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THE SCOTTISH CHIEFS;

OR
The Heroic Adventures of Wallace
and Bruce.

BY MISS JANE PORTER.

In the Spring of 1296 Scotland groaned under the yoke of the English Edward. King Baliol was a prisoner, and England's supremacy was acknowledged by all the Scottish nobles, save the brave and youthful Sir William Wallace, who lived secluded in the glen of Ellerslie with his beautiful bride Marion, whom he had tenderly loved from his childhood. Suddenly summoned to Douglas castle, a small iron box, left with Douglas by the captive Baliol, was confided to Wallace's care, with the charge:

"It will be at the peril of his soul who dares to open it till Scotland be again free!"

Returning home, he rescued the Earl of Mar from a throng of merciless English soldiers, killed Arthur Heselrigge, their leader, and narrowly escaped with his own life. Pursued to Ellerslie by the enraged English, the wounded Earl was hidden in a dry well, Wallace climbed into an oak, and Marion concealed herself in a thicket. The search being baffled, Wallace hastened to hide himself among the Carlane crags, but the next day Governor Heselrigge, Arthur's uncle, came and violently demanded:

"Where is Sir William Wallace?"

Lady Marion remained silent.

"Speak, woman! If you refuse, you die!"

"I die," she answered, "and may heaven preserve my Wallace from the fangs of Edward and his tyrants!"

"Bastardous wretch!" cried Heselrigge, plunging his sword in her defenseless breast.

"My Wallace—to God!" murmured Marion, as another fiendish stroke reached her heart, and her pure spirit fled to heaven.

An aged servant escaped to the Carlane crags with the heart-breaking news:

"Oh, my murdered wife! my unborn babe!" cried the agonized Wallace.

Give me power, Almighty Judge, to avenge this angel's blood, and then take me to Thyself!"

Gath'ring a band of sixty brave Lauchers, Wallace fell like a thunderbolt on Heselrigge's fortress and slew the wretch with the same bloody sword that had ended Marion's life.

"So fall the enemies of Wallace," cried his exulting followers.

"Rather so fall the enemies of Scotland," he replied. "To work our country's freedom, who will follow me?"

"All! With Wallace forever!"

The first nobleman to join this daring crusade was the rescued Earl of Mar. But he was speedily captured and Bothwell castle was seized by the Scotch Lord Soules and the English Aymer de Valence, both of whom had sued in vain for the hand of the Earl's daughter, the lovely Helen Mar. Dreading their violence, she escaped with her cousin Andrew Murray by a secret passage to the priory of St. Filians. Her father and his wife were confined at Dumbarton castle, Wallace and his few followers were hemmed in on the Carlane crags by swarms of English soldiers, and Lady Helen, decoyed from the priory, fell into the hands of the brutal Soules. Crossing the mountains by night he sought to take the utmost advantage of his helpless prisoner, whose hand was raised to save her honor by plunging a knife into her own breast, when an unknown knight suddenly fell upon him, wounded him severely, and spirited Lady Helen away to a hermit's cell. The strange knight concealed his name, but both Helen and the hermit believed him to be young Robert Bruce.

Wallace, meanwhile, eluded his pursuers, joined his slender forces with those of Andrew Murray and a few other fearless Scots, and marched to attack Dumbarton castle. By night the patriots scaled its walls, cut down the English garrison, and planted the royal Scottish standard upon the captured citadel. The Earl of Mar was released, and Edwin Rutliven, his nephew, a lad of fifteen, was knighted for his bravery by Wallace, to whom he attached himself with more than a brother's devotion. The Earl's wife, Helen's young step-mother, was seized with a passion for Wallace, whose coldness only served to increase

her guilty love. She persuaded him to escort the Earl and herself to Rothsay castle, in the isle of Bute, where she shamelessly petitioned:

"Only give me leave to love thee, and I shall be happy!"

He had scarcely finished rebuking her when a messenger arrived with news that Wallace's grandfather and eighteen other Scottish chiefs had been treacherously murdered at Ayr!

"This arm shall show how I loved that good old man!" cried the afflicted Wallace, and, hastening to Dumbarton, he gathered his forces and marched instantly on Ayr. The palace was seized and surrounded with combustibles, and Wallace, tearing off part of the roof, showed himself with a flaming brand in his hand to the affrighted revelers within, and cried aloud, as he threw it among them:

"The blood of the murdered calls for vengeance, and it comes!"

Hundreds perished in the flames and by the sword hundreds more surrendered, and a long train of captive chiefs found release. Castle after castle fell in rapid succession before the valor of Wallace, and at last Berwick was besieged and taken. At the height of this victory a letter from Helen Mar informed Wallace that she and her parents were prisoners at Stirling, and that the Earl's life was in deadly peril.

"I shall be on my knees," she wrote, "till I hear you trumpet before the walls, for in you and heaven now rest all the hopes of Helen Mar!"

Another swift march and fierce attack instantly followed. But while victory hung in the balance sixty thousand English were marching on Wallace's little army of five thousand. The first division of twenty thousand essayed to cross the Forth by a bridge, the beams of which he Scots had secretly sawed. By suddenly pulling this down a multitude were whelmed in the stream, and the rest, attacked both front and rear, were soon overwhelmed. The savage valor of Wallace's followers so dismayed the English that the remaining forty thousand men laid down their arms without a blow! The citadel of Stirling surrendered at once, and the Earl of Mar, his wife, and the lovely Helen, were again set free.

In the rejoicings over this triumph Helen was amazed to find in Sir William Wallace the knight who had rescued her from the fierce Soules, and for whom her heart had cherished a pure though hidden affection. Knowing his devotion to the memory of Marion she felt herself destined only to such love as a nun feels for her heavenly preserver. But her step-mother's wicked passion burned with renewed fierceness, and she plotted to win Wallace's regard and make him king of Scotland, hoping thus, at her husband's death, to gratify both her love and her ambition as Wallace's wife. But he repelled her wicked advances, refused the crown, and consented only to act as regent of Scotland till Bruce should resume the throne. Among his prisoners was the treacherous Aymer de Valence, who, full of jealous envy against Wallace, sought to stab him in the chapel, whither Helen had gone to pray for his safety. A deadly stroke meant for him pierced Helen's arm, but De Valence's villainy was generously forgiven.

War being resumed, after an exchange of captives, the English Percy was routed, and Northumberland was sacked from sea to sea by the victorious Scots. King Edward then marched in person to subdue the insurgents, but in the opening battle between him and Wallace, the amazed king found himself obliged to retreat for the first time in his life. In this very hour of triumph, envy and treason began to plot the ruin of Wallace. A plan to surrender Dunbar was unmasked by the adroitness and bravery of Helen Mar! Edward invaded Scotland with a hundred thousand men; Wallace's authority was bitterly disputed by traitors, and on the field of Falkirk his army was nearly crushed. But gathering his scattered forces, he fell by night on the English camp, and rested not until he had driven Edward and his shattered hosts over the border. Many a brave Scot was slain in this struggle, and Helen Mar was captured by the ruthless Aymer de Valence.

"Swear to me, Wallace," ejaculated her grief-stricken father, "that you will rescue my Helen!"

"So help me, Heaven!" answered

Wallace, looking steadily upwards.

Resigning his regency soon after, to quell the dissensions caused by envy of his glory, he disguised himself as a minstrel and traveled to the English court, at Durham, in search of Helen. Here he met young Robert Bruce whom Edward held a prisoner, and even dared to play before the king and Queen Margaret, whose admiration of the strange minstrel excited Edward's raging jealousy which was not allayed until Wallace, escaping to France, sent him a letter declaring the queen's perfect innocence. Followed soon by Bruce, the two traced Aymer de Valence to a castle near Rouen, where Wallace soon penetrated to Helen's prison chamber. He found her sleeping and murmuring in dreams: "Save me, Wallace!"

Dressed in a page's suit, which he had provided for her, the once more happy Helen safely escaped from her heartless captor, and journeyed with Wallace and Bruce to Paris, where the French king treated them all with the utmost kindness. Returning at last to Scotland with their fair companion, the chiefs thought it prudent to pass as two brothers, Guy and Thomas de Longneville. Joining thus with their countrymen in battle against an overwhelming English force the Scots were on the point of retreating, when defeat was changed to triumph by the supposed Guy, who raised his helmet and shouted: "Scots, if you be men, follow William Wallace to victory!"

This success re-established his authority, and again he devoted himself to expelling the English from Scotland. But an unknown knight who had joined his train and fought by his side, suddenly proved to be the Countess of Mar, whose husband was now dead, and who sought in this disguise to win Wallace's regard. Firmly repulsed by him, her passion turned to hate, and plucking his dagger from his girdle she stuck it into his breast, though not with fatal effect. Her eyes glared with maniac fury, and she exclaimed:

"Insolent triumpher, it is not for the dead Marion you have trampled on my heart, but for the living Helen!"

"I pardon this outrage," said Wallace; "go in peace, only remember, that with regard to Helen my wishes are as pure as her innocence."

"I go," cried she, "to yield the rebel Wallace to the scaffold! My curse pursues you here and hereafter." Too well she kept her word, for upon charges of treason preferred by her Wallace was arrested and brought to Stirling, where the wretched woman sought by the most shameful perjuries to swear away his honor and his life. While his enemies were quarreling over the charges an English army advanced into Scotland with such resistless strides that his very adherents were compelled to solicit him to resume the command. On the plain of Dalkeith he conquered again, but his malignant rivals once more combined with King Edward to crush him forever.

Outlawed by his own ungrateful country, and a price set on his head by England, his few faithful friends were powerless to save him. For gold a soulless traitor betrayed him to the English, and he was flung into the tower of London, and condemned to die.

The frenzied Helen, dressed in the page's suit in which Wallace had rescued her from De Valence, journeyed to London alone, bribed the guard, and gaining access to Wallace's cell, fell cold and senseless at his feet.

"Helen!" exclaimed he, in alarm; "dread! gone to tell Marion that her Wallace comes! blessed angel, take me with thee!"

But Helen revived at his voice, and spoke such words of pure devotion to her benefactor that Wallace cried:

"Thy soul and Marion's are indeed one!"

To give her an unquestioned right to stay and comfort his last hours, the priest of the prison pronounced the words that made Helen Mar the wife of the doomed patriot. Life was offered him at the price of dishonor, but he refused the gift. The furious Edward would not relent, and Wallace was led to the scaffold. But as he clasped the brave Helen in a last embrace, his soul escaped from its earthly tenement before the executioner could act his cruel part.

The agonized Bruce, whose weakness resulting from wounds had prevented him from aiding his friend, followed Helen to London, and in his frenzied

grief was hardly restrained from assaulting Edward, single handed, in his palace. But calmer counsels prevailed, and the royal mourner returned to Scotland, where Wallace's death had re-lighted the fires of patriotism and steeled every true heart against the English usurper. At Bannockburn the power of Edward was broken, and the Countess of Mar, baffled by Bruce's triumph, became a raving maniac.

Upon the day of Bruce's coronation the body of William Wallace was returned to his native land. Over his coffin the mysterious iron box, confided to his care the day he rescued the Earl of Mar, was opened, and found to contain the regalia of Scotland. The pale yet beautiful Helen, clad in a nun's black vestments, knelt by the bier as the crown was placed on Bruce's head.

"Look up," he cried, "and let thy soul, discoursing with thy Wallace, tell him that Scotland is free, and Bruce a king!"

She spoke not, she moved not. Both well raised her clay-cold face.

"Thy soul is fled, my lord," said he, "but from yon eternal sphere they now together look upon you!"

Period of Self-Conceit.

In almost every man's life there is a period of self-conceit. But with a true heart and a well balanced head the disease is of short duration, and is not liable to recur. There are only a few incurable cases, and still fewer in which one's vanity becomes inflated as seasons leave their silvery register upon his locks. The period is somewhere between fifteen and twenty-five, at which men are generally the smartest. They are ages then, are standards of wisdom in all things. They are Zacheuses in the giddy heights of the sycamore. Some of them tumble out and break their necks, while others see their folly and come down among humble and wise men. But this is a critical period in one's life. He may act foolishly towards others, but others should exercise discretion toward him.

Older men should not aggravate the ill, but bear patiently and gently with it. Kindness and patience will best help a young man through this crisis of vanity. Harsh treatment may leave unpleasant reflections after the patient has been restored. The insane and delirious never forget derision and ill treatment. So the puffed-up young man may remember all attempts to puncture him with ridicule. After his collapse of vanity, and the normal adjustment of his faculties, he may know who had pity and patience, and who sought to kill rather than cure. We would therefore say to our brethren: Bear with that vain young man; he may be ripening into maturer strength that shall largely advance the cause of truth.

Use of Silence.

A pity that so few people understand the full effect of well-timed silence! How eloquent it is in reality! Acquiescence, contradiction, difference, disdain, embarrassment and awe may all be expressed by saying nothing. It may be necessary to illustrate this apparent paradox by a few examples. Should you hear an assertion which you may deem false, made by some one of whose vacuity politeness may withhold you from openly declaring your doubt, you denote a difference of opinion by remaining silent. Are you receiving a reprimand from a superior? You mark your respect by an attentive silence. Are you compelled to listen to the frivolous conversation of a fool? You signify your opinion of him by treating his loquacity with silence. Again, how much domestic strife might have been prevented, how often might the quarrel which by mutual aggravation has, perhaps, terminated in bloodshed, had it been checked in the commencement by a judicious silence! Those persons only who have experienced them are aware of the beneficial effects of that forbearance, which to the exasperating threat, the malicious sneer, or the unjustly imputed culpability, shall never answer a word. A soft answer turns away wrath; but sometimes erring humanity cannot give this soft answer in moments of irritation; in such cases, there stands the fortress of silence, with doors wide open, as a refuge for the tired spirit until calmer moments come. Think of this seriously, you who glory in having "the last word."

Fenced In.

"Don't believe in joinin' churches, any way," said Farmer Rye, as he stood leaning on the bars of the meadow lot, talking to his niece Ruthie, who had just come from the woods with her arms and hands full of ferns and mosses, and clematis wreaths.

She had found time at last to speak a word to "Uncle Charlie," whom she dearly loved. There had been earnest prayers before that, you may be sure, that the kindly, upright, honest man might not trust to his purity of life, but find salvation in Christ's finished atonement. And she had said just now:

"Then, Uncle, dear, why don't you stand out on the Lord's side, and come into His army?"

Uncle Charlie tipped up his old hat from behind, as he was wont to do when annoyed; and leaning his crossed arms on the fence-rail, looked quite away from the girl's earnest face, as he continued: "Pears to me, if a body's got any religion, they ought to be able to stick to it without being tethered up like a wild steer."

Ruthie said nothing at first; then, with a golden maple branch pointed over to the corner of the wide lawn in front of the house, which had been newly redeemed from the wilderness and fenced in, nearly.

Outside there were briars, and thickets, and bogs, and marshy spots, and wandering footpaths and thorny bushes. Inside was the level stretch of redeemed green sward, with the graded paths that touched, at curves and angles; or clumps of evergreens and beds of roses blooming yet, though autumn had come.

"Uncle Charlie, what a difference that fence made, didn't it? I think that poor little strip of land must be so glad. Now it feels as though it belongs to somebody, and somebody cares for it; so it's just blooming out its gratitude because it has been redeemed: isn't it?"

Uncle Charlie looked down at the earnest little face a moment, and said:

"Trot along, dear; most tea-time," and Ruthie came home heavy-hearted.

But a great joy was coming to her with the next communion season, when, in his quaint way, Uncle Charlie said:

"Ruthie, I'm goin' to be fenced in, and belong to somebody."

And when the cup of blessing came it touched his reverent lips, while little Ruthie was softly giving thanks the while.—Ethel Lynn Beers in the Sower.

Think-Speak-Act.

Would that every one could realize the vast importance of these little words, think, speak act. In this world where character is continually in a state of commotion, and scarce ever reaches a climax, it is no little thing, but it behooves us that we reflect how to speak, think and act. In our lives is not visible the effects of our actions, but their influences will show themselves when our bodies are laid beneath the sod. The influence of many words and actions never dies, but like circles in water when a stone is cast into its bosom, keeps widening till we can scarce define it, or our eyes reach its boundaries. Many times our words and actions may touch a chord in the harp of humanity, the influence of which will vibrate throughout eternity; and it is the same if the influence be for good or evil. Not a thought in our mind, not a word escapes our lips, not an action is performed, but that God is witness of. How important it is, then, that our every endeavor be for the good, and that we weigh well every thought, word and action. If we do this, our influence will assuredly be good, and such that we shall never have the cause to regret.

A three-ton iron roller lay at the top of a high hill in Eureka, Cal. A boy called his companions' attention to the chance for fun in seeing it go down the long and heavy grade. They started it with considerably difficulty, and at the very outset it ran over a pile of slates and school books, crushing them to bits. Gaining speed as it whirled along, it soon overtook and flattened a dog. Next, it smashed a wagon, from which a man jumped just in time to save his life; and then, quitting the road, it crashed through a Chinaman's shanty, and buried itself in a ravine. The boys are said to have been fully satisfied with the diversion.