

The Struggle for Independence.

LOVE of conquest is an infirmity of the human race. There is no nation under heaven, no party for that matter of it, but is saturated with the overwhelming, avaricious passion. In Paradise it began to look for victims. And down through the æons it has ever been on the outlook for more, finding everywhere some hovel for its squalidity, and treating those who have sacrificed themselves to its wiles with intemperate cruelty. It is an innate imbecility, from whose meshes mankind, even though it were willing—which, as a matter of course, it is not—cannot disentangle itself.

And when this debilitating disease becomes endemic, it makes an out-and-out debauchee of the country that it has laid hold of. Then the downfall is swift and sure. It urged the Plantagenet Kings of England—that sovereign race whose emblem was humility!—to assume unto themselves the overlordship of Scotland. It carried them beyond the bounds of prudence, for it is insane, and insanity is essentially imprudent. It transmitted their memory through clouds of smoke and pillars of fire, made them gorgons in the eyes of posterity, and drenched their fatherland and ours with blood.

In the early centuries of the Scottish monarchy our rulers possessed large territories in England, and, in consequence of this, were obliged to do homage for them to the English King, and acknowledge him as their feudal overlord. Such, according to the ancient historians, was the tenure of the oath :—

“ I, ———, King of Scots, shall be true and faithful unto you, Lord Edward, by the grace of God, King of England, the

noble and superior lord of the kingdom of Scotland, as unto you I make my fidelity of the same kingdom, the which I hold and claim to hold of you. And I shall bear to you my faith and fidelity of life and limb and worldly honour against all men ; and faithfully I shall acknowledge, and shall do to you service due to you of the kingdom of Scotland aforesaid : as God so help and these holy evangelists !”

The time, however, came when the spirit of fealty became distasteful, and the Scottish sovereigns showed that they had minds of their own, and renounced their allegiance. The torch of war at once blazed forth. English troops poured across the Border to chastise the insurgents—more often, indeed, to be themselves chastised !—and to threaten the country with destruction.

Again and again did this happen. The first incursion, it is true, was a friendly and fortunate one. It carries us back to the coming of the Saxon Margaret. Contrary winds, you remember, drove her ships up the Forth. Malcolm Caenmohr made the princess his queen. And soon a great number of her countrymen came flocking into Scotland, and they, too, found favour in the Scottish monarch’s sight. He treated them hospitably and honourably,—he gave them livings, which they bequeathed, with their names, to their descendants. Then, or shortly afterwards, it was that the Lindsays, the Wardlaws, the Ramsays, the Melvilles, the Bethunes, the Sinclairs, the Boswells, and a host of others, settled in our country—not all of them, however, English ; some, indeed, were Hungarians in origin, for Margaret and her kinsfolk had been spending the years of their exile in far-away Austria.

But not always so peaceful or beneficial were the English incomings. When Alexander III. and his grand-daughter, the young Maid of Norway, died, Scotland was hurled into a horrible maelstrom of calamities. The ambitious and greedy eye of Edward Longshanks took in the situation at a glance. Here, he thought, was a splendid opportunity for him to meddle with

Scottish affairs. Thirteen claimants appeared for the crown, and by selecting one of these he might easily obtain the supreme authority of the Scottish kingdom. He therefore decided in favour of John Baliol, a man after his own heart—the great-grandnephew of William the Lion. Baliol's claims had been supported by Fraser, Bishop of St Andrews and one of the guardians of the kingdom, who—at Leuchars, 7th of October 1290—addressed to the English king a remarkable letter, which has become an interesting and memorable relic of those rugged times. In this wise wrote the traitor :—

“ To the most excellent prince and most revered lord, Sir
 “ Edward, by the grace of God most illustrious king of
 “ England, lord of Ireland, and duke of Guienne, his devoted
 “ chaplain, William, by divine permission, humble minister of
 “ the church of St Andrew in Scotland, wisheth health and
 “ fortune.

“ The faithful nobles and a certain part of the community of
 “ Scotland returned infinite thanks to your Highness. . . . The
 “ Earls of Mar and Athole are collecting an army, and some other
 “ nobles are drawing to their party ; and on that account there is fear
 “ of a general war and great slaughter of men, unless the Highest, by
 “ means of your industry and good service, apply a speedy remedy.
 “ If Sir John Baliol comes to your presence we advise you
 “ to take care so to treat with him that in any event your honour and
 “ advantage may be preserved, and let your excellency set
 “ over the people of Scotland for king him who of right ought to have
 “ the succession, if so be that he will follow your counsel.”

This letter, penned after the negotiations of the English ambassadors with the faithful nobles of Scotland, was no doubt made Edward's plea for taking upon himself the arbitration of the whole affair ; and as arbiter, appointed apparently, as we have seen, by the *community of Scotland*, he, like a wise and open-eyed and crafty man, chose one who would, for his own sake and safety, consider his *honour and advantage* and be ready to *follow his counsel*.

Such a being was John Baliol. Poor worthless creature ! he

had not his sorrows to seek : he was to be “a toom tabbard,” a sort of waxwork king—in short, a monarch in nothing but name. Edward interfered with the business of the realm,—he goaded Baliol into resistance,—he even went so far as to set the nobles against him. And when the toy-monarch rose in rebellion he invaded Scotland with a mighty army, laid siege to Berwick, and with wolfish bestiality took the town by the most shameful of artifices—“butchering the inhabitants, man, woman, child, and infant without distinction, and converting the sacred edifices into stables for the English soldiery.” So great was the slaughter that, in the words of Wyntoun, for

Two days entire, as a deep flood,
Through all the town there ran red blood.

Nine thousand—some authors say 15,000—of the inhabitants and defenders were slain, including a great many nobles and gentlemen of Fife and the Lothians.

Then he swept like an angry torrent through the country, razing the strongholds that durst oppose his progress and his tyrannic rage, and filling others with English soldiers. To glut his ire, he plundered the monasteries and despoiled them of their ancient charters and historical archives.

And into Fife he went and brent it clene,
And Andrewe's toune he wasted then full plane,

writes Hardyng, the metrical chronicler. Having sated his wrath and vindictiveness the Grand Superior returned home, carrying with him the crown and sceptre and the famous Stone of Destiny. Stupid man! he knew not what he was doing; but—tell it not in Gath!—we, who are Scotsmen, do know.

In the meantime a strong spirit of independence had been growing among the Scots, and all they required was someone to place himself at their head. And, in the hour of direst necessity, a deliverer did arise. This was Sir William Wallace, the knight of Ellerslie, “one of the strongest and bravest men

that ever lived." With a band of devoted patriots he soon recovered all the fortresses north of the Tay except that of Dundee. Thousands flocked to join his standard. His energy, his wisdom, and his knowledge of military affairs all combined to make him the pride and the glory of Scotland.

He had just laid siege to the castle of Cupar, the acropolis of the Macduffs, when a messenger arrived to inform him that Sir Hugh de Cressingham, "the rapacious robber of all our castles," was marching towards Stirling with an army of 60,000 men. Wallace instantly advanced to intercept them ere they could cross the Forth, and, taking up a strong position near to the abbey of Cambuskenneth, awaited their approach. Here the Scots gained a glorious victory. A dreadful carnage took place. The headless corpse of Cressingham, so abhorred on account of his cruelty and oppression, was found among thousands of his followers, while thousands more, escaping death by the sword, were swept away by the surging waters of the Forth.

Flushed with victory, the conqueror at once returned to Cupar, the citadel of which town—one of the strongest fortresses in the Kingdom—soon after capitulated. The fame of Wallace now spread like wildfire, and many of the Scottish chieftains who had formerly held aloof from the plebeian general appeared at the heads of their clans, eager to form a part of the patriotic host. By his glorious achievements he became the terror of England and the darling of his fellow-countrymen. How unpretentious and unselfish, too, was his glory! When the Bishop of Dunkeld hailed him as the Lord's anointed he replied, "Nay, holy father, the royal blood flows in too many noble veins for me to usurp its rights." And to the Scottish warriors who knelt at his feet he exclaimed, "Rise, brothers,—kneel not to me! I am to you what Gideon was to the Israelites—your fellow-soldier and your friend. I will fight for you—I will die for you!" Someone has worded his patriotism so :

"God, countrymen, and fatherland,
Accept the sacrifice!"

Yet there were not wanting those who regarded the noble hero with envy and dread, who indeed considered his rejection of the crown as insincere—as being, in fact, too much like Cæsar, who, you know, was thrice offered the purple and thrice refused it, and, after all, died emperor of the Romans. At last jealousy gave place to open revolt, and Edward I., taking advantage of the discontentment, sent two of his generals, Aymer de Valance and Sir John Pseworth or Siward (son of the Earl of March), to ravage Fifeshire. Being advertised of this, the Scottish Guardian immediately set out in pursuit, and, by a rapid march, overtook the Southron marauders near the castle of Lindores which, along with the old fortress of Balgarvie, was in possession of the enemy. In the spacious and beautiful forest of Blackearnside—the old chroniclers erroneously call it Ironside—the two armies encountered one another on the 12th of June 1298. Under a leader whose terrible sword, “fit only for archangel to wield,” wrought wholesale destruction at every blow, the Scots, ardent, heroic, desperate men, fought with a hyena-like fierceness, as only those can who struggle for friends and fatherland. Time after time the English knights charged against the Scottish ranks, but only to be entangled among the marshes and quagmires with which the district abounded. At the close of the day the Sassenachs retreated, leaving nearly two thousand killed and wounded behind them; while Wallace lost but few of his men and none of his officers. The gallant Sir John Graham and Duncan Balfour, Sheriff of Fife, were placed *hors-de-combat*. In the course of the same summer the English suffered three more defeats between Lindores and Perth.

According to Harry the Minstrel, Wallace next proceeded to St Andrews, and ousted the renegade Bishop Comyn from his office :—

Upon the morn to Sanct Androwis they past ;
Out of the town that byschop turnèd fast.
The King of Ingland had him hidder send,
The rent at will he gave him in commend.

His kingis charge as then he durst not hald ;
A wrangwys Pope that tyrant might be called.
Few fled with him, and gat away by sea ;
For all Scotland he wald nocht Wallace see.

The fortunes of war, however, are fickle and fluctuating. Next year the "dark-flowing Carron" was crimsoned with the blood of freemen, when vile-hearted treachery played its masterpiece and the fiends of Scotland, the sons of Envy, betrayed their country for the shield of a king. "O strange fatuity!" groans Abercromby. "O odious envy! whence comes it that Scotsmen are thus overruled by thee? Alas! it is natural to most men to hate and depress one another, the best patriots especially, because the best: in this, like to Cain who envied Abel; to Rachel, who hated Leah; to Saul, who maltreated David; and to the Scots, who would not suffer themselves to be blessed by their Wallace."

But to our purpose: on Falkirk's fatal field Duncan Macduff, Earl of Fife, along with many other noble and valiant men, met a soldier's doom. Simpson, however, in his *History of the Stuarts*, tells us that it was not the Earl himself, but his granduncle, who fell in this battle. The immediate result was that the castles of Scotland again fell into the hands of the usurpers, the kingdom of Fife in particular being devoted to destruction, in revenge for the gallant stand made by the vassals of Macduff on Carron's banks.

Some time after the disastrous and ignominious defeat at Falkirk, Wallace repaired to France with a company of faithful adherents. About Whitsunday, 1303, he returned, and, landing at Montrose—some say Dundee—determined to rescue his outraged country from the yoke of the oppressor, or fall in the glorious attempt. On learning that almost all the eastern shires were in the possession of Edward's generals, he marched with his small army through Fife, and was successful in recapturing several strongholds garrisoned by Englishmen. A party of the enemy had betaken themselves to Lochleven, on an island in which stood an old castle, the residence for many

centuries of the Pictish and Scottish sovereigns, and belonging latterly to the house of Douglas. Wallace made up his mind to dislodge them. At dead of night he slipt towards the lake, taking with him eighteen of his trustiest soldiers. Arrived at the shore he doffed his garments, fastened his sword about his neck, and swam sturdily across to the islet; there he cut the hawser of the English boat, brought it over, and conveyed his men in safety to the castle, which he assaulted and took, sparing none, as was his custom, except the women and children. Then he sent a message to Sir John Ramsay, requesting him to come over and partake of a dish of trout with him in the castle of Lochleven.

So far, so good; but what will preferments not do?—what will money not do?—what will envy not do? For English gold the noble hero was betrayed into his enemies' hands by Sir John Menteith, a man—nay, rather a fiend in human form, whose name is blackened with treachery and iniquity of the deepest dye. On Tower Hill, 23rd of August 1305, the brave knight of Ellerslie was beheaded. And who among us can venture to chastise, even holily, the chaplain of Wallace for his outburst of anathemas on the head of the traitor? “Accursed be the day,” says that worthy man, “of John Menteith’s nativity, and may his name be blotted out of the Book of Life! Accursed to all eternity be the inhuman tyrant who put him to death, whilst he, the noble champion of the Scots, shall, for the reward of his virtue, have glory without end!”

His soul Death had not power to kill;

His noble deeds the world do fill

With lasting trophies of his name.

Before this happened, however, Fife was again visited by the puissant Longshanks himself. In the beginning of the summer of 1303 he crossed the Forth, and rampaged as far north as Elgin. Nothing was sacred to the war-fiend. Hither and thither he sped in a frenzy of malicious rage. “The torch,” says Chalmers, “everywhere conducted him to his object:

devastation followed in his rear. He burnt the abbeys which supplied him with the most commodious lodgings; the Benedictine Abbey of Dunfermline, which could then have accommodated three sovereigns and their retinues within its ample precincts, was destroyed by the English when they no longer wanted its abundant hospitality."

At the western metropolis the Hammer of the Scots—*Le Marteau des Écossais*—as Edward loved to style himself, wintered and held his Christmas festivities. In its venerable abbey the Scottish Parliament had frequently assembled, to discuss, among other things, the suzerainty of England; and this was the reason probably why it fell a sacrifice to the rage of the invaders, whose writers palliate its destruction, as they do many similar acts of violence, by declaring that the Scots had converted the house of the Lord into a den of thieves by holding their rebellious Parliaments there.



BRUCE.



WALLACE.

The Christmas festivities over, Edward proceeded to St Andrews, where he stayed for about a month. There he convoked a great council of the barons of both countries to

settle the difficult task of subduing Scotland. By that ignoble assembly those chieftains who had defied the Lord Paramount—amongst them Sir William Wallace and Sir Simon Fraser, the lieutenant-general of the Scottish army—were outlawed. While in the ecclesiastical capital, too, he again displayed his brutal extravagance by tearing the leaden roof off the refectory of the monastery, to face the mangonels and other war-engines which were afterwards used at the siege of Stirling Castle. The furious old despot then quitted the land which he had so ruthlessly overrun and mangled, leaving the inhabitants to wonder when the withering blast would return again. Providence, however, stepped in and decreed that never more would he set foot on Scottish soil.

And now the days speed on, and it is just six months after that never-to-be-forgotten tragedy on Tower Hill. On the shoulders of the Bruce has fallen the cloak of Wallace, and in his hand has been placed the sword of Freedom. On Palm Sunday, 1306, he was crowned. The coronation, so auspicious an event in itself, becomes all the more interesting to us when we remember that the courageous Isobel, Countess of Buchan, the noble consort of the renegade and ignoble Comyn, was the sister of the Earl of Fife, who at that time was a partisan of Edward I. By hereditary right it was the special privilege of the Macduffan family to place the crown on their sovereign's head, and when her vacillating brother scornfully refused the honour, it was this loyal lady who, amid the loud huzzas that burst from a thousand throats, crowned the Bruce with a golden hoop—the regalia having been carried away ten years before by the English Czar. For this intrepid deed the heroic Countess whom the prejudiced and one-sided Westminster characterises as *impiissima coniuratrix*—a most shameless conspirator, and the scurrilous Prynne calumniates as an infamous adulteress, was actually confined, by order of the irate tyrant, in an iron cage at Berwick, from which it is doubtful if she ever escaped.

Great was Edward's rage when he heard that Bruce had been crowned. Though in his dotage and shattered by infirmities, he at once set out for Scotland with a powerful army, and pushed the Earl of Pembroke on in front. Edward's generalissimo harried the eastern shires. For King Robert the castle of Cupar maintained a memorable siege. It was nobly defended by Bishop Wishart of Glasgow, a turbulent and versatile politician and prelate, who, like most of his colleagues, could wield the weapons of war when necessary. At last, however, Wishart was compelled to hand over the keys to Lord Aymer de Valance. On the capitulation of the citadel, the priest, who had doffed his sacerdotal stole for burnished armour, and laid aside his crosier for a drawn sword, was sent, arrayed in such ungodly garb and loaded with chains of iron, a prisoner to England.

The decrepit old king had in the meantime reached Carlisle, where he lay languishing on a bed of sickness. Though in a state of extreme weakness, he swore that he would never sheathe his sword until he had subdued the Scots. He flattered himself that he was growing better; he even offered up his horse-litter in the cathedral-church of Carlisle; then re-commenced his march, but was so weak that he had to be supported on his war-horse between two aides-de-camp. At Burgh-on-Sand he breathed his last—within sight of the country he hated so much and so well. Yet, ere he died, he made his son promise to carry his bones at the head of the army till Scotland was vanquished. The second Edward, happily, had none of his father's mettle and abilities, and soon returned home without having accomplished anything.

The change of kings was the turning-point in Bruce's career. Garrison after garrison surrendered itself into his hands, and at length Stirling Castle was the only great fortress that remained to be taken; and it, too, opened its gates the morning after the battle of Bannockburn. In that celebrated struggle Fife lost thousands of its inhabitants.

Dishonourably humbled as they were, the English did not give up all hopes of conquering Scotland. Weary of futilely warring with the Scots on land, Edward Caernarvon, son of the famous Hammer, next attempted to assail them by sea. During the absence of King Robert in Ireland, whither he had gone to support his brother Edward who, two years previously, had been elected ruler at Carrickfergus, Caernarvon rigged out a fleet of ships and sent it into the Forth with orders to harry the country on both shores. In the midst of their depredations the English anchored off Inverkeithing, where their landing was half-heartedly opposed by the Earl of Fife and Sir Michael Balfour, who had raised a force of five hundred soldiers in order to drive the marauders back to their ships.

Perceiving the odds he had to encounter, and being, besides, not over courageous himself, the Earl beat a precipitate retreat, when he encountered William Sinclair, the Bishop of Dunkeld, with some three-score armed men in his company. The loyal and martial prelate, having inquired whither they were flying, severely censured them for their craven-heartedness, exclaiming, "Shame, ye cōwards; you deserve to have your gilt spurs hacked off!"—meaning, of course, that men like unto them were a stain upon the knightly priesthood. Then, throwing aside his prelatical garments, he seized a spear in his hand, and, putting spurs to his horse, cried, "Who loves Scotland, follow me!" A hundred lances were instantly couched,—he led them again to the charge, and, coming down upon the enemy before they had completed their disembarkation, attacked them so fiercely that several hundreds were slain at the first onset. The invaders gave way and escaped to their boats, but such was their hurry that one of them, being overburdened, sank ere they could pull to the men-of-war. When news of this exploit reached the ears of the King, he exclaimed, "Sinclair shall be my bishop!" and as the King's bishop was the gallant churchman ever afterwards honoured and remembered by his co-patriots.

Thus was Scotland delivered from the bondage under which it had groaned so long. A desultory warfare still continued for many years, but a zealous courage had been inspired by the Bruce into the hearts of his subjects, and the English were defeated on every side. Such indeed was their terror that, in the words of their own historians, "a hundred of them would have fled from two or three Scotsmen." At last Edward made overtures for peace, and in 1328 the English Parliament, at York, acknowledged the Independence of Scotland and renounced all claims of overlordship.

A year later Bruce died. But he left behind him a realm that was gloriously free. Peace had been concluded with England ; treaties made with France and Norway ; and the potentates of Europe, even the Pope, had owned the Scottish kingdom. Was it wonder, then, that the soul of Scotland rejoiced and was glad ? Though their new king, David II., was but a child of five summers, yet in Regent Randolph Moray, Baron of Aberdour, Scotsmen found a man whose genius and wisdom in the administration of justice was only equalled by his own matchless valour and uncorrupted character.

For a year or two the sun shone over Scotland as it had never done before, and there was peace and plenty. But every sweet has its bitter. In 1332 the Good Regent died at Musselburgh, and was buried beside the remains of his illustrious uncle in Dunfermline Abbey. Barbour, the Brucian historiographer and a youthful contemporary of Randolph, asserts that he was poisoned at a feast held in his palace of Wemyss, by an English friar. Here is the rhyiming chronicler's indisputable testimony :—

The lave sa weill mantenynt he,
 And held in pess swa the countre,
 That it was nevir or his day
 Sa weill, as I herd auld men say :
 Bot syne, allace ! pusionyt was he ;
 To see his dede was gret pitè.

Andro of Wyntoun utters the same decisive affirmation :—

Thai thoct to gere
Him wyth wenenous fell poysoun
Be destroyid, and fell tresoun,
For at the Wemyss, by the se,
Poysownyd at a fest wes he.

Troubles multitudinous now assailed the Scottish kingdom. The corpse of Randolph was not yet cold when Edward Baliol—son of John Baliol—claimed the crown. In pursuit of his pretensions he set sail from Ravenspar, near the mouth of the Humber, with a few thousand soldiers. Prosperous gales carried them northward, and on the 31st of July 1332, the English ships appeared before Burntisland, where, owing to the nature of the ground, had the Scots been in the least prepared for the storm that momentarily broke over them, the hazardous enterprise might easily have been nipped in the bud, and all Baliol's hopes of recovering his father's rankless and degraded sceptre made the sport of every wind. Mar, however, was faint-hearted and vacillating : with a large army he lay at a distance, and the opportunity to break the neck of the invasion flitted past before his very eyes.

As it was, a landing was effected. The conflicting accounts given of the expedition warn us to walk warily. While Mar remained inactive, Sir Alexander Seton and Duncan Macduff, Earl of Fife, swooped down upon the invaders with a handful of men, and a desperate encounter took place upon the edge of the cliffs. The Scots were thoroughly repulsed, and the brave Seton slain in the fray. With terribly immodest hyperbole, the English writers magnify to incredibility the successes of their countrymen, affirming that the little band of six hundred warriors disembarked in the face of ten thousand Scotsmen ; nay, killed nine hundred of them upon the spot, without losing—how many, themselves, they don't say. What disgusting braggadocio ! Certain it is, truly, they gained a glorious victory. Echard says that Baliol and his resolute adventurers,

to prevent all hopes of escape, sent back their vessels to sea, and, thus reduced to the necessity of fighting valiantly or dying cowardly, encountered their opposers with such vigour and magnanimity that they gave them a signal defeat and forced them to fly dishonourably, crying out as they fled, "The enemy are come! The enemy are come!"

Elated by this success, Baliol at once pushed on to the abbey of Dunfermline, where he found great stores of ammunition, particularly five hundred spears of fine oak, with long pikes of iron and steel, and a seasonable supply of provisions, laid up by the Regent Randolph, who had died only twelve days previously.

His army, meanwhile, had increased to quadruple the strength it possessed on its arrival, and so, feeling more confident and enthusiastic, Baliol hastened towards St John's Town, bidding his fleet circumnavigate the peninsula of Fife and anchor in the Firth of Tay. On the 12th of August he reached the historic banks of the river Earn, and found his progress barred by a powerful Scottish force, under the incapable and presumptive Mar, encamped on Dupplin Moor. By dawn of next day a most ignominious defeat had befallen the Scottish arms. It could not be called a battle: no, not even a rout, but rather a carnage. Ill-fated intemperance on the part of the native soldiers, and the abominable treachery of a recreant nobility, combined with the military incapacity of the Regent, provoked an overthrow which was as disgraceful as it was disastrous.

"Rushing down," says Tytler, "at the head of his army, without order or discipline, the immense mass of soldiers became huddled and pressed together; spearmen, bowmen, horses, and infantry were confounded in a heap, which bore headlong down upon the English, and in an instant overwhelmed young Randolph Moray and his little phalanx. The confusion became inextricable: multitudes of the Scottish soldiers were suffocated or trodden down by their own men; and the English, preserving their discipline, and under brave and experienced leaders, made

a pitiless onslaught. . . . Multitudes perished without stroke of weapon, overridden by their own cavalry, suffocated by the pressure and weight of their armour, or trod under foot by the fury with which the rear ranks had pressed upon the front. On one part of the ground the dead bodies lay so thick that the mass of the slain was a spear's length in depth."

Terrible indeed was the butchery—so terrible, in fact, that, though disrobed of the exaggeration with which English authors have arrayed it, it will ever rank as one of the most calamitous reverses in the annals of our country. The Regent himself and the flower of Scottish chivalry were slain, and multitudes, through treachery as well as in despair, humbly submitted to the conqueror. Duncan, Earl of Fife, was taken prisoner, after making a gallant stand, in which fell nearly four hundred men-at-arms who fought under his banner.

Perth straightway surrendered; and Baliol, after being crowned king at Scone, where he received the oath of allegiance from the gentry of Fife, Gowrie, and Strathearn, marched with his army through the country, leaving the captured citadel to the care of Earl Duncan. Before he returned, however, Perth had been stormed and retaken by the Scots under Sir Simon Fraser and Sir Robert Keith; Fife and his wife and children sent to the Castle of Kildrummie to think over their inconstancy and shiftiness; and the town delivered into the safe keeping of Sir John Lindsay. Nor did Baliol enjoy his honours long. Suddenly attacked in Annandale by Randolph Moray at the head of a band of determined patriots, he was chased, almost naked, upon a bridleless horse, across the Border: so once more he had perforce to cast himself upon the charity of England's avaricious and treacherous monarch.

The battle of Halidon Hill, however, reinstated him. Again he was master of the kingdom, and again he placed Sassenach garrisons in all the principal fortresses. And thus, within a remarkably short time, Scotland had, as it were, lost nearly forty years: the retrogression more than counterbalanced the

advancement it had made during that period : it seemed really to stand just where Wallace found it when he rose in all his majesty to break the bonds of the usurpers.

After the disastrous conflict at Halidon Hill in 1334, only five strongholds held out for King David. One of these was Lochleven Castle, which, under Governor Alan Vipont, successfully resisted all the attacks of Sir John de Strivelin and his troops. During the following month the Scottish Estates assembled in the consequential castle of Dairsie, under the presidency of Robert the Steward and Sir Andrew Moray, the governors of the kingdom. Much was expected to accrue from



DAIRSIE CASTLE.

this Parliament for the freedom of Scotland : nothing, however, was done. Bitter dissensions among the nobles, who eyed with suspicion and distrust the presence of the self-seeking and turn-coat Comyn, Earl of Athole, with a large retinue of his followers, embroiled the deliberations before any definite plan of defence could be arrived at.

A year later the English monarch himself rushed up and down the country. He visited Perth. It was unfortified,—he caused it to be fenced with walls and bulwarks, and made the abbeys of Cupar, Arbroath, Lindores, Balmerino, Dunfermline, and St

Andrews pay for the doing of it. Assuredly he was exercising his overlordship with a mighty hand! Henry Beaumont he appointed governor of St Andrews, and Henry Ferrier captain of the castle of Leuchars. On the 5th of October he was at Falkland which was also in the hands of the English, and then he went home, leaving garrisons in many of the strongholds, and Baliol, the puppet-king, in possession of the throne.

And just as when the cat is from home the mice come out to sport and play, so the Scots who, while the English tiger was harrying the country, had retired to the woods and morasses, now emerged from their hiding-places. With Edward's departure rose the Scottish star in brilliancy and glory. Month by month the government gained strength. The guardian, Sir Andrew Moray, the pupil of Wallace and a veteran of sterling abilities and unapproachable integrity, stormed through the eastern shires, here and there inflicting terrible defeats on the southron soldiery. Leuchars Castle yielded to him on the spot; St Andrews and the tower of Falkland followed its example, and were, to prevent them again becoming strongholds to the oppressors, destroyed and dismantled. From the highest pinnacle of the Macduffian castle on Cupar Hill there still flaunted, however, the banner of the usurper.

The castle of Cupar, remarks Lord Hailes, was defended by William Bullock, an ecclesiastic of eminent abilities, whom Baliol had appointed chamberlain of Scotland. This able, sagacious, and valiant churchman for a long time successfully resisted the arms of Moray the Regent, the intrepid assertor of his nation's rights after Wallace's death. But the art of Robert the Steward succeeded where the bravery of Moray had failed. Sounding Bullock, he discovered him to be selfish and avaricious; and, satiating his predominant passion by an ample grant of lands, won him over from his duty. Bullock abandoned and betrayed his benefactor, yielded up the fortress committed to his care, and, with his numerous adherents, swore fealty to David. Men in all ages have rewarded treason: but

in that age men were wont to put confidence in traitors. Bullock was received into as great trust with the Scots as he had ever enjoyed under Baliol ; and he seems to have acted with zeal and fidelity in support of that cause which he had so dishonourably espoused.

The fall of Cupar occurred towards the close of 1339 A.D. Soldierly qualities like those of the double-hearted prelate were invaluable to the noble band of patriots. Through his endeavours Perth was wrested out of the enemy's hands, just when the Scots were on the eve of raising the siege ; and the possession of Edinburgh Castle, soon after, was all owing to the clear-headedness and strategic propensities of the warlike Bullock. Yet the fate of this intriguing and renegade churchman was horrible in the extreme. Suspected of trafficking with the English, he was shorn of his honours, thrown by Sir David Barclay into the dungeons of Lochindorb in Moray, and there slowly starved to death.

Such is a meagre outline of the perilous condition of the Kingdom during the long years which preceded and followed what is known in *English* history as the Independence of Scotland. Not that Scotland was ever anything else than free : not that, but she was so overburdened by wars within and wars without, that she neither reaped nor enjoyed those pleasures and advantages which are the inheritance of a country absolutely free and independent. Enmity—cold-blooded, back-biting, persevering, unappeasable enmity on the part of the Comyn family towards the Brucean, coupled with the intriguing hostility of the Plantagenet sovereigns of England and the treachery of the disinherited barons, created the most violent heart-burnings among the Scottish nobility—heart-burnings which were, as we have seen, only stamped out, after great difficulty, by wise and able Regents.