

THE

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AND

Surprising Adventures

OF

THAT RENOWNED HERO,

Sir W<sup>M</sup> WALLACE.

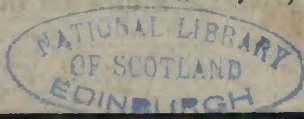
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THE  
HISTORY  
OF  
Sir William Wallace.

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SIR WILLIAM WALLACE was a descendant of an ancient and honourable family in the west of Scotland; he was the younger son of Sir Malcolm Wallace of Ellerslie, by his wife, who was a daughter of Ronald Crawford, Sheriff of Ayr. The precise period of Wallace's birth is unknown, but it is highly probable that it must have been some time before the death of Alexander III. in 1286.

The mind of Wallace in his younger days was directed in its progress to maturity by John Blair, a Benedictine monk at Dundee, who was afterwards his chaplain, and lived to record his exploits.

It appears, that during the early part of his life, Wallace had resided chiefly in retirement. At what time he first emerged from the peace and the improve-

ment of private life is uncertain ; but it is presumed to have been about the period of the battle of Dunbar, where the discipline of Edward's soldiers triumphed over the loose violence of the Scottish army, as much as his political finesse overcame the wisdom of the Scottish nobility in other spheres of contention.

After the humiliation of Scotland, Wallace returned to Dundee, (if in fact he had been engaged in the war), for the purpose of studying under the superintendance of his tutor, Blair. He beheld the oppression of his countrymen with horror and indignation ; he sympathized with the sufferings of individuals, and he mourned the degradation of his native land. While these sentiments animated his bosom, he was, in an accidental rencounter, insulted by a young Englishman, son of Selby, the constable of Dundee. Though a stripling, he possessed inconceivable bodily strength ; he overcame young Selby in a scuffle that ensued, and killed him with his own dagger, in presence of a number of his followers. This action exposed him to the rage of the English, compelled him to seek refuge in retirement from the punishment which would have followed. Having slain all Selby's attendants who op-

opposed his flight, and being still pursued very keenly, he went into an inn, exhausted with his exertions. Wallace was instantly dressed in the attire of a female, and was busily employed twirling his distaff and humming his song, when the pursuers searched the house which they had seen him enter. They were so completely outwitted by this device, that they did not discover him: and upon retiring from the immediate pursuit, he found himself at leisure to concert and adopt measures for more effectually securing his retreat. Having left the roof of his kind hostess, he bent his steps towards the residence of a parental uncle at Dunipace.

Wallace, after a short stay with his mother at Dunipace, proceeded to Ellerslie. On their arrival, they learned from Sir Ronald Crawford, the lady's husband and elder son had been cruelly murdered at Lochmaben by the English, who infested and tyrannised over the whole country without control. The old lady got a promise of protection from Percy, Edward's lord lieutenant; but Wallace scorned to accept of protection from the hands of those men who had become the tools of that tyrant's oppressions. In this situation of his affairs, he went to live in secrecy at the house of his paternal uncle

Sir Richard Wallace of Riccarton, where his restless and patriotic aversion to the English tyranny permitted him not long to remain. One day he went a fishing, and in the course of his pastime was interrupted by the insolent rapacity of some of Lord Percy's followers who happened to pass the spot, where he saw the only weapon he had was his fishing staff, with this he beat one of them to the ground, and having wrested the sword from his hand he soon taught the crowd, by whom he was speedily assailed, that his individual strength, skill, and intrepidity, were superior to their united force; he killed several of the party, and the others fled, confounded at the matchless prowess of their single antagonist. He rode home triumphant to his uncle, on a horse left by the persons whom he killed or terrified, and now he was inspired with a just confidence in his own powers by these exploits. His residence with Sir Richard now becoming very insecure, he resolved to devote his mightiest exertions, and his life itself, to the deliverance of his country, or to the chastisement of its oppressors; and, accordingly, he destroyed as many English as came in his way, sparing neither the dignified nor the mean. For these noble actions he was outlawed by the English, and compelled to

lived during the most inclement seasons of the year entirely in the open fields, the woods and mountains, where he often wandered subjected to all hardships, that it is possible for human nature to sustain, but animated by a spirit that enabled him to bid defiance to the direst calamities that assailed him.

The exploits of Wallace were soon generally known, and attracted the notice of many, who, dreading the stratagems of Edward to subvert their independence had courage to hazard their lives for the liberty of their country. At the head of such men as these, Wallace performed such exploits as posterity has surveyed with astonishment. He would frequently sally out of his lurking places, and with a handful of men defeat whole multitudes. His personal strength was extraordinary, and had often been tried; but to this he did not so much trust as to stratagem. Expedition and indefatigable, cautious, though undaunted, he eluded the pursuits of his enemies, and never exposed himself to numbers, but when certain to frustrate their endeavours, if not to triumph in their destruction. The English having proclaimed a justice meeting to be held at the town of Ayr, [18th June, 1296,] many of the neighbouring landed gentry attended, se-

veral of whom being accused of felony, were immediately condemned and executed. Among these were Sir Ronald Crawford, Sheriff of Ayr, and uncle of Wallace, Sir Bryce Blair, Sir Neil Montgomery, and many of the barrons of Kyle, Cunningham, Carrick, and Clydesdale. The few who escaped, having informed Wallace of this dreadful catastrophe, he, with his usual intrepidity, immediately assembled fifty of his followers, secretly entered Ayr in the night, and set fire to the place, where many of the English were asleep. The garrison issuing forth from the castles fell into an ambush laid for them, and were all put to the sword. The fort being immediately seized, Wallace marched next morning to Glasgow, when engaging a body of troops under the command of Lord Henry Percy, he completely routed them, and quickly after took the castle of Stirling, recovered Argyle and Lorn, with the town of St. Johnston, and adjacent country, and continued daily, in short, to do some signal mischief to the English and their friends. Travelling through Angus and Mearns, he arrived at Aberdeen, from which the English had just made their escape by sea, and made himself master of all the towns of consequence in the north. In the mean time, Sir William

Wallace was, by the majority of the kingdom, elected guardian of Scotland, and vicery in the absence of Baliol. The castle of Dundee was the only place that withstood the arms of Wallace in the north. While besieging this fort he got intelligence of the approach of the English army, commanded by John Earl of Surrey, and Sir Hugh Cressingham, and joined by many disaffected Scots, to the number altogether of about thirty thousand men; Wallace commanded the burghers, upon pain of death, to prosecute with vigour the siege he had begun, and he himself, with ten thousand faithful adherents, marched towards Stirling, and encamped in an advantageous situation upon a hill above the monastery of Cambuskenneth, on the north side of the Forth; which, having no fords at that place, was passable only by a wooden bridge. The English army lay on the south of the Forth; and their generals being desirous of bringing matters to an accommodation, sent two Dominican friars with overtures of peace to Wallace. These terms, insulting in the last degree to the honour and independance of Scotland, were rejected with disdain. "Tell your officers, (said Wallace,) that we have not come to this place to sue for peace, that now we are ready to



find and will immediately evince, that our country is still free." This answer irritated the English generals, several of whom despising Wallace and his followers, presumptuously exclaimed, "They are all our own, let us instantly charge them." The bridge formerly mentioned, over which it behoved the army to pass, was both narrow and weak, and the Scottish carpenter, who shortly before had been employed to repair it, had by Wallace's desire, cut the main beams of it half through, and thereby rendered it incapable of supporting a great weight. Urged by the impetuosity of Cressingham, Surrey gave orders to the army to march along the bridge; and Sir Marmaduke Twenge, a gentleman distinguished for valour and resolution, led the van, and boldly advanced at the foot of the hill, on which the Scots had drawn up their army in order of battle. Here Wallace remained till he saw as many of the English had got over as he thought he could safely encounter, but so far from making a formidable opposition, he gradually retreated as Sir Marmaduke advanced. The English commander pursued with vigour; but soon discovered that there was not a standard of his countrymen in his rear. While some of the Scots seemed to flee before him, the

greater part having taken an unfrequented road, completely intersepted his retreat, and the bridge having broken down by the immense weight of so many armed men, vast quantities were drowned in the river. All the English who had crossed the river, to the number of six or seven thousand, were put to the sword, except Sir Marmaduke and a very few, who stood on the north side of the water, and made their escape by swimming across the river. Surrey, during all this time, had the galling mortification of seeing his men drowned and slain, without being able to afford them the smallest relief. As soon as Twenge joined Surrey, he advised him to set on fire the remaining part of the bridge, to prevent the victorious Scots from pursuing and harassing their disheartened army. This expellient proved of little use, for the Great Steward of Scotland and the Earl of Lennox, having previously posted themselves in an ambush, at a short distance from the English, came from behind the mountains, as soon as they ascertained the event of the day, charged the retiring Earl, put him to flight, and pursued him with such vigour, that with difficulty he escaped to Berwick.

This glorious battle, so disastrous to the English army, was fought on the 13th Sep-

tember. Sir Andrew Murray was the only Scotchman of note that lost his life, although many of the English commanders fell this day. This victory was evinced to be complete in its effects and consequences. No Englishman durst remain in Scotland; and all those Scots, who, for reasons of policy or of baseness, had deserted to the English interest, now submitted to Wallace, and hailed him as the deliverer of their country. And thus, in about fourteen months after the king had been deposed and his kingdom subdued, and obliged to own a foreign prince as their hereditary king, did Wallace, till then a private and obscure gentleman, unaccustomed to martial exploits, without money or arms, but such as he took from the enemy, and with only a handful of men, restore the nation to its ancient liberty and independence.

Although the plunder taken at the battle of Stirling was not inconsiderable, yet so many armies ranging through all parts of the kingdom, occasioned a great scarcity, and a general famine was seriously apprehended. To prevent this calamity, Wallace issued orders, commanding all Scotsmen capable of bearing arms to be ready to join him by turns. The men thus raised were formed into

regiments, and had officers appointed over them. Having thus arranged all domestic affairs, and collected as many men as he thought necessary for his purpose, he, under himself, as commander, appointed Andrew Murray, surnamed the noble, son of Andrew Murray, who shortly before fell at the battle of Stirling, and entered England on the eighteenth of October. The inhabitants of Northumberland, alarmed at his approach, leaving the country defenceless, fled with their families and effects to Newcastle. Upon this Wallace and his army halted, or rather seemed to retreat. The country people observing their retrograde motion, returned to their houses, and were all unawares surprised by parties of the Scottish army, who ravaged the whole country between Tyne and Derwent, for the space of twenty-three days. A body of fresh troops advancing now to the borders, some of the former were sent home, and had the peculiar satisfaction of carrying back with them to their friends the welcome news of their various success, particularly the plenty of food they had procured in the land of their enemies. But Wallace did not think proper to attack them, or to push his successes farther: he had already done sufficient mischief to his enemies, and

had at an easy rate, obtained much glory to his countrymen, and reflected distinguished lustre on the Scottish arms.

The fame of Wallace, and the splendid victories which he had gained both in Scotland and in England, spread abroad, and attracted the attention of the courts of England and France. Philip the Fair, the French monarch, heard of his successes with joy: but Edward the I. king of England observed them with decided displeasure; he felt much at being outstripped by one, whom he accounted his inferior. The constable and marshall of England, the earls of Gloucester, Surrey, and Arundel, and a great majority of the earls and barons of the kingdom agreed that a large army should be instantly raised, and that within eight days all the forces they could collect should assemble at Newcastle. This meeting took place as appointed, and the army was found to consist of four thousand and five hundred cavalry, and upwards of a hundred thousand infantry. The prince and fore-said noblemen headed this immense body, marched against the Scots, relieved the castle of Roxburgh, which Wallace was besieging, and took possession of Berwick, which the Scottish garrison had abandoned as untenable; and hav-

ing proceeded thus far, they received orders from Edward to halt, till he himself, having now settled his affairs abroad, should come home, and put an end to the disturbances in Scotland.

Edward having arrived in England on the 21st of March, immediately sent letters to Wallace, replete with insult and abuse. He told him that he durst not have attempted to revolt in Scotland, far less an invasion on England, had he himself been in the island. Sir William received Edward's messenger with that dignity which became his present situation, and replied, that he had more reason to take the advantage of Edward's absence to deliver his country from servitude, than he of the divisions of a free and independent people to enslave them: he added, that he had invaded England to repay the injuries done to Scotland; that he meant to keep his Easter in the same country, and that he invited his highness to that feast. He punctually did what he promised. Edward had a great army to oppose him; but Sir William's courage, which had been conspicuous all along, did not fail him here; with his usual intrepidity, he collected his chosen troops, rallied, and came in view of the mighty monarch near Stanmore.

Edward's army appeared to the Scots to

be incredibly numerous, the armour of the soldiers glittering, the equipage of the officers rich and elegant, and the sound of their trumpets, and noise of their drums, pompous and terrible. Yet such was the ardour and bravery of many in the Scottish army, that they requested leave from their guardian to go a pickering, and thus by conspicuously evincing their undaunted intrepidity, to aim at the honour of knighthood. But this favour Wallace was by no means disposed to confer: he issued a proclamation, commanding all his men, upon pain of death, to keep their ranks, to march with gravity, and to attempt nothing without his orders. Edward observed, and admired the order, discipline, and formidable appearance of the same enemy that he had been hitherto accustomed to despise. His own veteran and experienced soldiers had not by this time arrived from Flanders, and in his situation he thought it improper to hazard his own glory, the lives of his nobles, and the forfeiture of his claim, with an undisciplined though numerous militia, against a small but resistless army, in which every officer and every soldier acted the part of a hero. Edward therefore wisely retired, and Wallace with no less prudence, checked the impetuous courage of his men, who,

seeing the enemy retreat, were eager to follow and charge their rear. He again upon pain of death, discharged every one from stirring from the ranks, and told his followers "that they had done enough when they stood their ground, and kept their countenance in the presence of such a power, which one would thought was able to have swallowed them up: that this was in effect a victory, and too much the more glorious, that they had gained it without drawing their swords." This speech being circulated through the army, had an agreeable influence upon all their minds; the officers alighted from their horses, and the whole army prostrated themselves on the ground while, according to the custom of the day, they sung the praises of St. Andrew the patron of Scotland, and returned thanks to St. Cuthbert, on whose feast, and in some measure by whose intercession, they attributed their courage having been roused, and their enemies put to flight.

The glory of Sir William Wallace was now at its height; and as, by numerous and gallant exploits, he had become the admiration of Europe, and the terror of England, and the darling of his countrymen; so he was the object of the envy, jealousy, and fear of the nobility.



John Cummine of Badenoch and Robert Bruce earl of Carrick, both of the blood royal, and of aspiring dispositions, were afraid that he would at length usurp the sovereignty, and sieze upon the crown, to which they had a just and legal title. These considerations made the one join openly with the enemy, and the other to act but faintly against him.

“ Thus did Scotland, by the wonderful conduct and vigilance of its Guardian, enjoy peace in the midst of war, and the people, guarded by repeated victories over their enemies, securely cultivated the formerly neglected soil, and dispersed plenty over the land ; while at the same time the more powerful nobles, inebriated with envy and jealousy, outwardly professed all the gratitude that was due to the admired achievements of their deliverer, but secretly conspired his ruin ; in order to effect this, caused rumours to be spread abroad, intimating that he designed to usurp the crown : and that if an usurper must reign, a great and mighty monarch, though a foreigner, was preferable to an upstart of yesterday.

By this time, the formidable army which Edward had left at Flanders, was returned to England ; and he to strengthen it by the addition of all the forces

which that kingdom, with Ireland and Wales, could raise, had gratified his nobles, respecting the privileges for which they had long contended: and now their jealousies being completely removed, they marched with him against the Scots, with courage and alacrity. To oppose this formidable power Wallace had not above thirty thousand, including both horse and foot; yet in that high state of discipline which they had attained, and animated with that patriotic ardour which had long marked their conduct, they would doubtless have withstood their enemies, had they been commanded by the guardian alone; but unfortunately, two men, of acknowledged bravery indeed, but,—as were the greater part of the nobility and their immediate dependants, for the reasons already noticed,—his secret enemies, divided with him the command.

In this position did they remain at Falkirk, which is situated about eleven miles from Stirling, till the army of Edward appeared on the 22d day of July, after having reduced several castles, and penetrated thus far into the heart of the kingdom. And now was the time that the animosities that unhappily subsisted between the commanders should have been entirely banished; but, unfortunately for Scotland, this

was not the case. Each of them would have the honour of going first upon the head of the van; Wallace, because he was guardian of the kingdom; Cumine, on account of his more numerous vassalage and royal birth; and Stewart, because he acted that day in the place of his brother, the Lord High Steward himself, whose vassals or military tenants would obey be commands but what he gave them; and he is said to have stood so much upon this punctilio of honour, that he upbraided Wallace to his face, charged him with ambition and pride, and compared him to the owl in the fable, which had nothing originally of its own, but begged a feather of every bird, and thus having acquired rich and gay plumage, pretended to beauty and superiority above all others.

It is easy to conjecture what must have been the result of a battle begun at such an unfortunate period, and in such a manner. While the fatal debate was agitated with the greatest heat, Edward, although he had that very morning got a fall from his horse, by which two of his ribs were broken, caused a charge to be sounded. The Scots were soon routed, and they lost upwards of ten thousand men. Sir John Cumine, with those under his command, went away without fighting at all: Sir

John Stewart fought bravely, and died honourably, as did all his dependants. And the guardian, who, in the beginning of the action, had just sufficient leisure to address this short speech to his men, "I have brought you to the king, fly if you can," did all that could be expected from the greatest commander in the world.

Thus Wallace, by the means to which we have already adverted, was obliged to retreat; on which account, and because of the numerous forces he brought to the field, he was branded as the main author of all the losses which his country had sustained.

This line of conduct, however, he was soon after disposed to follow: for by Sir John Cummine's conduct, both before and after the battle, and by the conversation which he afterwards had with Robert Bruce Earl of Carraik, he plainly understood that these great men were actuated by mere jealousy, a passion, of all others the least easily checked; and that both having a view to the crown, would always oppose, at least would never heartily concur with one, who, in their apprehension, had merit and ambition enough to set it on his own head.

After the glorious victory obtained in the beginning of the campaign 1302, by

the Scots, in the vicinity of Roslin, when he had reason to conclude that his country stood not so much in need of his service. It is said, in his voyage to France, he fought with and made prisoner, the famous French pirate, Thomas de Longueville, commonly called the Red Reiver; and that he was heartily welcomed, and very much caressed by Philip the Fair.

At a time when their services were again required, Sir William Wallace and his unconquerable friends appeared again in the field, in opposition to that irresistible army, upon the head of which King Edward marched triumphantly through, and a second time subdued nearly the whole kingdom of Scotland. King Edward had got reason to dread our hero; that Prince did not think himself an absolute conqueror while he survived. But Wallace was not, as others, to be awed into submission, by fines, forfeitures, or threats; he therefore courted him with large and magnificent promises of honours and wealth, places and pensions—but in vain—his constant answer, both to his intimate friends, and to the emissaries of King Edward, who addressed him on the subject was, “that he owed his life to, and would willingly lay it down for his country; that should all Scotchmen but him.

self submit to the king of England, he never would; nor would he yield allegiance to any power, except the king of Scotland his rightful sovereign."

Since, therefore, neither threats nor bribes nor example, neither open force nor secret stratagem, could conquer the invincible soul of our undaunted hero. Edward bethought him of the traitor Sir John Monteith, one of those in whom he placed the most unbounded confidence, who brought a party of Englishmen upon him, as he lay concealed in the neighbourhood of Glasgow. These having immediately apprehended him, carried him to London, by orders of king Edward. As this misfortune, the greatest which at this juncture could befall the kingdom of Scotland, was inexpressibly afflicting to all its sincere friends and honest defenders, so it gave joy and pleasure to all ranks of people in England. They now imagined that the war was at an end; yet even the king could not but pity the hard fate of a hero so renowned.

When he arrived in London, he was conducted to and lodged in the house of one William Delect, in Fenchurch street. The next day he was brought on horseback to Westminster, attended by several knights, the mayor, sheriffs, and aldermen of the city, with many other persons of eminence

and rank ; in presence of all whom he was seated on the south bench of the great hall, and either because they wished the people to believe that he aspired to the crown of Scotland, or because it was reported that he had formerly boasted that he deserved to wear a diadem, in that place they crowned him with laurel, while Sir Peter Mallory impeached him with high treason. To this charge he boldly replied, " That a traitor he never was, nor could be, to the King of England." The other crimes for which he was indicted, such as burning of towns, storming of castles, killing the English, &c. he frankly acknowledged, but denied that they were crimes, unless mistaken loyalty to one's sovereign, with deference to whom, and in whose name he had ever acted—zeal for the just rights and liberties of one's native country, by the community of which he was created a magistrate—and resisting the encroachments of a foreign government and tyrannical surpation—shall deserve to be branded with that odious name. However, these heroic virtues were voted crimes ; and the prisoner, notwithstanding he had never acknowledged or submitted to the laws of England, was tried by them, and condemned to be hanged, drawn and quartered, and whilst alive, to have his bowels cut out ; all

which was executed with the utmost severity, or rather relentless barbarity.

It is doubtless if ever any country produced a hero similar to Wallace. Wallace, only a private gentleman, the second brother of a Scots laird, who—though he had martial England to contend with, and ambitious Edward, who had spread terror in other nations by the power of his arms—wrought the salvation of his country, and rescued its liberties, its ancient rights and privileges from the else certain destruction which brooded over them, with few of the nobility and commonalty to support him or support his cause, till by exploits incredible for their greatness he wrought them into belief, that under him they would prove invincible. No man ever attempted more than he, yet none was more cautious, or better understood the arts of stratagem. Untutored himself, he taught the whole nation to be soldiers, and disciplined them so admirably, that had it been thought proper to have carried on his plan, Scotland could always afford at least thirty thousand men ready for any enterprise whatever, and that too without being chargeable to the government, or depopulating the country.

THE END