

**GREAT ACHIEVEMENTS OF
MILITARY
MEN, STATESMEN,
AND OTHERS, PP. 8-224**

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Great Achievements of Military Men, Statesmen, and Others, pp. 8-224 by Anonymous

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OF
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AND OTHERS.

Selected and Arranged by the Editor of
'THE ENGLISH ESSAYISTS,' 'THE TREASURY OF BRITISH ELOQUENCE,' 'RISIN BY
PERSEVERANCE; OR, LIVES OF SELF-MADE MEN,' ETC



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PREFATORY NOTE

IT is probably allotted to few to achieve great things in an average lifetime; the common duties of every day bounding and filling up the horizon, and giving no opportunity for the performance of any great deeds, or any displays of talent or heroism, which might challenge the admiration of the world. Perhaps the best kind of heroism is that which shows itself in the cheerful and right performance of daily duty, of which the world shall hear little or nothing. Doing right and guiding one's own life wisely and prudently may be considered as no mean performance, and a task in which some of those blessed with great talent and genius have not always succeeded.

It is none the less interesting and important, however, to keep great examples and the heroic deeds of the world's great ones before the mind. These examples have a stimulating and invigorating effect on character. The present examples have been chosen from copyright matter placed in the hands of the Editor, by the Publishers, for the present purpose.

lay down their arms. But such was not the purpose of the high-minded champion of Scotland.

'Go back to Warrenne,' said Wallace, 'and tell him we value not the pardon of the King of England. We are not here for the purpose of treating of peace, but of abiding battle, and restoring freedom to our country. Let the English come on : we defy them to their very beards.'

The English, upon hearing this haughty answer, called loudly to be led to the attack. Their leader, Sir Richard Lundin, a Scottish knight who had gone over to the enemy at Irvine, hesitated, for he was a skilful soldier, and he saw that, to approach the Scottish army, his troops must pass over the long, narrow wooden bridge, so that those who should get over first might be attacked by Wallace with all his forces, before those who remained behind could possibly come to their assistance. He therefore inclined to delay the battle. But Cressingham the Treasurer, who was ignorant and presumptuous, insisted that it was their duty to fight and put an end to the war at once ; and Lundin gave way to his opinion, although Cressingham, being a churchman, could not be so good a judge of what was fitting as he himself, an experienced officer.

The English army began to cross the bridge, Cressingham leading the van or foremost division of the army ; for in those military days even clergymen wore armour and fought in battle. That took place which Sir Richard Lundin had foreseen. Wallace suffered a considerable part of the English army to pass the bridge without offering any opposition ; but when about one-half were over, and the bridge was crowded with those who were following, he charged those who had crossed with his whole strength, slew a great number, and drove the rest into the river Forth, where the greater part were drowned.

The remainder of the English army who were left on the southern bank of the river fled in great confusion, having first set fire to the wooden bridge, that the Scots might not pursue them.

Cressingham was killed in the very beginning of the battle ; and the Scots detested him so much, that they flayed the skin from his dead body, and kept pieces of it in memory of the vengeance they had taken upon the English treasurer.

The remains of Surrey's great army fled out of Scotland after this defeat ; and the Scots taking arms on all sides, attacked the castles in which the English soldiers continued to shelter themselves, and took most of them by force or stratagem.

Scotland was thus once more free ; but in consequence of bad seasons and the disorders of war, it suffered severely from famine. With the view of procuring sustenance to his remaining followers, Wallace marched his army into the north of England ; and for upwards of three weeks, the whole of that wide tract of country from Cockermouth and Carlisle to the gates of Newcastle, was wasted with all the fury of revenge, licence, and rapacity.

Wallace now assumed the title of 'Guardian of Scotland, in name of King John (Baliol), and by the consent of the Scottish nation.' That he was virtually so, there can be no doubt ; and we ought therefore to be the less scrupulous in inquiring as to the forms which attended his investiture with this high dignity. With the aid and countenance of only one of all the Scottish barons, the lamented Andrew Murray, and supported by the lower orders of Scottish people alone, he had freed his country from English thralldom, and restored it to its ancient independence. A service so great and unexampled gave him a claim to the appellation of Scotland's Guardian, which wanted neither

form nor solemnity to make it as well founded as any title that ever existed.

The barons, who had stood aloof during the struggle for liberty, now began, as before, to intermeddle with the fruits of the conquest so gloriously achieved. Of Wallace they speedily evinced the utmost jealousy. His elevation wounded their pride; his great services were an unceasing reproach to their inactivity in the public cause. Strife and division were again introduced into the Scottish camp, at a time when, more than ever, unanimity was necessary to the establishment of the national independence. Edward had again invaded Scotland with a powerful army, and Wallace had a second time to risk a general battle for Scottish freedom. In the neighbourhood of Falkirk the hostile armies met. Wallace had now around him a Cumming, a Stewart, a Graham, a Macduff, and other names of equal note in Scottish chieftainship; but feebler, through the jealousy and distrust of so many rivals, than when alone with the gallant Murray he led his countrymen to battle. Victory had deserted his plume: the Scots were defeated with great slaughter; and though for some time after they kept up the war in detached parties, they were no longer able to muster an army in the field. Edward, with his victorious troops, swept the whole country from the Tweed to the Northern Ocean; and there was scarcely any place of importance but owned his sway.

Yet, amid this wreck of the national liberties, Wallace despaired not. He had lived a freeman, and a freeman he resolved to die. All his endeavours to rouse his countrymen were, however, in vain. The season of resistance was, for the present, past. Wallace perceived that there remained no more hope, and sought out a place of concealment, where, eluding