

In Freedom's Cause

A Story of Wallace and Bruce

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A Meeting of Wallace and Bruce

G.A. Henty

Revised and Edited by Michael J. McHugh

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Preface

My Dear Lads,

There are few figures in history who have individually exercised so great an influence upon events as William Wallace and Robert Bruce. It was to the extraordinary personal courage, indomitable perseverance, and immense energy of these two men that Scotland owed her freedom from English domination. So surprising were the traditions of the feats performed by these heroes that it was at one time the fashion to treat them as belonging as purely to legend as the feats of St. George or King Arthur. Careful investigation, however, has shown that so far from this being the case, almost every deed reported to have been performed by them is verified by contemporary historians. Most of the information regarding the character of Sir William Wallace has, regrettably, come down to us principally by the writings of his bitter enemies, and even modern historians, who should have taken a fairer view of his life, repeated the cry of the old English writers that he was a blood-thirsty robber. Mr. W. Burns, however, in his masterly and exhaustive work, *The Scottish War of Independence*, has torn these accusations to shreds, and has displayed Wallace as he was, a high-minded and noble patriot. While consulting other writers, especially those who wrote at the time of or but shortly after the events they record, I have for the most part followed Burns in all the historical portions of the narrative. Throughout the story, therefore, wherein it at all relates to Wallace, Bruce, and the other historical characters, the circumstances and events can be relied upon as strictly accurate. The only exception concerns the earlier events of the career of Wallace, of which the details that have come down to us are somewhat conflicting, although the main features are now settled past question.

Yours sincerely,
G.A. Henty

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Introduction

In recent times, there has been a renewed interest in the study of Scottish history in general and in particular the lives of Sir William Wallace and Robert the Bruce. Major motion pictures and popular novels have featured one aspect or another of the titanic struggle that took place between England and Scotland during the late 1200s and early 1300s. The novel that follows provides readers with a stirring account of the exploits of Wallace and Bruce during the climactic days that preceded Scottish independence. This true adventure story clearly portrays how two men were instrumental in giving the land of Scotland its own national identity and political freedom.

The author, G. A. Henty (1832–1902), was one of the most respected historians and writers of his day. He wrote over 144 books of historical fiction covering a wide range of history topics from the fall of Jerusalem to the American War Between the States. Most of his historical narratives revolve around the adventures of some young boy who is caught up in a particular event of history. This writing technique helps younger readers to more easily relate to the study of history without getting lost in a sea of dry and impersonal details. The enduring popularity and esteem of Henty's writings is a fitting testimony to the quality of his work as a master storyteller.

Michael J. McHugh
Arlington Heights, Illinois
1998

The following novel, *In Freedom's Cause*, was revised and edited by Michael J. McHugh. He has worked in the field of Christian education for over twenty-five years with the Christian Liberty Academy of Arlington Heights, Illinois. During his time with the academy, Mr. McHugh has worked as a teacher, administrator, curriculum director, and textbook author.

As a father of seven children, Michael lives in the Chicago area where he is active as an elder in an independent Reformed Church by the name of Church of Christian Liberty.

Chapter 1

Glen Cairn

The village of Glen Cairn was situated in a valley lying to the west of the Pentland Hills, some fifteen miles north of the town of Lanark, Scotland. The country around it was wild and picturesque. The villagers for the most part knew little of the world beyond their own valley, although a few had occasionally paid visits to Glasgow, which lay as far to the west as Lanark was distant to the south. On a spur jutting out from the side of the hill stood Glen Cairn Castle, whose master the villagers had for generations regarded as their lord.

The glory of the little fortalice had now departed. Sir William Forbes had been killed on his own hearthstone, and the castle had been sacked in a raid by the Kerrs, whose lands lay to the south-west, and who had a long-standing feud with the Forbes clan.

The royal power was feeble, and the Kerrs had many friends, and were accordingly granted the lands they had seized; only it was specified that Dame Forbes, the widow of Sir William, should be allowed to reside in the fortalice free from all hindrance, so long as she meddled not, nor sought to stir up enmity among the late vassals of her lord against their new masters.

The castle, although a small one, was strongly situated. The spur of the hill ran some two hundred yards into the valley, rising sharply some thirty or forty feet above it. The little river which meandered down the valley swept completely round the foot of the spur, forming a natural moat to it, and had in some time past been damned back, so that, whereas in other parts it ran brightly over a pebbly bottom, here it was deep and still. The fortalice itself stood at the extremity of the spur, and a strong wall with a fortified gateway extended across the other end of the neck, touching the water on both sides. From the gateway of the hold itself, and between these walls and the water every level foot of

ground was cultivated; this garden was now the sole remains of the lands of the Forbes clan.

It was a meager inheritance for Archie, the only son of Dame Forbes. His lady mother had hard work to keep up a respectable state and to make ends meet. Sandy Grahame, who had fought under her husband's banner and was now her sole retainer, made the most of the garden patches. Here he grew vegetables on the best bits of ground and oats on the remainder; these crushed between flat stones, furnished a coarse bread. From the stream an abundance of fish could always be obtained, and the traps and nets therefore furnished a meal when all else failed. In the stream, too, swam a score and more of ducks, while as many chickens walked about the castle yard, or scratched for insects among the vegetables. A dozen goats browsed on the hillside, for this was common ground to the village, and Dame Forbes had not therefore to ask for leave from her enemies, the Kerrs. The goats furnished milk and cheese, which was deftly made by Elspie, Sandy's wife, who did all the work indoors as her husband did without. Meat they seldom touched. Occasionally the resources of the small estate were enriched by the present of a little hill sheep, or a joint of prime meat, from one or other of her old vassals, for these, in spite of the mastership of the Kerrs, still at heart regarded Dame Mary Forbes as their lawful mistress, and her son Archie as their future chief.

Dame Mary Forbes was careful in no way to encourage this feeling, for she feared above all things to draw the attention of the Kerrs to her son. She was sure that did Sir John Kerr entertain but a suspicion that trouble might ever come from the rivalry of this boy, he would not hesitate a moment in commissioning his death. Sir John was a rough and violent man who was known to hesitate at nothing which might lead to his aggrandizement. Therefore she seldom moved beyond the outer wall of the hold, except to go down to visit the sick in the village. She herself had been a Seaton, and had been educated at the nunnery of Dunfermline, and she now taught Archie to read and write, accomplishments by no means common even among the better class in those days. Archie loved not books; but as it pleased his mother, and time often hung heavy on his hands, he did not mind devoting two or three hours a day to the tasks she gave him. At other

times he fished in the stream, wandered over the hills and brought in the herbs from which Dame Forbes distilled the potions which she distributed to the villagers when sick.

Often he joined the lads of the village in their games. They all regarded him as their leader; but his mother had pressed upon him over and over again that on no account was he to assume any superiority over the others, but to treat them strictly as equals. Doubtless the Kerrs would from time to time have news of what was happening in Glen Cairn; and while they would be content to see him joining in the sports of the village lads, with seemingly no wish beyond that station, they would at once resent it did they see any sign on his part of his regarding himself as a chief among the others.

No inconsiderable portion of Archie's time was occupied in acquiring the use of arms from Sandy Grahame. His mother, quiet and seemingly resigned as she was, yet burned with the ambition that he should some day avenge his father's death, and win back his father's lands. She said little to him of her hopes; but she roused his spirit by telling him stories of the brave deeds of the Forbeses and Seatons, and she encouraged him from his childhood to practice in arms with Sandy Grahame.

In this respect, indeed, Archie needed no stimulant. From Sandy even more than from his mother he had heard of his brave father's deeds in arms; and although, from the way in which she repressed any such utterances, he said but little to his mother, he was resolved as much as she could wish him to be, that he would some day win back his patrimony, and honor his father's memory.

Consequently, upon every opportunity when Sandy Grahame could spare time from his varied responsibilities, Archie practiced with him, with sword and pike. At first he had but a wooden sword. Then, as his limbs grew stronger, he practiced with a blunted sword; and now Sandy Grahame had as much as he could do to hold his own with his pupil who was fifteen years of age.

At the time the story opens, in the springtime of the year 1293, he was playing at ball with some of the village lads on the green, when a party of horsemen was seen approaching.

At their head rode two men perhaps forty years old, while a lad of some eighteen years of age rode beside them. In one of the elder men Archie recognized Sir John Kerr. The lad beside him was his

son Allan. The other leader was Sir John Hazelrig, governor of Lanark; behind them rode a troop of armed men, twenty in number. Some of the lads would have ceased from their play; but Archie exclaimed:

"Heed them not; make as if you did not notice them. You need not be in such a hurry to tip your caps to the Kerr."

"Look at the young dogs," Sir John Kerr said to his companion. "They know that their chief is passing, and yet they pretend that they see us not."

"It would do them good," his son exclaimed, "did you give your troopers orders to tie them up and give them a taste of our stirrup leathers."

"It would not be worth while, Allan," his father said. "They will all make stout men-at-arms some day and will have to fight under my banner. I care as little as any man what my vassals think of me, seeing that whatsoever they think they have to do mine orders. But it needs not to set them against one needlessly; so let the varlets go on with their play undisturbed."

That evening Archie said to his mother, "How is it, mother, that the English knight whom I today saw ride past with the Kerr is governor of our Scottish town of Lanark?"

"You may well wonder, Archie, for there are many in Scotland of older years than you who marvel that Scotsmen, who have always been free, should tolerate so strange a thing. It is a long story, and a tangled one; but tomorrow morning I will draw out for you a genealogy of the various claimants to the Scottish throne, and you will see how the thing has come about, and under what pretense Edward of England has planted his garrisons in this free Scotland of ours."

The next morning Archie did not forget to remind his mother of her promise.

"You must know," she began, "that our good King Alexander had three children—David, who died when a boy; Alexander, who married a daughter of the Count of Flanders, and died childless; and a daughter, Margaret, who married Eric, the young King of Norway. Three years ago the Queen of Norway died, leaving an only daughter, also named Margaret, who was called among us the 'Maid of Norway,' and who, at her mother's death, became heir-presumptive to the throne, and as such was recognized by an

assembly of the estates at Scone. But we all hoped that the king would have male heirs, for early last year, while still in the prime of life, he married Joleta, daughter of the Count of Drew. Unhappily, on the nineteenth of March, he attended a council in the castle of Edinburgh, and on his way back to his wife at Kinghorn, on a stormy night, he fell over a precipice and was killed.

"The hopes of the country now rested on the 'Maid of Norway,' who alone stood between the throne and a number of claimants, most of whom would be prepared to support their claims by arms, and thus bring unnumbered woes upon Scotland. Most unhappily for the country, the maid died on her voyage to Scotland, and the succession therefore became open.

"You will see on this chart, which I have drawn out, the lines by which the principal competitors—for there were nigh upon a score of them—claimed the throne.

"Before the death of the maid, King Edward had proposed a marriage between her and his young son, and his ambassadors met the Scottish commissioners at Brigham, near Kelso, and on the eighteenth of July, 1290, the treaty was concluded. It contained, besides the provisions for marriage, clauses for the personal freedom of Margaret should she survive her husband; for the reversion of the crown failing her issue; for protection of the rights, laws, and liberties of Scotland; the freedom of the church; the privileges of crown vassals; the independence of the courts; the preservation of all characters and natural muniments;¹ and the holding of parliaments only within Scotland. It also provided that no vassal should be compelled to go forth of Scotland for the purpose of performing homage or fealty; and that no native of Scotland should for any cause whatever be compelled to answer, for any breach of covenant or for a crime committed, out of the kingdom.

"Thus you see, my boy, that King Edward at this time fully recognized the perfect independence of Scotland, and raised no claim to any jurisdiction over it. Indeed, by Article I it was stipulated that the rights, laws, liberties, and customs of Scotland should remain forever entire and inviolable throughout the whole realm; and by Article V that the kingdom of Scotland shall

1. A means of protection or defense.

remain separate and divided from England, free in itself, and without subjection, according to its right boundaries, as heretofore.

“King Edward, however, artfully inserted a salvo, ‘saving the rights of the king of England and of all others which before the date of this treaty belong to him or any of them in the marches or elsewhere.’ The Scottish lords raised no objection to the insertion of this salvo, seeing that it was of general purport, and that Edward possessed no rights in Scotland, nor had any ever been asserted by his predecessors—Scotland being a kingdom in itself equal to its neighbor—and that neither William the Norman nor any of his successors attempted to set forward any claims to authority beyond the border.

“No sooner was the treaty signed than Edward, without warrant or excuse, appointed Anthony Beck the warlike Bishop of Durham, Lieutenant of Scotland, in the name of the yet unmarried pair; and finding that this was not resented, he demanded that all the places of strength in the kingdom should be delivered to him. This demand was not, however, complied with, and the matter was still pending when the Maid of Norway died. The three principal competitors—Bruce, Baliol, and Comyn—and their friends, at once began to arm; but William Frazer, Bishop of St. Andrews, a friend of Baliol, wrote to King Edward suggesting that he could act as arbitrator, and more than hinting that if he chose Baliol he would find him submissive in all things to his wishes. Edward jumped at the proposal, and thereupon issued summonses to the barons of the northern counties to meet him at Norham on the third of June; and a mandate was issued to the sheriffs of Northumberland, Cumberland, Westmoreland, York, and Lancaster, to assemble the feudal array at the same rendezvous.

“Now, you know, my son, that, owing to the marriages between royal families of England and Scotland, there has been a close connection between the countries. Many Scottish barons have married English heiresses and hold lands in both countries, while Scottish maidens have married English knights. Thus it happens that a great number of the Scottish nobility are as much Englishmen as Scotsmen, and are vassals to England for lands held there. Because four of the competitors—John Baliol, Robert

Bruce, John Comyn, and William Ross—are all barons of England as well as Scotland and their lands lying in the north, they were, of course, included in the invitation. In May, Edward issued an invitation to the Bishops of St. Andrews, Glasgow, and other Scottish nobles to come to Norham, remain there, and return, specially saying that their presence there was not to be regarded as a custom through which the laws of Scotland might in any future time be prejudiced. Hither then came the whole power of the north of England and many of the Scottish nobles.

“When the court opened, Roger Brabazon, the king’s justiciary,² delivered an address, in which he stated that Edward, as lord-paramount of Scotland, had come there to administer justice between the competitors for the crown, and concluded with the request that all present should acknowledge his claim as lord-paramount. The Scottish nobles present, with the exception of those who were privy of the true motive behind this pretension, declared their ignorance of any claim of superiority of the King of England over Scotland.

“By holy Edward, whose crown I wear, I will vindicate my just rights, or perish in the attempt,” insisted Roger Brabazon.

“However, he saw that nothing could be done at that hour, and adjourned the meeting for three weeks, at the end of which time the prelates, nobles, and community of Scotland were invited to bring forward whatever they could in opposition to his claim to supremacy.

“At the time fixed, the Scottish nobles again met, but this time on the Scottish side of the border, for Edward had gathered together the whole of the force of the northern counties.

“Besides the four claimants, whose names I have told you, were Sir John Hastings, Patrick Dunbar, Earl of March, William de Vesci, Robert de Pinkeny, Nicholas de Soulis, Patrick Galythly, Roger de Mandeville, Florence, Count of Holland, and Eric, King of Norway. With the exception of Eric, the Count of Holland, Dunbar, and Galythly, all of those were of Norman extraction, and held possession in England. When the meeting was opened the prelates and nobles present advanced nothing to

2. The chief political and judicial officer of the king; a judge of a superior court.

disprove Edward's claim, for which, indeed, my son, as every man in Scotland knows, there was not a shadow of foundation.

"The king's chancellor declared that there was nothing in these objections to Edward's claim, and therefore he resolved, as lord-paramount, to determine the question of succession. The various competitors were asked whether they acknowledged Edward as lord-paramount, and were willing to receive his judgment as supreme. In a moment of folly, these wretched traitors proceeded to barter their country for their hopes of a crown, acknowledged Edward as lord-paramount, and left the judgment in his hands.

"Bruce and Baliol received handsome presents for thus tamely yielding the rights of Scotland. All present at once agreed that the castles and strongholds of Scotland should be surrendered into the hands of English commanders and garrisons. This was immediately done; and thus it is, Archie, that you see an English officer lording it over the Scottish town of Lanark.

"Then every Scotsman was called upon to do homage to the English king as his lord-paramount, and all who refused to do so were seized and arrested. Finally, on the seventeenth of November last, 1292—the date will long be remembered in Scotland—Edward's judgment was given at Berwick, and by it John Baliol was declared King of Scotland.

"Thus for eighteen months Scotland was kept in doubt; and this was done, no doubt, to enable the English to rivet their yoke upon our shoulders, and to intimidate and coerce all who might oppose it."

"There were some that did oppose it, mother, were there not?—some true Scottish patriots who refused to own the supremacy of the King of England?"

"Very few, Archie. One Sir Malcolm Wallace, a knight of but small estate, refused to do so, and was, together with his eldest son, slain in an encounter with an English detachment under a leader named Fenwick at Loudon Hill."

"And was he the father of that William Wallace of whom the talk was lately that he had slain young Selbye, son of the English governor of Dundee?"

"The same, Archie."

"Men say, mother that although but eighteen years of age he is of great stature and strength, of very handsome presence, and courteous and gentle; and that he was going quietly through the streets when insulted by young Selbye, and that he and his companions being set upon by the English soldiers, slew several and made their escape."

"So they say, Archie. He appears from all description of him to be a remarkable young man, and I trust that he will escape the vengeance of the English, and that some day he may again strike some blows for our poor Scotland, which, though nominally under the rule of Baliol, is now but a province of England."

"But surely, mother, Scottish clans will never remain in such a state of shameful servitude!"

"I trust not, my son; but I fear that it will be long before we shake off the English yoke. Our nobles are for the most part of Norman blood; very many are barons of England; and so great are the jealousies among them that no general effort against England will be possible. No, if Scotland is ever to be freed it will be by a mighty rising of the common people, and even then the struggle between the commons of Scotland and the whole force of England aided by the feudal power of all the great Scottish nobles, would be will-nigh hopeless."

This conversation sank deeply into Archie's mind; day and night he thought of nothing but the lost freedom of Scotland, and vowed that even the hope of regaining his father's lands should be secondary to that of freeing his country. All sorts of wild dreams did the boy turn over in his mind; he was no longer carefree and light-hearted, but walked about moody and thoughtful. He redoubled his assiduity in the practice of arms; and sometimes when fighting with Sandy he would think that he had an English man-at-arms before him, and would strike so hotly and fiercely that Sandy had the greatest difficulty in parrying his blows, and was forced to shout lustily to recall him from the clouds. He no longer played at ball with the village lads; but, taking the elder of them aside, he swore them to secrecy, and then formed them into a band, which he called the Scottish Avengers. With them he would retire into valleys far away from the village, where none would mark what they were doing, and there they practiced with club and stake instead of broadsword and pike, defended narrow

passes against an imaginary enemy, and, divided into two parties, did battle with each other.

The lads entered into the new diversion with spirit. Among the lower class throughout Scotland the feeling of indignation at the manner in which their nobles had sold their country to England was deep and passionate. They knew the woes which English domination had brought upon Wales and Ireland; and though as yet without a leader, and at present hopeless of a successful rising, every true Scottish patriot was looking forward to the time when an attempt might be made to throw off the English yoke.

Therefore the lads of Glen Cairn entered heart and soul into the projects of their "young chief," for so they regarded Archie, and strove their best to acquire some of the knowledge of the use of sword and pike which he possessed. The younger lads were not permitted to know what was going on—none younger than Archie himself being admitted into the band, while some of the elders were youths approaching manhood. Even to his mother Archie did not breathe a word of what he was doing, for he feared that she might be forced to reveal his plans. The good lady was often surprised at the cuts and bruises with which he returned home; but he always turned off her questions by muttering something about how hard country life can be, and so for some months the existence of the Scottish Avengers remained unsuspected.