

THE BATTLE OF ENBO.*

A.D. 1259.

IN the year 1259, the Danes and Norwegians having landed at the ferry of Unes, proceeded to ravage the county of Sutherland, committing the most savage excesses, and slaying numbers of the peasantry. William Earl of Sutherland resolved to oppose those ancient enemies of the country, who had often scourged it by their periodical visits, notwithstanding the many severe defeats they had sustained. Mustering his numerous vassals he marched against the Danes, whom he met at a place called Enbo, between the ferry of Unes and the ancient episcopal city of Dornoch.

The conflict which ensued was obstinate and bloody. The Danes fought from desperation, the men of Sutherland to protect their country, and to rid themselves of the common enemy; but the invaders were at last overthrown with great slaughter, and the survivors were pursued to their ships. The Thane of Sutherland is traditionally said to have exhibited great bravery on this occasion, and it was his personal valour which chiefly determined the victory. He singled out the Danish general, towards whom he fought his way; but while thus forcing a passage through the Danes to encounter their chief he was accidentally disarmed. The gallant nobleman seized the leg of a horse, which he

* History of the Family of Sutherland; Statistical Account of Scotland.

opportunately found lying on the ground near the mutilated body of the animal, and with it he inflicted a mortal blow on the Danish general, who almost instantly expired.

This victory freed the country from the ravages of the Danes till the year 1263, when they sustained a more severe defeat at the battle of Largs in Ayrshire. It is said that the name of the town and parish of Dornoch is derived from the gallant exploit of the Thane of Sutherland. The name Dornoch is a compound of two Gaelic words signifying the *foot* or *hoof of a horse*, and the *horse shoe* is still retained in the arms of this old seat of the bishops of Caithness. In memory of the same exploit a stone pillar was erected on the spot where the Danish general fell, supporting at the top a cross encompassed by a circle which was designated the *Earl's Cross* and also *Righ-roish*, or the *cross of the king* or *general*. Being erected in a sandy hillock it was gradually undermined by violent winds, and it fell in the eighteenth century and was completely destroyed. Some fragments of it, however, still remain, and the graves of the slaughtered Danes are still pointed out to the stranger.
