 While thy voice falters, "Hail ! my king !  
 Be every wrong, by memory traced,  
 In this full tide of joy effaced !

Hail ! and rejoice !—thy race shall claim  
 A heritage of deathless fame,  
 And Scotland shall arise, at length,  
 Majestic in triumphant strength,  
 An eagle of the rock, that won  
 A way through tempests to the sun !  
 Nor scorn the visions, wildly grand,  
 The prophet-spirit of thy land !  
 By torrent-wave, in desert vast,  
 Those visions o'er my thought have passed,  
 Where mountain-vapours darkly roll,  
 That spirit hath possessed my soul !  
 And shadowy forms have met mine eye,  
 The beings of futurity !  
 And a deep voice of years to be,  
 Hath told that Scotland shall be free !  
 He comes ! exult, thou Sire of Kings !  
 From thee the chief, th' avenger springs !  
 Far o'er the land he comes to save  
 His banners in their glory wave,  
 And Albyn's thousand harps awake  
 On hill and heath, by stream and lake,  
 To swell the strains, that far around  
 Bid the proud name of Bruce resound !  
 And I—but wherefore now recall  
 The whispered omens of my fall ?  
 They come not in mysterious gloom,  
 —There is no bondage in the tomb !  
 O'er the soul's world no tyrant reigns,  
 And earth alone for man hath chains !  
 What though I perish ere the hour  
 When Scotland's vengeance wakes in power,  
 If shed for her, my blood shall stain  
 The field or scaffold not in vain.  
 Its voice, to efforts more sublime,  
 Shall rouse the spirit of her clime,  
 And, in the noontide of her lot,  
 My country shall forget me not !”

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*Art thou forgot ? and hath thy worth  
 Without its glory passed from earth ?*

—Rest with the brave, whose names belong  
To the high sanctity of song,  
Chartered our reverence to control,  
And traced in sunbeams on the soul!  
*Think, Wallace!* while the heart hath still  
One pulse a generous thought can thrill,  
While youth's warm tears are yet the meed  
Of martyr's death, or hero's deed,  
Shall brightly live, from age to age,  
Thy country's proudest heritage!  
'Midst her green vales thy fame is dwelling,  
Thy deeds her mountain-winds are telling,  
Thy memory speaks in torrent-wave,  
Thy step hath hallowed rock and cave,  
And cold the wanderer's heart must be,  
That holds no converse there with thee!

Yet, Scotland! to thy champion's shade,  
Still are thy grateful rites delayed!  
From lands of old renown, o'erspread  
With proud memorials of the dead,  
The trophied urn, the breathing bust,  
The pillar, guarding noble dust,  
The shrine where art and genius high  
Have laboured for eternity;  
The stranger comes—his eye explores  
The wilds of thy majestic shores,  
Yet vainly seeks one votive stone,  
Raised to the hero all thine own.

Land of bright deeds and minstrel-lore!  
Withhold that guerdon now no more.  
On some bold height, of awful form,  
Stern eyrie of the cloud and storm,  
Sublimely mingling with the skies,  
Bid the proud Cenotaph arise!  
Not to *record* the name that thrills  
Thy soul, the watch-word of thy hills,  
Not to assert, with needless claim,  
The bright *for ever* of its fame;  
But, in the ages yet untold,  
When *ours* shall be the days of old,  
To rouse high hearts, and speak thy pride  
In him, for thee who lived and died.

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