

# Varieties of Female Gothic

Historical Gothic

Edited by  
Gary Kelly



ROUTLEDGE  


## VARIETIES OF FEMALE GOTHIC





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# VARIETIES OF FEMALE GOTHIC

*General editor:*  
Gary Kelly

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Historical Gothic

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Jane Porter,  
The Scottish Chiefs (1810),  
Part 2



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THE  
SCOTTISH CHIEFS,  
A ROMANCE.  
IN FIVE VOLUMES.

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BY MISS JANE PORTER,

AUTHOR OF THADDEUS OF WARSAW, AND REMARKS  
ON SIDNEY'S APHORISMS.

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There comes a voice that awakes my soul. It is the voice of years that are gone; they  
roll before me with all their deeds.

OSSIAN.

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## THE SCOTTISH CHIEFS.

### CHAP. I.

WALLACE, having disposed part of his men in commanding posts around the town, went forward with his chosen troops towards the place where, from the information of his scouts, he deemed it most likely he should intercept De Warenne. He took his position upon an advantageous ground about half a mile from Stirling, near to the abbey of Cambus-kenneth. The Forth lay before him, crossed by a wooden bridge, over which the enemy must pass to reach him, as the river was not in that part fordable, and some late rains had rendered it at present particularly swollen.

The beams which supported this bridge, he ordered to be sawed at the bottom; but not moved in the least, that they might stand perfectly firm for as long as he should deem it necessary. To each beam were fastened strong ropes; all of which were held by some of his sturdiest Lanerkers who lay concealed amongst the rushes. These preparations being made, he drew up his troops in order of battle. Kirkpatrick and Murray commanded the flanks. In the centre stood Wallace himself, with Ramsay on one side of him, and Edwin with Scrymgeour on the other, awaiting with steady expectation the approach of the enemy, who, by this time, he knew could not be far distant.

Cressingham, from the information he had received, was also as well aware of the proximity of De Warenne; and burning with malice against Wallace, and earnest to redeem the favour of De Valence by some act in his behalf, (having left certain orders with his lieutenant) he went alone to an avenue of escape that was never divulged to any but to the commanders of the fortress; and there, by the light of a torch, making his way through a passage that was bored in the rock, he emerged at its western base, amongst a thicket of obscuring bushes. He had wisely arrayed himself in a shepherd's dress, in case of being observed by any passing Scot; but fortune favored him, and unseen he crept along through the underwood and furze on the ground, till he came up with the advance of De Warenne's army on the skirts of Torwood.

Having missed Wallace in West Lothian, where he expected to find him, De Warenne divided his army into three divisions, to enter Stirlingshire by different routes, hoping by that means certainly to intercept him in one of them. The Earl of Montgomery led the first, of twenty thousand men; Baron Hilton the second, of ten thousand; and De Valence himself, the third, of thirty thousand.

It was the first of these divisions that Cressingham encountered in Torwood; and immediately revealing himself, he was conducted to Lord Montgomery, to whom he recounted how rapidly Wallace had gained the town, and in what jeopardy stood the citadel if he were not instantly attacked. The Earl advised waiting for a junction with Hilton or the Lord Warden, 'which,' said he; 'must happen in the course of a few hours.'

'In the course of a few hours,' returned Cressingham, 'you will have no Stirling castle to defend. The enemy will seize it at sun-set in pursuance of the very agreement by which I warded him off, to give us time to annihilate him before that hour. Therefore no hesitation, if we would not see him lock the gates of the north of Scotland upon us, even when we have the power to hurl him to perdition.'

By arguments such as these, the young Earl was induced to give up his judgment; and accompanied by Cressingham, who felt himself brave amid such a host, he proceeded to the southern bank of the Forth.

The troops of Wallace were drawn up on the opposite shore, hardly five thousand strong; but so disposed that the enemy could not calculate their numbers: yet, the narrowness of their front suggested to Cressingham the idea that they could not be very numerous, as he must have left forces to occupy the outworks of the town and the citadel. 'It will be easy to surround the rebel,' cried he, 'and that we may effect our enterprise, and rescue De Valence, before the arrival of our Warden robs us of the honour, let us about it directly, and cross the bridge!'

Montgomery replied, that he thought a herald ought to be sent to inform Wallace, that besides the long line of troops he saw, De Warenne was advancing with double hosts: and therefore if he would now surrender, a pardon should be granted to him in the king's name, for all his late rebellions. Cressingham was vehement against this measure, but Montgomery being resolute, the messenger was sent.

In a few minutes he returned, and repeated to the two Southron commanders the words of Wallace: – 'Go,' said he, 'tell your masters we came not here to treat for a pardon of what we shall never allow to be an offence: We came to assert our rights, and to set Scotland free. Till that is effected, all negotiation is vain. Let them advance, they will find us prepared.'

'Then onward!' cried Montgomery; and spurring his steed, he led the way to the bridge: his eager soldiers followed, and the whole of his centre ranks passed over. The flanks advanced, and the bridge from end to end was filled with archers, cavalry, gens d'armes, and war carriages; and Cressingham in the midst, was halloing in proud triumph to those who occupied the rear of the straining arches; when the blast of a trumpet sounded from the till now silent and

immoveable Scottish phalanx: It was re-echoed by loud shouts from behind the passing enemy – And in that moment the supporting beams of the bridge<sup>(a)</sup> were pulled away, and the whole of its mailed throng fell into the roaring stream.

The cries of the maimed and the drowning, were joined by the terrific slogen of the two bands of Scots; the one with Wallace on the north of the river; and the other under the command of Sir John Graham, who had lain in ambush on the south, ready to assail the rear of the enemy the moment the bridge should fall. Both parties rushing down upon the dismayed troops, attacked them with a sweeping impetuosity which drove those who fought on land, into the river; and those who had escaped the flood, to meet its waves again, a bleeding host.

In the midst of this conflict, which rather seemed a carnage than a battle, Kirkpatrick, having heard the proud shouts of Cressingham on the bridge, now sought him amidst its ruined arches with a ferocity which seemed to transmute his own nature into that of a fiend thirsting for blood, as he ran from man to man of those who emerged from the water. But even while his glaring eyeballs and uplifted axe threatened their destruction, he only looked on them, and with imprecations of disappointment, rushed forward on the same chase. Almost in despair that the waves had stolen from him his revenge, he was hurrying on in another direction, when he perceived a body moving through some sedges in a hollow on his right. He turned, and saw the object of his search crawling amongst the mud which lay on that spot.

‘Ha!’ cried Kirkpatrick with a voice of thunder: ‘Art thou yet mine? – Damned, damned villain!’ cried he, springing upon his breast; ‘Behold the man you dishonoured – Behold the hot cheek which your dastard hand dared pollute! – Thy blood shall obliterate the stain; – and then Kirkpatrick may again front the proudest in Scotland!’

‘For mercy!’ cried the horror-struck Cressingham; struggling with almost preternatural strength to extricate himself.

‘Hell would be my portion, did I grant any to thee,’ cried Kirkpatrick; and with one stroke of his axe, he severed his head from his body. ‘I am a man again!’ shouted he, as he held its bleeding veins in his hand, and placed it on the point of his sword. ‘Thou ruthless priest of Moloch and of Mammon, thou shalt have thine own blood to drink, while I shew my general how proudly I am avenged!’ As he spoke, he dashed again amongst the victorious ranks of his less sanguinary brethren in arms; and came up with Wallace at the very moment he was extricating himself from his fallen horse, which a random arrow from the opposite shore had killed. Murray at the same instant was bringing towards him the wounded Montgomery, who came to surrender his sword, and to beg quarter for his men. The Earl turned deadly pale, as the first object that struck his sight was the fierce knight of Torthorald walking under a stream of blood, which continued to flow from the ghastly head of Cressingham as he held it triumphantly in the air.

‘If that be your chief?’ cried Montgomery, ‘I have mistaken him much – I cannot yield my sword to him.’



Murray understood him: – ‘If cruelty be an evil spirit,’ returned he, ‘it has fled every breast in this army to shelter with Sir Roger Kirkpatrick, and its name is Legion! *That* is my chief!’ added he, pointing to Wallace with an evident consciousness of deriving honour from his command. The chieftain rose from the ground, and though dyed in the same ensanguined hue that had excited the abhorrence of Montgomery, yet it had been drawn from his own veins and those of his horse, and all of blood about him seemed to be on his garments; none was in his eyes; none in his heart, but what warmed it to mercy, and to benevolence, for all mankind. His eye momentarily fell on the approaching figure of Kirkpatrick, who, waving the head in the air, blew the triumphal notes of the Pryse<sup>(b)</sup> from his bugle, and then cried aloud: ‘I have slain the tiger of Scotland! I have sent my brave Loch-Doiners to case my target with his skin:<sup>(c)</sup> and when I strike its bossy sides, I will exclaim as I do now, *‘So perishes my dishonour! So perish all the enemies of Scotland!’*’

‘And with the extinction of that breath, Kirkpatrick,’ cried Wallace, looking sternly from the head to him; ‘let your fell revenge perish also. For your own honour, commit no indignities on the body you have slain. – Let us subdue our enemies, but not riot in their fall!’

‘Tis for you, my general, to conquer like a God!’ cried Kirkpatrick; ‘I have felt as a man, and like a man I revenge. This head shall destroy even in death: It shall vanquish its friends for me; for I will wear it like a Gorgon<sup>1</sup> on my sword to turn to stone every Southron who looks on it.’ As he spoke, he disappeared amongst the thickening ranks, towards the shattered bridge; and as the rejoicing Scots hailed him as he passed, Montgomery struck to the heart by every shout of triumph, suffered Murray to lead him forwards to the scene of his humility.

The ever comprehensive eye of Wallace perceived him as he advanced; and guessing, by his armour and dignified demeanor, who he was; with a noble grace he raised his helmet from his head, as the Earl approached him. Montgomery looked on him; he felt his soul even more subdued than his arms; but still there was something about a soldier’s heart that shrunk from yielding his power of resistance. The blood mounted into his before pale cheeks: he held out his sword in silence to the victor, for he could not bring his tongue to pronounce the word *‘surrender.’*

Wallace put it gently back with his hand: ‘Ever wear what you honour,’ said he, ‘but, gallant Montgomery, when you next draw it, let it be in a better cause. Learn, brave Earl, to discriminate between a warrior’s glory and his shame: between being the defender of his own country, and the unprovoked ravager of another’s.’

Montgomery blushed scarlet deep at these words; but it was not with resentment. He looked down for a moment: ‘Ah!’ thought he to himself, ‘perhaps I ought never to have drawn it here!’ Then raising his eyes to Wallace, he said – ‘Were you not the enemy of my king, who, though a conqueror, sanctions none of the cruelties that have been committed in his name; I would give you my hand before the remnant of his brave troops, whose lives you grant. But you

have my heart: a heart that knows no difference between friend or foe, when the bonds of virtue would unite what only civil dissensions divide.'

'Had your king possessed the virtues you believe he does,' replied Wallace, 'my sword might have now been a pruning hook. But that is past! We are in arms for injuries received, and to drive out a tyrant: For, believe me, noble Montgomery, that monarch has little pretensions to virtue, who suffers the oppressors of his people, or of his conquests, to go unpunished. To connive at cruelty is to practise it. And has Edward ever frowned on one of those despots, who in his name, have, for these two years past, laid Scotland in blood and ashes?'

The appeal was too strong for Montgomery to answer: he felt its truth; and bowed, with an expression in his face that told more than as a subject of England, he dared declare.

Wallace now turned to a herald, and commanded him to sound the notes of peace. He sounded: – and where the moment before was the horrid clash of arms, the yell of savage conquest, and the piercing cries for mercy, all was still as death. Not that death which has past; but that which is approaching: – None spoke; not a sound was heard but the low groans of the dying, who lay overwhelmed and perishing under the bodies of the slain, and the feet of the living.

The voice of Wallace rose from this dreary pause. Its sound was ever the har-binger of glory or of *good will to men*.<sup>2</sup> 'Soldiers!' cried he, 'God has given us victory. – Let us shew our gratitude, by healing those images of himself which we have broken! – Gather the wounded into quarters, and bury the dead.'

The late silence was now turned into a buz of busy heads and hands, all eager to obey their commander. The prisoners were conducted to the rear of the town, while the major part of the troops, to allow the appointed detachment to unburthen the earth of its bleeding load, crossed the river at the ford, and came in front of Stirling just as De Warenne's division appeared on the horizon like a moving cloud gilded by the now setting sun. At this sight, Wallace sent Edwin into the town with Lord Montgomery, and extending his line, prepared to bear down upon the approaching Earl.

But the Lord Warden had received information which fought better for the Scots than a host of swords. When he had advanced a very little onward on the carse of Stirling, a scout, whom he had previously sent out, (and who had approached the south border of the Forth at the very moment Kirkpatrick came forward waving the bloody head of Cressingham on his sword,) met him; and related that he had seen the remains of the slaughtered Governor of Stirling, the river floating with dead bodies, and Southron soldiers flying on all sides, while the Scottish horns were blowing the notes of victory. From what he had learnt from the fugitives, he also informed his lord, that he had found it necessary to fly, for fear of being impeded in his return to him, as the town and citadel of Stirling had not only been taken by Sir William Wallace, but the two detachments under Montgomery and Hilton were both discomfited, and their leaders slain or taken.



At this intelligence, Earl de Warenne stood aghast: and while he was still doubting that such disgrace to King Edwards arms could be possible, two or three fugitives came up and witnessed to its truth: For one of them having been near Cressingham in the wood, when he told Montgomery of the capture of de Valence, concluded that he meant the leader of the other detachment; and corroborating the Scout's information of the two defeats, and of the town and citadel being entirely in the possession of the Scots, he added, (for terror had multiplied objects in his vision;) that their army was incalculable; and was so disposed by Sir William Wallace, as to appear few; that he might ensnare his enemies by filling them with hopes of an easy conquest.

These accounts had already persuaded Warenne to make a retreat: but Wallace, perceiving a sort of confusion in his enemy's flanks, and that they seemed making a retrograde motion in no very good order, called his men to the attack; and with fixed pikes bearing down upon them, while a stream of arrows from his archers behind, poured upon them with such thickness as to darken the air, he sent Graham round by the wood to take the enemy in flank. All was executed with promptitude; and the tremendous slogen of victory sounding from side to side, the terrified Southrons, before panic-struck, now threw away their arms to lighten themselves for escape; and dreadful would have been the slaughter, had not de Warenne, sensible that it is not the number of the dead but the terror of the living which gives the finishing stroke to conquest, and believing that now all was lost, to put at end to the useless carnage of his troops, sounded a parley.

The bugle of Wallace instantly answered it. De Warenne sent forward his herald. He offered to lay down his arms at the feet of Sir William Wallace, provided that he might be exempted from relinquishing the royal standard, and that he and his men might be permitted to return unmolested into England.

Wallace accepted the first article: granted the second; but added, that with regard to the third, he would accord with it on condition, That he, the Lord de Warenne, and the officers taken in his army, or in other engagements lately fought in Scotland, should be immediately exchanged for the like number of Scots he should name, who were prisoners in England; and that the common men of the army now about to surrender their arms, should take an oath never to serve again against Scotland.

These preliminaries being agreed to, the Lord Warden advanced at the head of his 30,000 troops; and first laying down his sword, which Wallace immediately returned to him, the officers and soldiers marched by with their heads uncovered, throwing down their pikes, bows, arrows, and swords, as they approached their conqueror. Wallace extended his line as the procession moved; for he had too much policy to shew his enemies that 30,000 men, had yielded almost without striking a blow, to hardly 5,000. The oath was administered to each regiment by heralds sent for that purpose round into the strath of Monteith, whither he directed the captured legions to assemble and refresh themselves by sleep, previous to their march the next morning for England. The privates thus disposed of, Wallace, hoping that Hilton might also fall into his

hands, resolved to pass the night in Torwood under arms; and, therefore, to release himself from the commanders also, he told De Warenne that duty kept him from returning with him into the town; but that he should receive every respect from the Scottish officers.

He then gave directions to Sir Alexander Ramsay; who, with a small detachment, escorted De Warenne and the rest of the noble prisoners to Stirling.



## CHAP. II.

THE first prisoners being lodged behind the town, and the wounded Southrons carried into the abbey of Cambuskenneth, while those of the Scots were brought into Stirling; Edwin was pleased to hear that all had been done according to his general's orders. But even while he was listening to the returns of the subalterns who had been on these duties, he perceived that Montgomery became faint from fatigue and loss of blood; and contriving that he should be carried in a litter, as he could no longer sit a horse, he conducted him to Snawdown; the ancient palace of the kings of Scotland in Stirling, but which had lately been inhabited by Cressingham. The priests, who in Wallace's army not only exercised the Levitical but the good Samaritan functions,<sup>3</sup> soon obeyed Edwin's orders; and he had the pleasure of seeing the Earl's wounds drest, and himself laid without pain, and composedly, on a couch.

Messengers had arrived from Wallace to his young knight, and to the other captains in and about Stirling, to acquaint them with the surrender of De Warenne's army. Hence no surprise was created in the breast of Montgomery, when he saw his commander enter the room as the prisoner of the illustrious Scot.

Montgomery held out his hand to the Lord Warden in silence, and with a flushed cheek.

'Blush not, my noble friend!' cried De Warenne, 'these wounds speak more eloquently than a thousand tongues, the gallantry with which you maintained the sword that fate compelled you to surrender. But I, without a scratch! How can I meet the unconquered Edward? And yet it was not for myself I feared: my brave and confiding soldiers were in all my thoughts. For, I saw that it was not to meet an army I led them; but against a whirlwind, a storm of war with which no strength that I commanded could contend.'

While the English generals thus conversed, Edwin, whose impatient heart yearned to be again at the side of its brother, gladly resigned the charge of his noble prisoner to Sir Alexander Ramsay, whose gentle courtesy of manners, he knew, would well supply the place of his divided spirit. As soon as he found a cessation in the conversation of the two Earls, he drew near Montgomery to take his leave.

'Farewel, till we meet again!' said the young Earl, pressing his hand; 'You have been a brother rather than an enemy to me.'

'Because,' returned Edwin, smiling, 'I follow the example of my general, who would willingly be no man's enemy, but the brother of all mankind.'

Warrenne looked at him with surprise: 'And who are you, who, in that strippling form, utter sentiments which might grace the maturest years?'

Edwin blushed, but with a sweet dignity replied – 'I am Edwin Ruthven, the adopted brother of Sir William Wallace.'

'And the son of him,' asked De Warrenne, 'who with Sir William Wallace, was the first to mount Dumbarton walls?'

At these words of the Lord Warden, the glowing blush on the cheek of Edwin was suffused with a more animated bloom. At the moment when his courage was distinguished on the heights of Dumbarton by the vowed friendship of Wallace, he found his heart expand with a new emotion; he loved, and was beloved by the bravest and most amiable of beings, and in his light he felt both warmth and brightness. But this question of De Warrenne conveyed to him that he had found fame himself; that he was then acknowledged to be an object not unworthy of being called the brother of Sir William Wallace! – and casting down his eyes, beaming with exultation, from the fixed gaze of De Warrenne, he answered: – 'I am that happy Ruthven who had the honour to mount Dumbarton rock by the side of my general; and from his hand, there received the stroke of knighthood.'

De Warrenne rose, much agitated; 'If such be the boys of Scotland, need we wonder when the spirit of resistance is roused in the nation, that our strength should wither before its men!'

'At least,' said Montgomery, whose admiration of what had past, seemed to re-animate his before languid faculties; 'it deprives defeat of its sting, when we are conscious that we yielded to a power that was irresistible. But, my Lord,' added he, 'if the courage of this youth amazes you; what will you say ought to be the fate of this country, ought to be the crown of Sir William Wallace's career, when you know by what a chain of brave hearts he is surrounded? All that approach him, seem to partake of his invincible soul: even tender woman loses the weakness of her sex when she belongs to him.' Earl de Warrenne, surprised at the energy with which he spoke, looked at him with an expression that told him so. – 'Yes,' continued he, 'I witnessed the dauntless heroism of the loveliest of human beings when, in the midst of an armed host, she defended the character of her husband, and preserved the secret of his retreat inviolate; I saw that matchless woman whom Sir Arthur Heselrigge so basely slew.'

'Surely,' cried Edwin with indignant vehemence, 'you were not a spectator of that bloody deed? If you were, retire from this house; go to Cambuskenneth, any where; but leave this town before the injured Wallace arrives; and blast not his eyes with a second sight of one who could have beheld his wife murdered.'

Every eye was now fixed on the commanding figure of the young Edwin, who stood with the determination of being obeyed breathing in every look. De Warrenne then at once saw the possibility of so gentle a creature being transformed into the soul of enterprise, into the fearless and effective soldier.

Lord Montgomery held out his hand to Edwin. – 'By this right arm, I swear, noble youth, that had I been on the spot when Heselrigge lifted his sword against the breast of Lady Wallace; though he was then my commanding officer,

and an ignominious death might have awaited me, I would have sheathed my sword in his! It was then that I saw Lady Wallace. Heselrigge, offended with my want of severity in the scrutiny I had made at Ellerslie a few hours before; sent me under an arrest to Ayr. Arnulf quarrelled with me on the same subject; and I retired in disgust to England.'

'Then how? – you ought to be Sir Gilbert Hambleton?' said Edwin, 'but whoever you are, as you were kind to the Lady Marion, I cannot but regret my late hasty charge; and for which I beg your pardon?'

Montgomery took his hand and pressed it: 'Generous Ruthven, your warmth is too honourable to need forgiveness. – I am that Sir Gilbert Hambleton; and had I remained so, I should not now be in Scotland. But, in consequence of an uncle's death, a few weeks ago I became Earl of Montgomery; and in my first interview with the Prince of Wales, he told me that it had been rumoured I was disloyal in my heart to my king: *and to prove*, said he to me, *the falsehood of your calumniators, I appoint you second in command to Earl de Warenne in the new expedition against Scotland*. To have refused to fight against Sir William Wallace, would have been to have accused myself of treason. And while I respected the husband of the murdered Lady Wallace, I yet regarded him as an insurgent; and with the same spirit you follow him to the field, I obeyed the commands of my prince.'

'Justice is justice, Lord Montgomery!' returned Edwin, 'let princes say what they will. But I am rejoiced to meet one who proves to me, what my general, wronged as he has been, yet always inculcates – that all the Southrons are not base and cruel. When he knows who is indeed his prisoner, what recollections will it not awaken! But gratitude to you, will be at least an assuasive to the rest. To-morrow morning you will see him. Till then I shall not intimate to him the melancholy satisfaction he is to enjoy; for, with the remembrances it will arouse, your presence must bring the antidote.'

Young Edwin then telling Ramsay in what parts of the palace the rest of the lords were to be lodged, took his leave of the party; and with recovered composure descended to the court-yard to mount his horse to rejoin Wallace. He was galloping along under the bright light of the moon, when he heard a squadron on full speed approaching, and presently Murray appeared at the head of the troop. 'Edwin,' cried he, 'I was coming to you. We are sent to demand the instant surrender of the citadel. Hilton's division has struck, and we are complete masters of the field.'

He then proceeded to relate that the Baron came up about half an hour after Earl de Warenne had marched towards the town. Sir William Wallace immediately sent forward his heralds with the colours of De Valence, and Montgomery, with the personal banner of De Warenne, and required him to lay down his arms. The sight of these standards was sufficient to assure Hilton that there was no deceit in the embassy; and not seeing any reason for 10,000 men disputing the day with a power to whom 50,000 had just surrendered, he directly grounded his arms, and very quietly submitted to the terms proposed.



Wallace, impatient to apprise Lord Mar and his family of their safety; as the castle must be his, since he had discomfited all who would have maintained it against him; and thinking it prudent to lodge the noble prisoners he had taken in a stronger hold than the town; while he was inspecting the secure disposition of his new conquest in the shelter of the wood, he sent off Murray with a considerable number of men, to demand the immediate surrender of the citadel.

Murray gladly obeyed this mission; and now accompanied by Edwin, with the banners of Cressingham and De Warenne trailing in the dust as Scrymgeour held the royal lion over them, the trumpet of the herald summoned the lieutenant to the walls. He feared to appear, well aware of what was going to happen; for he had seen from the battlements of the Keep the dreadful conflict on the banks of the Forth: He had seen the thousands of De Warenne pass before the conqueror: and he now believed that in punishment for the treachery of Cressingham in stealing out under the armistice, and breaking his word to surrender the citadel at sun-set, that Wallace was sending to inform him that the whole garrison should be put to the sword.

Even at the moment when the trumpet blew, driven to the direst extremity, he had forced himself to consult with his enemy; and had just entered Lord Mar's room, to offer him his liberty if he would go to Wallace and treat with him to spare the lives of the garrison. He had scarcely delivered his wishes to the overjoyed Earl, (who, closed up in a solitary dungeon, knew nought of what had happened without; and who expected that his present re-entrance was to lead him to the death that had been twice averted) before he answered for Wallace in the most gracious manner. Indeed, the pale and trembling lieutenant had no sooner spoken the first word, than Mar discerned that it was a suppliant, not an executioner, he saw before him; and he was even promising that clemency from Wallace which he knew dwelt in his heart, when the trumpet sounded.

The lieutenant started horror-struck on his feet: 'It is now too late! I have not made the first overture; and there sounds the death-bell of this garrison! – I saved your life, Earl,' said he, turning more confidently to Mar; 'when the enraged Cressingham commanded me to pull the cord which would have launched you into eternity: – I disobeyed him! – For my sake, then, seek to preserve this garrison, and accompany me to the ramparts.'

The chains were immediately knocked off the limbs of Mar; and the lieutenant presenting him with a sword, they, together, approached the battlements. As the declining moon shone on their backs, Murray did not discern that it was his uncle who mounted the wall. But calling to him in a voice which declared there was no appeal, pointed to the humbled colours of Edward, and demanded the instant surrender of the citadel.

'Let it be then with the pledge of Sir William Wallace's mercy?' cried the venerable Earl.

'With every pledge, Lord Mar,' returned Murray, now joyfully recognising his uncle, 'which you think safe to give.'

‘Then the keys of the citadel are yours,’ cried the lieutenant, ‘I only ask the lives of my garrison.’

This was granted; and immediate preparations made for the admission of the Scots. As the enraptured Edwin heard the heavy chains of the portcullis drawing up, and the massy bolts of the huge doors grating in their guards, he thought of his mother’s liberty, of his father’s joy in pressing her again in his arms; and hastening to the tower where that lord, with an anxious heart held watch over the now sleeping De Valence, he told him all that had happened; ‘Go, my father,’ added he, ‘enter with Murray, and be the first to open the prison doors of my dearest mother.’

Lord Ruthven embraced his son. – ‘My dear Edwin! this sacrifice to my feelings is worthy of you. But I have a duty to perform superior to even the tenderest private ones. I am planted here by my commander, and shall I quit my station for any gratification, till he gives me leave? No, dear boy. – Be you my representative to your mother: and while my example teaches you, above all earthly considerations, to obey your general, your tender embraces will shew her what I sacrifice to duty.’

Edwin no longer urged his father, but acquiescing in his orders, left his apartment, and flew to the gate of the inner ballium. It was open: and Murray already stood on the platform before the Keep, receiving the keys of the garrison. The business of the surrender being over, ‘Now,’ said he to the lieutenant, ‘lead me to the Ladies Mar and Ruthven, that I may assure them they are free.’

‘Blessed sight!’ whispered the Earl to his nephew; ‘little could I expect, even under my most sanguine expectations when at Bothwell I put the banner of Mar into your unpractised hand, that in the course of four months I should see my brave boy receive the keys of proud Stirling from its commander!’

‘But so it is!’ returned Murray, with a gay smile; ‘and you may think yourself well off if you do not see me pull Edward himself by the beard, before four moons silver my raven locks.’

The gates of the Keep were now unclosed to them: and the lieutenant leading the way, conducted them along a gloomy passage to a low door studded with knobs of iron. As he drew an outward bolt, he said to Lord Mar with a flushed cheek, ‘These severities are not to be laid to my account. They are the hard policy of governor Cressingham.’

He pushed the door slowly open, and discovered a small miserable cell, whose walls of rugged stone had no other covering than the incrustations which time and many a dripping winter had strewn over its vaulted sides. On the ground, on a pallet of straw, lay a female figure in a profound sleep. But the light which the lieutenant held, streaming full upon the uncurtained slumberer, she started, and with a shriek of terror at sight of so many armed men, discovered the pallid features of the Countess of Mar. The Earl, with an anguish which hardly the freedom he was going to bestow could ameliorate, rushed forward, and throwing himself beside her, caught her in his arms.



'Are we then to die?' cried she in a voice of horror, and thrusting him from her; 'Has Wallace abandoned us? — Are we to perish? — Heartless, heartless man!'

The Earl, overcome by the violence of his emotions, could only strain her to his breast in speechless agitation. Edwin, who saw a picture of his mother's sufferings in the present distraction of the Countess, felt his powers of utterance locked up: But Lord Andrew, whose ever-light heart was gay the moment he was no longer unhappy, jocosely answered; 'The world is not to be so relieved, my fair aunt. There are many hearts to die beneath my uncle's sword and your eyes, before the Lady Fates think fit to snip your threads;<sup>4</sup> and meanwhile I come with the shears of Sir William Wallace to clip your chains.'

The name of Wallace, and the intimation that he had sent to set her free, drove every former thought of death and misery from her mind: Again the ambrosial gales of love seemed to breathe around her: she saw not her prison walls; she felt herself again in his presence; and in a blissful trance in which the words of Murray had involved her, she rather endured than participated the warm congratulations of her husband on their mutual safety.

'Let us leave my aunt and uncle together,' whispered Murray to his cousin, 'while we go and open the cages of our other pretty birds; I know, my little one, you want to nestle to your mother; and I promise you I shall have no objection to hear again the soft cooing of the sweet dove of Mar.'

Edwin eagerly acquiesced: and the lieutenant, who preceded them a few paces along the same gallery, said, 'Lady Ruthven's habitation is not better than the Countess's.' As he spoke he threw open the door, and discovered its sad inmate asleep. But when the glad voice of Edwin pierced her ear, when his fond embraces clung to her bosom, her surprise and emotions were almost insupportable. Hardly crediting her senses, that he whom she had believed was safe in the cloisters of St. Columba, could be within the dangerous walls of Stirling; that it was his mailed breast that pressed against her bosom; that it was his voice she heard exclaiming, 'Mother we come to give you freedom!' all appeared to her like a dream of madness.

She listened, she felt him, she even found her cheek wet with his rapturous tears: 'Am I in my right mind?' cried she, looking at him with a fearful yet overjoyed countenance, 'Am I not mad? O! tell me,' cried she, turning round upon Murray and the lieutenant, 'is this my son that I see, or has terror turned my poor brain?'

'It is indeed your son, your Edwin, my very self,' cried he, alarmed at the expression of her voice and countenance. Murray now advanced, and kneeling down by her, gently took her hand. 'He speaks truth, my dear Madam. It is your son Edwin. He left his convent to be a volunteer with Sir William Wallace. He has covered himself with honour on the walls, of Dumbarton, and here also, a sharer in his leader's victories, he is come to set you free.'

At this explanation, which being given in the sober language of reason, Lady Ruthven believed, she gave way to the full happiness of her soul, and falling on

the neck of her son, embraced him with a flood of tears: 'And thy father, Edwin! Where is he? Did not the noble Wallace rescue him from Ayr?'

'He did, and he is here.' Edwin then proceeded to relate to his mother the affectionate embassy of his father and the particulars of his release. Murray perceiving how happily they would be engaged, rose from his knees, and told the lieutenant to conduct him to Lady Helen's door.

'The Lady Helen,' returned the officer, 'lodges in the upper apartments of the Keep.'

Murray leaving the cell of Lady Ruthven, followed the lieutenant up a winding staircase into a stone gallery, where, throwing open a door, he let Lord Andrew into a splendid apartment surrounded with couches on which several women lay asleep. The lieutenant passed through this room, to an opposite door, 'Within this chamber,' said he, 'is Lady Helen.'

'Open the door,' returned Murray, 'though she seems not to have tasted the hardships of her parents, she has shared their misery I do not doubt, and I will not withhold from her a moment of their happiness.'

The lieutenant opened the door, but remembering the charges he had received to treat her with particular respect, he retreated, and Murray entered alone. It was a magnificent bed-chamber, lighted up with lamps in the most superb style. He cautiously approached the bed, fearing too hastily to disturb her, and gently pulling aside the curtain, beheld vacuity. An exclamation of alarm had almost escaped him, when observing a half-open door at the other side of the apartment, he drew towards it, and there beheld his cousin with her back to him, kneeling before a crucifix. She spoke not, but the fervour of her action manifested how earnestly she prayed. He moved behind her, but she heard him not: her whole soul was absorbed in the success of her petition, and at last raising her clasped hands in a paroxysm of emotion, she exclaimed: 'If that trumpet sounded the victory of the Scots, then, Oh, Power of Goodness! receive thy servant's thanks. But if De Warrenne have conquered where De Valence failed, if all whom I love be lost to me here, take me then to thyself; and let my freed spirit fly to their embraces in heaven!'

'Aye, and on earth, too, thou blessed angel!' cried Murray, throwing himself towards her. She started from her knees, and with a cry of such joy as the widow of Serepta uttered when she embraced her son from the dead,<sup>5</sup> Helen threw herself on the bosom of her cousin, and closed her eyes in a blissful swoon – for even while every outward sense seemed fled, the impression of joy played about her heart, and the animated throbings of that of Murray, while he pressed her in his arms, at last aroused her to recollection. Her glistening and uplifted eyes told all the happiness, all the gratitude of her soul. 'My father? – All are safe?' cried she, 'All, my best beloved!' answered Murray, forgetting, in the powerful emotions of his heart, that what he felt and what he uttered were beyond even a cousin's limits – 'My uncle; the Countess; Lord and Lady Ruthven; all are safe.'

'And Sir William Wallace?' cried she, 'You do not mention him. I hope no ill—'



'No evil has happened to him,' interrupted Murray, holding her clasped hands in his, with looks of the fondest affection; 'he is conqueror here. He has subdued every obstacle between Berwick and Stirling, and he has sent me hither to set you and the rest of the dear prisoners free.'

Helen's heart throbbed with a new tumult as he spoke: she longed to ask him whether the unknown knight she had parted from at the hermit's cell, had ever joined Sir William Wallace? She yearned to know that he yet lived. At the thought of the probability of his having fallen in some of these desperate conflicts, her soul seemed to gasp for existence; and dropping her head on her cousin's shoulder: 'Tell me, Andrew,' said she, and there she paused, with an emotion for which she could not account to herself.

'Of what would my sweet cousin inquire?' asked Murray, partaking her agitation, and trembling while he pressed his cheek on her silken hair.

'Nothing particular,' said she, covered with blushes, 'but did you fight alone in these battles? Did no other knight but Sir William Wallace?'

'Many, dearest Helen,' returned he, enraptured at the sensibility of a solicitude which he appropriated to himself, and pressing her gently to his breast. 'Many knights joined our arms. All fought in a manner worthy of their leader, and thanks to heaven, none have fallen.'

'Thanks indeed!' cried Helen, rising from her seat; and with a hope, she dared hardly whisper to herself, of seeing the unknown knight in the gallant train of the conqueror, she said, 'Now Andrew, lead me to my father.'

Murray would perhaps have required a second bidding, had not Lord Mar, impatient to see his daughter, appeared with the Countess at the door of the apartment. Rushing towards them, she fell on the bosom of her father, and while she bathed his face and hands with her glad tears, he too wept, and mingled blessings with his caresses. No coldness here met his paternal heart: no distracting confusions tore her from his arms: no averted looks, by turns, alarmed and chilled the bosom of tenderness. All was innocence and duty in Helen's breast; and every ingenuous action shewed its affection and its joy. The estranged heart of Lady Mar had closed against him: and though he suspected not its wanderings, he felt the unutterable difference between the warm transports of his daughter, and the frigid gratulations forced from the lips of his wife.

Lady Mar gazed with a wierd frown on the lovely form of Helen as she wound her exquisitely turned arms around the Earl in filial tenderness: her bosom, heaving in the snowy whiteness of virgin purity; her face radiant with the softest blooms of youth: all seemed to frame an object, which malignant fiends had conjured up to blast her hopes. 'Wallace will behold these charms!' cried her distracted spirit to herself, 'and then, where am I?'

As her thoughts followed each other, she unconsciously glanced on Helen looks, which, if an evil-eye had any witching power, would have withered all her beauties. At one of these portentous moments the glad eyes of Helen met hers: she started with horror. It made her remember how she had been betrayed, and all she had suffered from Soulis. But she could not forget that she had also been



rescued; and with the thought, the image of her preserver rose before her. At this gentle idea her alarmed countenance took a softer expression; but deeply sighing, both from the recollection of her step-mother's perfidy, and with a fear that she might repeat it; she turned to her father's question of 'How did she come to be with Lady Ruthven, when he had been taught by Lord Andrew to believe that she was safe at Saint Fillan's?'

'Yes,' cried Murray, throwing himself down on a seat beside her, 'I saw in your letter to Sir William Wallace that you had been betrayed by some traitor Scot from your asylum; and but for the fulness of my joy at our meeting, which absorbed all the past in the present, I should have inquired who that villain was?'

Lady Mar, who felt a deadly sickness at her heart on hearing that Sir William Wallace was so far acquainted with her daughter as to have received a letter from her, in despair prepared to listen to what she expected would bring a death-stroke to her hopes. They had met – They wrote to each other! Then, far indeed had proceeded that communication of hearts which was the aim of her life – and she was undone!

Helen glanced at the face of Lady Mar, and observing its changes, regarded them as corroborations of her guilt. It was conscience accusing her of having intended to betray her daughter to Soulis at Bothwell; and bidding her prepare to hear how in consequence she had afterwards fallen into his hands! – 'If conscience disturbs you thus,' thought Helen, 'let it rend your heart with shame, and perhaps remorse may follow!'

As the tide of success seemed so full for the Scots, Helen no longer feared that her cousin would rashly seek a precarious vengeance on Soulis, when he would probably so soon have an opportunity of making it certain at the head of an army; and she therefore commenced her narrative from the time of Murray's leaving her at the priory, and continued it to the hour when she met her father a prisoner in the streets of Stirling. As she proceeded, the indignation both of the Earl and of Murray against Soulis, was vehement; and the latter was full of immediate personal revenge. But the Earl, with arguments similar to those which had suggested themselves to his daughter, calmed his rage; and saw him re-seat himself with repressed, though burning resentment, to listen to the remainder of her relation.

The quaking conscience of Lady Mar did indeed vary her cheeks with a thousand dyes, when, as Helen repeated part of the conversation of Margery, Murray abruptly said – 'Surely that woman could inform you who was the traitor that would have betrayed us all into the hands of our enemies! Did she not hint it?'

Helen cast down her eyes, that even a glance of hers might not overwhelm with insupportable shame the already trembling Countess. Lady Mar seeing by her manner that she was acquainted with her guilt, and expecting no more mercy, than she knew she would shew to Helen were she in the like circumstances with herself, hastily rose from her chair, internally vowing vengeance against her triumphant daughter, and hatred of all mankind.

While all the furies raged in the breast of this guilty woman, Helen, wishing to avoid mystery, and determined never to accuse her step-mother, (who she hoped might have erred from blind affection to her husband,) simply answered – ‘You do not think that Lord Soulis would be so weak as to trust a secret of that kind with a servant.’ And then hurrying the relation of subsequent events, the Countess breathed again; and almost deceiving herself with the hope that Helen was ignorant of her treachery, listened with emotions of another kind when she heard of the rescue of her daughter-in-law. She saw Wallace in the brave act! But as Helen, undesignedly to herself, passed over the more interesting parts of their conversations, and never named the graces of his person; Lady Mar thought that to have viewed Wallace with so little notice would have been impossible; and therefore, without surprise at her first suspicion being entirely removed, but at the same time glad of such a conviction that he and her daughter had never met, she heard Helen say that the unknown chief had promised to *join his arms with those of Wallace.*

Murray looked on Helen as she spoke, with an impression at his heart that made it pause. Something in this interview had whispered to him what he had never dreamt before, that she was dearer to him than fifty thousand cousins; and while the blood flushed and retreated in the complexion of Helen, and her downcast eyes refused to shew what was passing there, as she hastily ran over the circumstances of the stranger knight’s appearance on the mountain, to his disappearance in the cell of the hermit; his own emotions declared the secret of hers; and with a lip as pale as her own, he said – ‘But where is this brave man? He cannot have yet joined us; for surely he would have told Wallace or myself that he came from you!’

‘I warned him not to do so;’ replied she, ‘for fear that your indignation against my enemies, my dear cousin, might have precipitated you into dangers inimical to the duty you owe your country.’

‘Then if he have joined us,’ replied Murray, rising from his seat, ‘you will probably soon know who he is. Tomorrow morning Wallace means to remove my uncle and his family into Snawdoun. He will therefore, at a very early hour, enter this citadel attended by his principal knights, to lodge his prisoners of rank here; and in his train you will doubtless discover the man who has laid such obligations on us all by your preservation. Glad shall I be to have an opportunity of expressing my gratitude.’

Murray’s feelings told him that glad should he be if that gratitude would repay him; if the confusion of Helen when she mentioned him, did not arise from the conscious remembrance of some tenderer communion, than the mere act of her rescue!

Helen herself knew not how to account for the agitation which shook her whenever she adverted to her unknown preserver. At the time of the hermit’s friend, the good lay-brother, attending her to Alloa, and she explained to Lady Ruthven the cause of her strange arrival, when she came to the mentioning of her deliverer, then, for the first time, she felt a confusion that disordered the



animation with which she described his patriotism and his bravery. But it was natural, she thought; gratitude for a recent benefit made her heart beat high. It was something like the enthusiasm she had felt for Wallace on the rescue of her father, and she was satisfied. When a few days of quiet at the castle had composed her feelings, she proposed to her aunt to send some trusty messenger to find his way to the imprisoned Earl at Dumbarton, and to inform him where she had found refuge. Lady Ruthven suggested the impropriety of such a project; urging the probability that the messenger would be intercepted, and so her asylum be discovered. 'Let it alone,' continued she, 'till this knight of yours, by performing his word, and giving freedom to your father, calls you to declare his honourable deeds. Till then, Lord Mar, ignorant of your danger, needs no assurance of your safety.'

This casual reference to the knight, made the before tranquil heart of Helen renew its throbbings; and turning from her aunt with an acquiescing reply, she retired to her own apartment to quell the unusual and painful blushes she felt burning on her cheeks. Why she should feel thus she could not account, 'Unless,' said she to herself, 'I fear that my suspicion of who he is, may be guessed at. Should my words or looks betray the royal Bruce to any harm, that moment of undesigned ingratitude would be the last of my life.'

This explanation seemed an ample apology to herself. And henceforth avoiding all mention of her preserver in her conversations with Lady Ruthven, she confined the subject to her own breast: and thinking that she thought of him more, by her attention to speak of him less, she wondered not that whenever she was alone his image immediately rose in her mind; his voice seemed to sound in her ears, and even as the summer air wafted a soft fragrance over her cheek, she would turn as if she felt that breath which had so gently hushed her to repose. She would then start and sigh, and repeat his words to herself: but all was then serene in her bosom. It seemed as if the contemplation of so much loveliness of soul in so beautiful a form, soothed instead of agitated her innocent heart. 'What a king will he be!' thought she, 'with what transport would the virtuous Wallace put the Scottish crown on so noble a brow.'

Such were her meditations and feelings when she was brought a prisoner to Stirling. And when she heard of the victories of Wallace, she could not but think that the brave arm of her knight was there, and that he, with the more renowned champion of Scotland, would fly on the receipt of her letter to Stirling, there to repeat the valiant deeds of Dumbarton. The first blast of the Scottish trumpet under the walls, found her, as she said, upon her knees, and kept her there; for hardly with any intermission, with fast and prayer, did she kneel before the altar of Heaven, till the voice of Andrew Murray, at midnight, called her to freedom and happiness.

Wallace, and perhaps her nameless hero with him, had again conquered! – His idea dwelt in her heart and faltered on her tongue; and yet, when in reciting the narrative of her late sufferings to her father, when she came to the mentioning of the stranger's conduct to her, – with surprise and embarrassment

she felt her augmented emotions as she drew near the subject; and forced, as if by an invisible power, to hurry over every event; she could only excuse herself for such perturbation, by supposing that the treason of Lady Mar in one instance, excited her alarm, for fear she would now fix on a new object. Indeed, turning cold at the idea of endangering the life of the royal Bruce, she gladly turned from a theme so full of agitation, to speak of the civility with which De Valence had treated her in every respect, except denying her the sight of her parents, and maintaining the necessity of the cruel sentence that had been passed upon her father.

‘Yes’ cried the Earl, ‘I must suppose that, though inflexible, he was, not so barbarous in his tyranny as Cressingham. For it was not until De Valence was taken prisoner that Joanna and I were divided. Till then we were lodged in decent apartments: But on that event, Cressingham tore us from each other, and threw us into different dungeons beneath the Keep. My sister Janet I have never seen since the hour we were separated in the street of Stirling; excepting the few awful minutes in which we met on the roof of this castle, when I expected to see her and my wife die before my eyes.’

Helen, now, for the first time, learnt the base cruelties which had been exercised on her father and his family since the capture of De Valence. She had been exempted from sharing them, by the fears of Cressingham; who, knowing that the English Earl had particular views with regard to her, durst not risque offending him by outraging one whom he had declared himself determined to protect.

Murray, during part of this conversation, had withdrawn to seek Lady Ruthven and her son: and now re-entering with both; after half an hour’s affectionate congratulations had unburthened the hearts of the happy circle; he left Lord and Lady Mar with Helen, and retired to settle the tranquillity of the castle.

Edwin and his mother accompanied Murray to the gate of the Keep; and there taking leave of him they proceeded to the barbican which contained Lord Ruthven; while he returned to the lieutenant of the castle to pursue his duty.

### CHAP. III.

SOON after sun-rise next morning Murray received a message from Wallace, desiring him to tell the Earl of Mar that he should have the happiness of seeing him in the course of an hour. He was coming to the citadel to offer the palace of Snawdoun to the Ladies of Mar; and to request the Earl to remain governor of the town and castle, and to take charge of the illustrious prisoners he was bringing to put into his hands.

At this intimation, Lord Mar, (whose wounds were now healed;) felt new vigour infused into him by the idea of the momentous trust that was to be confided to his care; and hastening to prepare for the reception of his brave friend, he sent to the apartments of his wife and daughter, and to Lady Ruthven (who had returned from her husband) to inform them of his expected visitant.

They all rose to meet, an interview that excited different expectations in each different breast. Lady Mar, well satisfied that Helen and Wallace had never met, and still hoping what she wished, and clinging to the vague words of Murray, that he had sent him to give *her* liberty, called forth every art of the toilet to embellish her still fine person. Lady Ruthven, with the respectable eagerness natural to a chaste matron's heart at the prospect of seeing the man who had so often been the preserver of her brother, and who had so lately delivered her husband from a loathsome dungeon, was the first who hurryingly arrayed herself, and joined the Earl in the great saloon. Soon after, Lady Mar entered like Juno,<sup>6</sup> in all her plumage of majesty and beauty.

But the trumpet of Wallace had sounded in the gates, before the trembling, half-fainting Helen could leave her room. It was the herald of his approach; and she sunk breathless into a seat. She was now going to see, for the first time, the man whose woes she had so often wept; the man who had incurred them all for objects dear to her. He whom she had mourned as one stricken in sorrows; and feared for as an outlaw, doomed to suffering and to death; was now to appear before her, not in the garb of woe which excites the sympathy its wearer excites, but arrayed as a conqueror; as the champion of Scotland, giving laws to her oppressors; and entering in triumph over fields of their slain!

Awful as this picture was to the timidity of her gentle nature, it alone did not occasion that inexpressible sensation which seemed to check the pulses of her heart. Was she, or was she not, to see in his train, the young and noble Bruce? Was she to be assured that he still existed? Or, by seeking him everywhere in vain, be ascertained that he, who could not break his word, had perished lonely and unknown?



While these ideas thronged into her mind, the platform below was filling with the triumphant Scots; and her door suddenly opening, Edwin entered in delighted haste: 'Come, cousin!' cried he, 'Sir William Wallace has almost finished his business in the great hall. He has made my uncle governor of this place, and has committed nearly a thousand prisoners of rank to his care. If you do not be expeditious, you will allow him to enter the saloon before you.'

As he spoke, hardly observing her face, from the happy emotions which dazzled in his eyes, he seized her hand. Summoning a sudden resolution, she obeyed its impulse; and was led by Edwin into the saloon.

Her aunt and step-mother only were there. Lady Ruthven sat composedly on a long tapestried bench, awaiting the arrival of the company. But Lady Mar was near the door, listening impatiently to the voices beneath. At the sight of Helen she drew back; but she smiled exultingly when she saw that all that splendour of beauty she had lately beheld, and so dreaded, was fled. Her unadorned garments gave no particular attraction to the simple lines of her form: the effulgence of her complexion was gone; her cheek was pale; and the tremulous motion of her step deprived her of that elastic grace which was the peculiar charms of her nymph-like figure.

Triumph now sat in the eyes of the Countess; and with an air of authority she waved Helen to take a seat beside Lady Ruthven. But Helen, fearful of what might be her emotion when the train entered, had just placed herself behind her aunt, when the steps of many a mailed foot sounded upon the stone gallery. The next moment the great doors at the bottom of the saloon opened, and a crowd of knights, in armour, flashed upon her eyes. A dimness overspread her faculties; and nothing appeared to her but an indistinct throng approaching: She would have given worlds to have been removed from the spot, but unable to stir; her recovering senses beheld Lady Mar, who, exclaiming 'Ever my preserver!' had hastened forward, and was now leaning on the bosom of one of the chiefs: – His head was bent as if answering her in a low voice. By the golden locks which hung down upon the jewelled tresses of the Countess, and obscured his face, she judged it was indeed the deliverer of her father, the knight of her dream. But where was he who had delivered herself from a worse fate than death? Where was the dweller of her daily thoughts – Ah, and of her dreams too, ever since the moment of her first beholding him?

Helen's sight now clearing to as keen a vision as before it had been dulled and indistinct, with a timid and anxious gaze glanced from face to face of the chieftains around; and withdrawing her eyes with a sad conviction at her heart, that their search was indeed in vain, they were arrested by a glimpse of the features of Wallace, as he raised his head from the Countess; he shook back his clustering hair, and her secret was revealed. In that godlike countenance, she recognised the object of her devoted wishes; and with a gasp of overwhelming surprise which denied all louder utterance, she would have fallen from her seat to the ground, had not Lady Ruthven, hearing a sound that burst like the sigh of death from her niece, turned round and caught her in her arms. The alarmed

cry of Lady Ruthven drew every eye to the spot. Wallace immediately relinquished the Countess to her husband, and moved towards the beautiful and senseless form that lay on the bosom of Lady Ruthven. The Earl and his agitated wife followed.

‘What ails my Helen?’ asked the affectionate father.

‘I know not;’ replied Lady Ruthven; ‘she sat behind me. I knew nothing of her disorder till she fell as you see.’

Murray instantly supposed that she had discovered the unknown knight: and looking from countenance to countenance amongst the train, to see if he could discover the envied cause of such emotions; he read in no face an answering feeling with that of Helen’s: and turning away from his unavailing scrutiny, on hearing her draw a deep sigh, his eyes fixed themselves on her as if they would have read her soul. Wallace, who in the pale form before him, saw not only the woman whom he had preserved with a brother’s care, but the compassionate saint who had given a hallowed grave to the remains of an angel as pure as herself, hung over her with an anxiety so eloquent in every feature, that the Countess would willingly at that moment have stabbed her in every vein.

Lady Ruthven had sprinkled her niece with water; and as she began to recover, Wallace motioned his chieftains to withdraw. Her eyes opened slowly; but recollection returned with every re-awakened sense: she dimly perceived a press of people around her; and fearful of again encountering that face which declared the Bruce of her secret meditations, and the Wallace of her declared veneration, to be one; she buried her face in the bosom of her father. In that short point of time, images of past, present, and to come, rushed before her; and without confessing to herself why she thought it necessary to make the vow, her soul seemed to swear on the sacred altar of a parent’s heart, never more to think on either idea. Separate, it was sweet to muse on her own deliverer; it was delightful to dwell on the virtues of her father’s preserver. But when she saw both characters blended in one, her feelings seemed sacrilege; and she wished even to bury her gratitude where no eye but Heaven’s could see its depth and fervour.

Lady Mar, trembling at what might be the consequences of this scene, got behind the bench; and then joyfully recollecting what Helen had said of the unknown knight, whispered in a soft voice, yet loud enough for Wallace to hear; ‘Retire my dear; you will be better in your own room, whether pleasure or disappointment about the person you wished to discover in Sir William’s train, have occasioned these emotions.’

Helen blushed scarlet deep at this indelicate remark; and raising her head with that modest dignity which only belongs to the purest mind, gently but firmly said; ‘I obey you, madam; and he whom I have seen will be too generous not to pardon the effects of so unexpected a weight of gratitude.’ As she spoke, her turning eye met the fixed gaze of Wallace. His countenance became agitated: and dropping on his knee beside her; ‘Gracious Lady,’ cried he, ‘mine is



the weight of gratitude! but it is dear and precious to me; a debt that my life will not be able to repay. I was ignorant of it, when, at our first meeting, I durst not confess to you an outlaw's name; but had I known it, no considerations could have prevented me from then pouring out my grateful soul to the last friend of her who was the friend of all. The spirit of an angel like yourself, Lady Helen, must whisper to you all her widowed husband's thanks.' He pressed her hand fervently between his, and rising, left the room.

Helen looked on him with an immoveable eye, in which the heroic vow of her soul spoke in every beam; but as he arose, even then she felt its frailty; for her spirit seemed leaving her: and as he disappeared from the door, her world seemed shut from her eyes. Not to think of him was impossible: how to think of him was in her own power. Her heart felt as if suddenly made a desert. But heroism was there. She had looked upon the heaven-dedicated Wallace; on the widowed mourner of Marion; the saint and the hero; the being of another world! and as such she would regard him; till the wall of mortality falling between them, in the realms of purity she might acknowledge the brother of her soul!

A sacred inspiration seemed to illuminate her features, and to brace with the vigour of immortality, those limbs which before had sunk under her. She forgot she was still of earth, while a holy love, like that of the dove in paradise, sat brooding on her heart.

Lady Mar gazed on her without understanding the ethereal meaning of those looks. Judging from her own impassioned feelings, she could only resolve the resplendent beauty which shone from the now animated face and form of Helen, into the rapture of finding herself beloved. Had she not heard Wallace declare himself to be the unknown knight who had rescued Helen? she had heard him devote his life to her: and was not his heart included in that dedication? And then so publickly made; avowed on the fainting of Helen; who had acknowledged that her emotions had been occasioned by the sight of him. What could she consider all this but as an exchange of hearts; as the dedication of that love to another, which she would have sacrificed her soul to win?

Murray too was confounded; but his reflections were far different from those of Lady Mar. He saw his newly-discovered passion smothered in its first breath. At the moment in which he found that he loved his cousin above all of woman's mould, an unappealable voice in his bosom bade him crush every fond desire. That heart which, with the chaste transports of a sister had throbbed so entrancingly against his, was then another's! Was become the captive of Wallace's virtues; of the only man whom his judgment would have said, *deserves Helen Mar*. But when he had clasped her glowing beauties in his arms the night before, his enraptured soul believed from the tender smile on her lips, that it was only the earnest of the moment when he might hold her there for ever. That dream was now past. – 'Well! be it so!' said he to himself; 'If this new fledged passion must be clipt on the wing, I have at least the consolation that I soared like the bird of Jove! – But, loveliest of created beings;' thought he, looking on Helen



with an expression which, had she met it, would have told her all that was passing in his soul; 'if I am not to be thy love; I will be thy friend – and die for thee and Wallace!'

Lady Mar believing that she had read her sentence, in what she thought the triumphant glances of a happy passion, turned from her daughter-in-law with such a hatred mantling in her heart, that she durst not trust her eyes to the inspection of any of the by-standers. But her tongue could not be restrained longer than the moment in which the object of her jealousy left the room. As the door closed upon Helen, leaning on the arms of her aunt and Edwin, the Countess turned to her Lord, and observed his yet fixed eyes looking with doting fondness towards the point where she withdrew. This sight augmented the angry tumults in the breast of Lady Mar, and with a bitter smile, she said, (for she half-suspected what was passing in his mind;) 'So, my lord, you find that the icy-bosomed Helen can be thawed!'

'How do you mean, Joanna?' returned the Earl, doubting her words and looks; 'you surely cannot blame our daughter for being sensible of gratitude.'

'I blame all young women,' replied she, 'who give themselves airs of unnatural coldness; and then, when the proof comes, behave in a manner as indelicate as extraordinary.'

'My Lady Mar!' ejaculated the Earl, with an amazed look; 'what am I to think of you, from this! How has my daughter behaved indelicate? She did not lay her head on Sir William Wallace's bosom, and weep there, till he replaced her on her natural pillow, mine! Have a care Lady Mar that I do not see more in this spleen, than it would be honourable to you for me to discover.'

The Countess fearing nothing so much as that her husband should really suspect the passion which possessed her; for the very idea of being removed from the side of Wallace, which, under such circumstance would certainly be the case, recalled her to all her former duplicity and affected tenderness for her lord. With a surprised and uncomprehending air, she said – 'I do not understand what you mean, Donald.' And then turning to Lord Ruthven, who stood uneasily viewing this scene; 'How,' cried she; 'can my lord discover spleen in my maternal anxiety respecting the daughter of the man I love and honour above all the earth. But men, however sensible, do not properly estimate female reserve. Any woman would say with me, that to faint at the sight of Sir William Wallace was declaring an emotion not to be revealed before so large a company; a something, from which men might not draw the most agreeable inferences.'

'It only declared surprise, madam,' cried Murray, 'the surprise of a modest and ingenuous mind, that did not expect to recognise its mountain-friend in the person of the protector of all Scotland. Perhaps, had I been cast away on a desert shore; been succoured by a pretty fisher's girl; and afterwards discovered my protectress to be my Lady Mar, I might have fainted too; and I assure you I should have thought it a most delicate proof of my gratitude!'

'Pogh! you are always a fool, Andrew!' said she with a smile; and turning to the still silent Lord Ruthven, again addressed him. 'Step-mothers, my lord,' said she, 'have hard duties to perform; and when we think we fulfil them best, comes our husband with a magician's wand to turn all our good to evil.'

'Array your good in a less equivocal garb, my dear Joanna,' answered the Earl of Mar, rather ashamed of the hasty words which the suspicion of a moment had drawn from his lips; 'judge my child by her usual conduct, and not by an accidental appearance of inconsistency, and I shall ever be grateful for your solicitude. But in this instance, though she might betray the weakness of an enfeebled constitution, it was certainly not the frailty of a lovesick heart.'

'Judge me by your own rule, dear Donald,' said she, blandishingly kissing his forehead; 'and you will not again wither the mother of your boy with such a look as I just now received!'

Lord Ruthven, glad to see this reconciliation, made a sign to Murray, and they withdrew together. Meanwhile, the honest Earl, surrendering his whole heart to the wiles of his wife, poured into her not inattentive ear all his wishes for Helen, all the hopes which her late meeting with Wallace, and their present recognition, had given birth. — 'I had rather have that man my son,' said he, 'than see my beloved daughter placed on an imperial throne.'

'I do not doubt it,' thought Lady Mar, 'for there are many emperors but only one William Wallace!' However, her sentiments she confined to herself; neither assenting nor dissenting, but answering so as to secure the confidence by which she hoped to traverse his designs. According to the inconsistency of the wild passion that possessed her, one moment she saw nothing but despair before her; and in the next it seemed impossible that Wallace should in heart be proof against her demonstrations of tenderness; or insensible to those beauties which, soon after her marriage with Lord Mar, had been the admiration of the whole court of France. She remembered that Murray had told her he was sent to set *her* free! and that re-awakened every hope. He had placed Lord Mar in a post as dangerous as honourable. Should the Southrons return in any force into Scotland, Stirling would be one of the first places they would attack. The Earl was brave, but age had robbed him of much of his martial vigour: might she not then be *indeed set free*? And might not Wallace, on such an event, mean to repay her for all those sighs he now sought to repress from ideas of virtue, which she could only admire, but had not courage to taste? Might she not in the end be Wallace's wife?

These wicked meditations passed even at the side of her husband: and with a view to further every wish of her intoxicated imagination, she determined to spare no exertion to secure the support of her own family, which, when agreeing in one point, was the most powerful of any in the kingdom. Her father, the Earl of Strathearn, was now a misanthropic lunatic in the Orkneys; but with this design, she resolved on requesting Wallace to put the names of her cousins Athol and Badenock in the exchange of prisoners; for by their means she expected to accomplish all she hoped. On Mar's probable death she had so long

thought, that she now regarded it as a matter of certainty; and so pressed forward to the fulfilment of her love and ambition with as much eagerness as if he were already in his grave.

She recollected that Wallace had not this time thrown her from his bosom, when in the transports of her joy she had, even unrestrained by the croud around, cast herself upon it: he only gently whispered, 'Beware, lady! There are present, who may think my services, by this, too richly paid.' With these words he had relinquished her to her husband. But in them she saw nothing inimical to her wishes; it was a caution, not a reproof: and had not his warmer address to Helen conjured up all the fiends of jealousy in her mind, she would have been perfectly satisfied with her grounds of hope.

Eager, therefore, to break away from Lord Mar's projects relating to his daughter, at the first decent opportunity, she said, – 'We will consider more of this hereafter Donald. I now resign you to the duties of your office, and shall pay mine to our dear Helen.'

Lord Mar pressed her hand to his lips, and they parted.



## CHAP. IV.

THE fame of these victories, the seizure of Stirling, the conquest of above 60,000 men, and the Lord Warden with his late deputy taken prisoners; all spread through the country on the wings of the wind.

Messengers were dispatched by Wallace, not only to the nobles who had already declared for the cause by sending him their armed followers; but to the clans who yet stood irresolute. But to the chieftains who had taken the side of Edward, he sent no exhortation. And when he was advised to do so, by Lord Ruthven, his answer was 'No, my lord; we must not spread a snare under our feet. If these men could be affected by the interest of their country; as they have the power to befriend her, they would not now colleague with her enemies. They remember her happiness under the rule of our Alexanders; they see her sufferings beneath the sway of an usurper: and if they can know these things and be unmoved, and require arguments to bring them to their duty; should they then come to it, it would not be to fulfil, but to betray. Ours, my dear Ruthven, is a commission from Heaven. The truth of our cause is God's own signet; and is so clear that it need only be seen to be acknowledged. And shall we seek to persuade those who err against the evidence of their own senses, and their own true interests. By what arguments could we turn such perverted judgments? All honest minds will come to us of themselves: and those who are not so had better be avoided, than shewn the way by which treachery may effect what open violence cannot attain.'

This simple reasoning, drawn from the experience of nature; neither encumbered by the subtilties of policy, nor the sophistry of the schools; was evident to every understanding, and decided the question.

Lady Mar, unknown to any one, again applied to her fatal pen; but with other views than for the ruin of the cause, or the destruction of Wallace. It was to strengthen his hands with the power of all her kinsmen; and finally, by the crown which they should place on his head, exalt her to the dignity of a queen. She wrote first to John Cummin Earl of Buchan, enforcing a thousand reasons why he should now leave a sinking cause and join the rising fortunes of his country.

'You see,' said she, 'that the happy star of Edward is setting. The king of France not only maintains possession of that monarch's territory of Guienne, but he now holds him in check on the shores of Flanders. Baffled abroad, an insurrection awaits him at home; the priesthood, whom he has robbed, cover his name with anathemas; the nobles whom he has insulted, trample on his prerogative; and the people, whose privileges he has invaded, call aloud for redress.

The proud barons of England are now ready to revolt. And the lords Hereford and Norfolk, those two earls whom, after madly threatening to hang,<sup>(d)</sup> he sought to bribe to their allegiance by leaving them in the full power of constable and mareschal of England; they are conducting themselves with such domineering consequence, that even the Prince of Wales submits to their directions, and the throne of the absent tyrant is shook to its centre.

‘Sir William Wallace has rescued Scotland from his yoke. The country now call for her ancient lords; those who made her kings, and supported them. Come then, my cousin! espouse the cause of right; the cause that is in power; the cause that may aggrandize the house of Cummin and my paternal Strathearn, with still higher dignities than any with which they have hitherto been honoured.’

With arguments such as these; and with others which she knew were yet more adopted to his Belial mind, she tried to bring him to her purpose; to awaken what ambition he possessed; and to entice his baser passions, by offering that security in his redeemed country, which would afford him the amplest opportunities for indulging in the gratifications of those senses to which he had already sacrificed the best properties of man. She dispatched her letter by a trusty messenger whom she bribed to secrecy; and added in her postscript, that ‘the answer she should hope to receive, would be an offer of his services to Sir William Wallace.’

While the Countess of Mar was devising her plans, (for the gaining of Lord Buchan was only a preliminary measure;) the dispatches of Wallace had taken effect. Their simple details, and the voice of fame, had roused a general spirit throughout the land; and in the course of eight and forty hours after the different messengers had left Stirling, the plain around the city was covered with a mixed multitude: all Scotland seemed thronging to throw themselves at the feet of their preserver. A large body of men, brought from Mar, by Murray, according to his uncle’s orders, were amongst the first encamped on the carse. And that part of Wallace’s own particular band, which he had left at Dumbarton to recover of their wounds, now, under the command of Fergus and of Stephen Ireland, rejoined their lord at Stirling.

Neil Campbell, the brave Lord of Loch-awe, and Lord Bothwell, the father of Lord Andrew Murray, with a strong reinforcement, arrived from Argyleshire. The Chiefs of Ross, Dundas, Gordon, Frazar, Scot, Lindsay, and of almost every noble family in Scotland, sent their sons at the head of detachments from their clans, to swell the victorious ranks of Sir William Wallace.

When this patriotic host assembled on the carse of Stirling, every inmate of the city, who had not duty to confine him within the walls, turned out to view the glorious sight. Mounted on a rising ground, they saw the leaders of each little army, shining in mail, and waving their gorgeous banners which, blazoned with all the chivalry of Scotland, floated afar over the lengthened ranks.

At the moment when the lines which guarded the outworks of Stirling opened from right to left, and discovered Wallace armed cap-a-pee, and mounted on a white charger, whose flowing main streamed to the air as his



proud head tossed up and down in conscious pride of his heroic rider; when the conqueror of Edward's hosts appeared; the deliverer of Scotland; a mighty shout from the thousands around rent the skies, and seemed to shake the firm earth on which they stood.

Wallace raised his helmet from his brow; as by an instinctive motion every hand bent the sword and banner it contained.

'He comes in the strength of David!' cried the venerable bishop of Dunkeld, who, at the head of his church's tenantry had brought his sacred person to the field. 'Scots, behold the Lord's anointed!'

The exclamation, which burst like inspiration from the lips of the bishop, struck to every heart. 'Long live King William!' was echoed with transport by every follower on the ground; and while the reverberating heavens seemed to ratify the voice of the people, the lords themselves, now believing that he who won had the best right to enjoy, joined in the glorious cry; and galloping up from the front of their ranks, threw themselves from their steeds; and before Wallace could recover from the surprise into which this unexpected salutation had thrown him, Lord Bothwell and Lord Loch-awe, followed by the rest, had bent their knees and acknowledged him to be their sovereign. The bishop of Dunkeld at the same moment drawing from his breast a small chalice of sacred oil, which he ever bore about him for holy purposes, poured it upon the unbonnnetted head of Wallace: — 'Thus, O king!' cried he, 'do I consecrate on earth, what has already received the unction of heaven!'

Wallace, at this action, was awe-struck, and raising his eyes to that heaven; his soul, in silence, breathed forth his unutterable devotion. Then looking on the bishop: 'Holy father;' said he, 'this unction may have prepared my brows for a crown; but, it is not of this world. Rise lords!' and as he spoke he flung himself off his horse, and taking Lord Bothwell by the hand, as the eldest of the band; 'Kneel not to me,' cried he, 'I am to you, what Gideon<sup>(c)</sup> was to the Israelites, your fellow soldier. I cannot assume the sceptre you would bestow; for he who rules us all has yet preserved to you a lawful monarch: — Bruce lives. And were he extinct, the blood royal flows in too many noble veins in Scotland for me to usurp its rights.'

'Surely the rights of the crown lie with the only man in Scotland who knows how to defend them! else reason is blind, or the people abandon their own prerogative! What we have this moment vowed is not to be forsworn. Baliol has abdicated our throne; the Bruce desert it; all our nobles slept till you awoke: and shall we bow to men who may follow, but will not lead? — No, bravest Wallace; from the moment you drew the first sword for Scotland, you made yourself her lawful king!'

Wallace turned to the veteran Lord of Loch-awe, who uttered this with a blunt determination that meant to say that the election which had passed should not be recalled. 'I made myself her champion, to fight for her freedom, not my own aggrandizement. Were I to accept the honour with which this too grateful nation would repay my service, I should not bring it that peace for