

SECOND ARTICLE.

IN the middle of the second exhibition-room, on the west side, there is a picture of Allan's which almost every visitor stands to study and admire ; and we observed not a few who, like ourselves, came back a second and a third time to look at it again and again. Let criticism say what it please, this is praise of the very highest order. The piece represents one of the first heroes and greatest men of Scotland,—Robert the Bruce ; and represents him when greatest and noblest,—uniting to a courage truly heroic the tenderness and compassion of a gentle and affectionate nature. It embodies with exquisite truth Barbour's affecting story of the king and the "poore lavender."

The scene, as all our readers must remember, is laid in Ireland. The redoubtable hero of Bannockburn had been compelled to retreat before the immensely superior forces of the English and their Irish allies. Both the retreating and the pursuing army had been resting for the night,—the one in a valley, the other on an adjoining hill ; but the pursuers were early astir, and their long array had been seen from the Scottish encampment stretching far into the background on the ridge of the neighbouring height, and all in full advance. The Scotch, too, had been preparing for a hasty retreat ; Edward Bruce and the Black Douglas had mounted their war-horses, and the warriors behind were all on foot and in marching column, when they were suddenly arrested by the voice of the king. He had heard a woman shrieking in despair when just on the eve of mounting his horse, and had been told by his attendants, in reply to a hurried inquiry, that one of the female followers of the army, a "poore lavender" (*i. e.* laundress), mother of an infant who had just been born, was about to be left behind, as being too weak to