

I.

A FEW REMARKS ON THE PORTRAITS OF SIR WILLIAM WALLACE. BY  
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In Scotland, the name of SIR WILLIAM WALLACE will never be forgotten; *ᾧ οὐ κλέος οὐποτ' ἀλείτται*.<sup>1</sup> His fame having survived with undiminished lustre the changes of more than five centuries, it may well be averred he needs no Monument. Yet if the people of Scotland, rousing themselves from their apathy, think that some of our old worthies are equally deserving of national commemoration, as either statesmen or warriors of the present age, the movement is one which ought to meet with support; and I hope the Wallace Monument will, in good time, be followed by others,—for Knox, Buchanan, Napier, men of whom any country might be proud.

The site for the proposed monument, the summit of the Abbey Craig near

<sup>1</sup> "Of whom the renown will never perish."—*Homeri Ilias*, lib. ii., v. 325.

Stirling, is perhaps not ill chosen; although the low ground on the actual battle-field might be more appropriate. What the monument itself should be, is a question that may depend much upon the amount of subscriptions to be realized. Without presuming to give any decided opinion on this point, I would nevertheless beg to suggest the union of architecture with sculptured bas-relief, in the style, but without any slavish imitation, of some of the famous monuments of Grecian art. I have however a very decided opinion that a Wallace Monument ought *not* to be, as some have proposed, either a gigantic cairn, or a huge, shapeless block of granite, or even an emblematic lion of heroic size, looking towards the south, and stretching out its paws, as if waiting the approach of "our auld enemies." Every one seems agreed, that any attempt at a bodily representation of our Scottish hero must be abandoned; and that an ideal figure, like that which exists in the neighbourhood of the beautiful grounds of Dryburgh Abbey, is not more absurd than might be a colossus in the antique garb, or with no garb at all.

But leaving these general remarks, it may be considered strange that so few nominal Portraits of Wallace should be known. I shall briefly refer to such as have been discovered. In point of date I would place first the carved head, one of the series of oak carvings, known as the Stirling Heads. In the temporary museum of the Archæological Institute, during their meeting held in this city four months ago, several of these carvings were exhibited, including the one referred to, which is now in the possession of Mr Campbell of Monzie, Perthshire. This series of heads is usually, but I presume to think fancifully, supposed to represent portraits of distinguished persons at the Court of James the Fifth; and they are engraved in the volume entitled "Lacunar Strevelinense: a Collection of Heads, etched and engraved after the carved work which formerly decorated the roof of the King's Room in Stirling Castle." This work was published at Edinburgh in 1817, and the portrait called "Wallace" is engraved as No. 7. The editor of this volume was Mr Gibson Lockhart, who says, "This is evidently intended to represent some personage equally conspicuous for prudence and for valour. The owl on his breast-plate, and the lion on his shoulder, seem at least to be emblematical of such qualities. If it may be permitted to hazard a conjecture, this is not improbably a likeness of Sir William Wallace. The features and costume resemble, in a considerable degree, those of the print commonly prefixed to Blind Harry, which is supposed to have been taken from an original picture executed during the residence of Wallace in France. In this case the lion on his shoulder may perhaps refer to the popular story respecting Wallace, that he was continually attended by an animal of that species while abroad." (P. 9.)

Of oil paintings there are two in particular, which have been regarded as original portraits, and which, however dissimilar, are evidently intended to embody the idea of Wallace. Of these portraits, the first had, for some indefinite period previously to 1783, been in the family of Sir Philip Ainslie, when the Earl of Buchan employed the well-known Scottish artist, David Allan, to make the drawing in sepia which his Lordship presented to our Society, and is now exhibited, a copy of which is given in Plate VI.\* From this drawing there is a very indifferent print prefixed to Morison's edition of Henry the Minstrel's Life of Wallace, printed at Perth in 1790, and the one to which Mr Lockhart refers. It probably also served as a guide for the statue already mentioned as put up at Dryburgh by the Earl of Buchan, which is intended to be seen from a distance across the valley. I have been favoured with the following description of the oil painting, which, I presume, is still preserved in the collections of the Ainslie family:—

“ The portrait is decidedly an original, and, I believe, unique. It is painted on coarse Italian canvas, and the colouring and drawing perfect. His head is covered with a close round skull-cap (iron), clasped on under the chin with a broad solid band. Over his shoulders hangs a tartan cloak, which is fastened in front by a round brooch, upon which is (within the circle) the following legend or inscription:—

RERV M LIBERTAS EST OPTIMA.

He is in close-fitting armour (but without glaives), which comes down to his waist, or rather to his hips, and below which is a *buff* continuation; but as the portrait is a kit-kat length, the under portion of the dress does not appear. On his left side is the basket-hilted claymore, suspended by a leathern belt across his shoulder, but which is hid by his cloak until it descends below his chest. He holds in his right hand a *roll*, either as representing a *baton* or document. In the upper and left-hand corner of the picture is the following legend:—

GVLIELMI VALLECI DE ELLERSLIE.

It appears to me that this is the work of an Italian or foreign artist. The flesh (particularly the hand) is beautifully painted; the drawing is perfect, and the softness and colouring of the whole shows the hand of a master. The canvas is, as I said before, coarse Italian.”

This portrait I have often seen in the possession of the late Lieut.-General Ainslie, a learned member of our Society, who spent the latter years of his life in Edinburgh. I must confess I was never much impressed with the idea of its antiquity, considering it to be of no greater age than the seventeenth century.

Had the Exhibition of National Scottish Portraits taken place, as was anticipated, this, however, and any other alleged portraits of Wallace would have been objects of peculiar interest for a careful comparison and examination.

The other portrait I have not seen, but I should conjecture that it likewise might be referred to the seventeenth century. It is in the possession of Sir John Maxwell of Pollok, Bart., and is well known by the excellent lithograph lately published by Messrs Schenck and Macfarlane. It is on canvas, and has the inscription "DOMINUS GULIELMUS WALLAS, DUX SCOTORUM." The original, we are told, "*is said to have been sold by Cromwell from the Royal Collection of Charles the First.*" This may safely be called an erroneous assertion. Had any such portrait been in the collection of Charles, or sold by Cromwell, it must of course have appeared in the catalogues of the royal pictures which were dispersed after the death of that unfortunate monarch; but there is no indication of any such portrait ever having been in the royal collection.

Many years ago, I bought in the Cowgate for a few shillings an old portrait, said to be that of Wallace. It was on pannel, which had split, and was badly mended. It was moreover so rubbed and covered with train oil that I soon lost conceit of it, and transferred it to Mr Kirkpatrick Sharpe. What became of it I do not know. The name of Wallace, I need scarcely add, was quite gratuitous.

In the gallery of Newbattle Abbey, among the numerous portraits of Scottish kings attributed to Jamesone, there is one bearing the name of Wallace. But these heads are certainly misnamed; and it is not improbable they formed part of the pageantry prepared for Charles the First's visit to Edinburgh in 1633.

Of engraved portraits of Wallace I have not been able to discover any of an early date. Without attempting a complete enumeration, I beg leave to specify and exhibit some of the engravings. 1. The mezzotint head may perhaps be an unfinished proof, as it has no engraver's name or date, and is not later than the middle of the last century. 2. Another mezzotint about the same date, and also without any engraver's name, with the inscription "Gulielmus Vallas de Ellersly, Miles, Custos Regni Scotiæ et Ductor Exercituum ejusdem sub Principe Sereniss<sup>o</sup>. Johanne Balliolo." 3. A small engraved oval, by Bannerman, belongs to Guthrie's History of Scotland, 1767. 4. An indifferent copy of the same head, by Walker, which had previously appeared in Smollett's History of England. There is also a mezzotint, by T. Watson, professing to be "from a painting at Holyrood House." It is not uncommon, but I have no impression of it, to say which of the heads it resembles. Wallace however has no place in the Royal Gallery of Holyrood, an honour not greatly to be regretted. But it may be considered as no improbable conjecture, that one or other of the por-

traits referred to may have been painted by De Witt, as a companion to that wonderful series of portraits of our Scottish kings, commencing with Fergusius and Teritharius, who reigned three centuries before the Christian era.

I will not trouble the Society with any more remarks, except to state, that the costume of the helmet, plaid, and mail, in these portraits betokens a comparatively recent period, and that no faith can be attached to such Portraits as furnishing any actual resemblance of the Scottish Champion. That a likeness of Wallace was taken while he was in France, is at least a pleasing fiction. But the existing portraits are evidently fanciful, and moreover present no features worthy to be recognised as those of "the illustre and vailzeand Champion," as our old Blind Minstrel terms him, to whom indeed Wallace may be said to have owed no small share of his popular fame.

[Since this communication was read to the Society, one or more alleged portraits of Wallace have been brought into notice. In particular, one at Niddrie House, engraved for "Paterson's Life of Wallace," where it is stated to have been specified in an inventory upwards of a century ago. The following description of another portrait is an extract from the *Brechin Advertiser*: "*The Brechin Portrait of Wallace*. At a late meeting of the Antiquarian Society of Scotland, the interesting subject of the portraits of Sir William Wallace was brought before the Society by David Laing, Esq. In addition to the portraits of Wallace mentioned by Mr Laing, it may interest strangers to know that there is another so-called in the hall of the Mechanics' Institution at Brechin. The picture is about 2 feet by 2½ feet in size, and represents a strong muscular personage between forty and fifty years of age, with short beard, long moustaches, and a bold, firm expression of countenance. The dress is composed of a buff coat, with steel gorget, ornamented with brass and with fringes of crimson silk; and the sleeve, the upper part of which is open, is lined with crimson. The left hand (the only one shown) is covered with a steel gauntlet or glove, and rests upon the hilt of a round-headed sword with crimson tassel. The right side of the back-ground is filled up with a round shield and lance leaning against a wall, and on the left is a curtain, betwixt which and the warrior's head appears a distant view of the ocean. It need hardly be said that the name "Wallace" is a misnomer to this picture, and that it had been so called merely from the peculiarity of the dress and expression of the countenance; for it cannot certainly lay claim to higher antiquity than the 17th century, and from the resemblance of the costume, &c., to that of the heroes of the Thirty Years' War, perhaps it represents one of the followers of Gustavus Adolphus. The picture, which had been lined at some

time, is an original work of art belonging to the Dutch school ; and, as a whole, is one of the finest pictures in the hall of the Mechanics' Institution which were presented, along with the building, by the late Lord Panmure ; and "Wallace" is one of two pictures in that hall which were given to the late noble donor by his mother, the Countess of Dalhousie."—*December 29, 1856.*]



N. N. PINXIT

W & A K Johnston, Lith. Edin<sup>g</sup>

D. ALLAN DEL

GULIELMUS VALLAS DE ELLERSLIE.