

THE SCOTISH INVASION OF IRELAND UNDER EDWARD BRUCE.

THE events of this invasion, down to the capitulation of Carrickfergus Castle, are briefly narrated in the Article of the Second Volume entitled "Siege of Carrickfergus." Though Robert Bruce, then in the ninth year of his reign, must have readily seen that to unite the discordant factions of the Irish, to reconcile them to the dominion of a stranger, and to drive the English out of their country, would be an enterprise of great or perhaps insuperable difficulty; yet he could not be so ungracious as to refuse the offer of a crown to a brother who had rendered him many and invaluable services, and he might hope at least to acquire a partial footing among the Irish, and to divide the forces, multiply the perplexities, and materially diminish the power of the English. Edward himself, also, liked the project well, and saw no obstacle in the path which it promised to open to fame and sovereign grandeur; and as he was to be the leader of the proposed expedition, and would bear the brunt of all its dangers, and possessed pretty ample resources for it within his own earldom of Carrick, he really needed little other help than Robert's consent, which was heartily given him, to levy forces and equip an armament. Archdeacon Barbour, the metrical historian of the Life and Acts of Robert Bruce, who is a principal authority in all the matters of the invasion, and who seems to have gathered his intelligence from the stragglers who survived it, and whom we shall have occasion to quote very freely in the course of our narrative, says,—

“ The Earl of Carrick, Sir Edward,
 That stouter was than a libbard,
 And had no will to be in peace,
 Thought that Scotland too little was
 To his brother and him alsa,
 Therefore to purpose can he ta
 That he of Ireland would be king.”

The spot at which the expedition landed was on the north side of the lower part of Belfast Lough, not far from Carrickfergus. The invaders dismissed their ships, and committed themselves irretrievably to the enterprise — they ‘drew the sword, and threw away the scabbard.’ Though the article on the Siege of Carrickfergus states, on apparently good authority, that “no sooner had Edward Bruce landed with his six thousand followers than the Irish chiefs of Ulster repaired to his standard, and solemnly engaged themselves in his service by giving hostages for the performance of their engagements,” yet a stern though somewhat unaccountable and perfectly vain opposition was really made to him before he reached Carrickfergus or was joined by his allies; and this is related as follows—very exaggeratedly, perhaps, and rather vain-gloriously—by Barbour:—

“ In two battles they took their way
 Toward Craig-fergus, it to see
 But the Lords of that countrie,
 Maundweil, Bisset, and Longane,
 Their men assembled e'erilkane.
 The savages werę also there;
 And when that they assembled were,
 They were well near twenty thousand;
 When they wist that into their land,
 Sik a menzie arrived were,
 With all the folk that they had there

They went toward them in great hy
And fra Sir Edward wist soothly,
That near to him coming were they,
His men he gart them well array.
The waward had the Earl Thomas,
And the rereward Sir Edward's was.
Their foes approached to the fighting,
And they met them but abasing.
There might men see a great mellee;
For Earl Thomas and his menzie
Dang on their foes so doughtily,
That in short time men might see ly
An hundred that all bloody were;
For hobynes that were sticked there,
Reeled and flang, and great room made,
And kest them that upon them rade.
And Sir Edward his company
Assembled syne so hardily,
That they their foes there rushed all,
Who happen'd in that fight to fall,
It was peril of his rising.
The Scottishmen in that fighting
So apertly and well them bare,
That their foes so rushed were,
That they wholly the fight have tane.
In that battle was tane or slain
All hail the flower of Ulister.
The Earl Murray great price had there;
For his right worthy chevalry
Comforted all his company.
This was a full fair beginning,
For newlings at their arriving,
On plain fight they discomfit there
Their foes, that four for one ay were;

Syne to Craig-fergus are they gane,
And in the town has innes tane."

When Robert Bruce, in the second year of the invasion, resolved to conduct a reinforcement in person to the assistance of his brother, he took shipping, along with all his men, at Loch-Ryan in Galloway, and landed at Carrickfergus, and was there met and gladly welcomed by Edward.

"Synne to the Castle went they yare
And made them meikle feast and fare.
They there sojourned dayis three
And that in mirth and jollitie.
Syne took they counsel that they wauld
With all their folk their wayis hald
Through all Ireland, fra end to other."

The army of Robert and Edward, amounting to 20,000 men, decamped from Carrickfergus in the month of February, 1317, and marched southward, with all possible speed, through the counties of Down and Louth, to the vicinity of Slane, on the northern border of Meath. An English army was posted to defend the entrance into the province of Leinster; and the Scots are said by the Annals of Ireland to have eluded them, but by Barbour to have fought and defeated them. Some slight action, or perhaps a smart skirmish, probably occurred; and was magnified by Barbour into a great and very eventful battle. Several circumstances which he reports to have preceded it are lively and characteristic. The Scottish army passed through a wood, and were marching in two divisions, the first led by Edward, and the second by Robert; and the English lay in ambush, purposing to attack the rear, as soon as the first division had passed. Edward, with his wonted impetuosity, hurried on, and bestowed not a thought on either the possibility of an ambuscade or the pru-

dence of maintaining a compact order of march ; while Robert advanced slowly, circumspectly, and with keen regard to the critical circumstances of the place. Small parties of English archers by and bye began to annoy the rear of the Scottish army ; and Robert inferred that stragglers acting in such a way must know themselves to be well supported, and therefore enjoined his soldiers to move on in order of battle, and on no account to leave their ranks. Sir Colin Campbell, the King's nephew, being shot at by two of the English archers, forgot or disregarded the King's injunction, and rode furiously off to revenge the insult ; and Robert followed, and nearly unhorsed him with a violent stroke of his truncheon, and said angrily to him, " Your breaking of bidding might have brought us all into discomfiture."

" With that well near thirty or moe
 Of bowmen came, and bicker'd so,
 That they hurt of the king his men ;
 The king has gart his archers then
 Shoot, for to put these men again.
 With that they entered in a plain,
 And soon array'd against them stand
 In four battles forty thousand.
 The King said then, Lording's, let's see
 Who worthy in this fight shall be.
 On them foroutten more abade,
 So stoutly then on them they rade,
 And assembled so hardily,
 That of their foes a great party
 Was laid at erd at their meeting ;
 There was of spears sik a bristing,
 As either upon other rade,
 That it a well great frush has made.
 Horse came there frushing head for head,
 So that feil on the ground fell dead.

Many a wight and worthy man,
As either upon other ran,
Were dushed dead down to the ground.
The red blood out of many a wound
Rushed in so great fusion than,
That of the blood the streams ran.
And they that wroth were and angry,
Dang on others so hardily
With weapons that were bright and bare,
That many a good man died there ;
For they that hardy were and wight,
And stoutly with their foes can fight,
Pressed them foremost for to be.
There might men cruel bargain see,
And hard battle : I take on hand,
In all the weir of Ireland
So hard a fighting was not seen.
The where of great victors nineteen,
Sir Edward has withoutten weir,
And that into less than three year,
And in sundry battles of thae
Vanquished thirty thousand and mae,
With trapped horse right to the feet ;
But in all that time he was yet
Ay ane for five when least was he.
But the king into this mellee
Had always eight of his foe men
For one ; but he so bare him then,
That his good deed and his bountie
Comforted so all his menzie,
That the most coward hardy was :
For where he saw the thickest press,
So hardily on them he rade,
That there about him room he made,

That he slew all he might o'ertake,
 And rudely rushed them aback.
 And Earl Thomas the worthy
 Was in all times near him by,
 And fought as he were in a rage;
 So that for their great vassalage,
 Their men sik hardiment can take
 That they no peril would forsake,
 But them abandon'd so stoutly,
 And dang on them so hardily,
 That all their foes afraid were,
 And they that saw well ly their fare,
 That they eschew'd some deal the fight
 Then dang they on with all their might,
 And prest dinging on them so fast,
 That they the back gave at the last;
 And they that saw them take the flight,
 They dang on them with all their might,
 And in their fleeing feil can slay,
 The King his men has chased sa,
 That they were scalyt e'erilkane."

The Scottish army now advanced toward Dublin, and seemed pretty stoutly to threaten the overthrow of the English government in Ireland. But the citizens of Dublin, with a zeal for England which might astonish their successors of modern times, burnt their suburbs, which might have facilitated the approach of the enemy, demolished a church, repaired and strengthened the city walls with its materials, and resolved to defend the city from the Scots or to perish amidst its ruins; and, suspecting the Earl of Ulster to be favourable to the invaders, though for no reason whatever except that he was allied by family ties to Robert Bruce, they seized him and committed him to prison. The invaders took possession of Castleknock, beyond the Phoenix Park, on the 23d of

February; but despairing of success against Dublin, they turned aside, and encamped at Leixlip, six miles up the Liffey, on the 25th of February; and after remaining there four days, they marched first to Naas in the county of Kildare, and then south-westward to Coblen in the county of Kilkenny, and then so far to the west as the city of Limerick.

“ And to give battle none they fand;
 Syne went they southward in the land,
 And right to Kinnike held their way,
 That is the southmost town, persey,
 That in Ireland may founden be;
 There lay they dayis two or three
 And busked syne again to fare.”

What induced the Bruces to carry their arms so widely and wanderingly to the farther parts of the country, especially at such a season of the year, and with all the forces and partisans of England behind them, cannot now be known or very satisfactorily conjectured. They must not be supposed to have had simply the silly object in view of braving the English power, or of finding out its paucity of resources beyond the limits of the Pale; but possibly they hoped, by passing to the confines of Munster and Connaught to excite the Irish chiefs of these provinces to repair to their standard, and more probably they were driven by scarcity of provisions and the inhospitality of the season to roam for sustenance to such remote parts as could offer least resistance to foraging and plundering. The invading army, at all events, were both rapacious and uneasy in even the portions of their march which lay between Carrickfergus and Dublin; and are accused, not only of ravaging the country, but of plundering churches and monasteries, and even of sacrilegiously searching for treasures in the sepulchres of the dead. But on the other hand, as partly accounting for their excesses, though

not one jot extenuating the guilt of them, they were often reduced to the necessity of feeding on horse flesh; and multitudes of them actually perished from sheer hunger.

About the 31st of March, while the Scottish army were in the far south-west, the English forces assembled, to the number of about 30,000, in the neighbourhood of Kilkenny. They seem, however, to have been more a rabble than an army; for though much more numerous than the Scots, and in a friendly country, and situated direct between the enemy and his resources, they neither advanced to attack him, nor adopted measures to cut off his retreat, but held wordy councils of war during an entire week, and then terminated them without forming any final resolution. On the 7th of April, just at the juncture when the officers of the English army had argued themselves into a nonplus, Roger Mortimer, invested with the character of deputy, landed from England, and despatched orders to the officers not to attempt anything against the Scots till he should give directions in person; and when he arrived at the army, he learned that the Scots, by forced marches, had extricated themselves from the embarrassment of their position, and retreated as far as to Kildare, so as now to be between him and Dublin,—and he therefore disbanded on the spot the actionless multitude whom he had gone to command. The Scots halted some days in the vicinity of Trim, in the county of Meath, and then, about the beginning of May, returned into Ulster.

Robert soon after sailed back to Scotland, to attend to the pressing exigencies of his own kingdom, and without having achieved more in Ireland than the idle and guilty exploit of overrunning a great part of the country at the expense of the lives of many of his most faithful subjects; and Edward remained behind, professedly to retrieve and establish his fortunes, but really to make a more terrible display than he had ever yet done of his characteristic impetuosity and recklessness, and to pay down his life as the forfeit. Robert, on

mending matters a little in Scotland, set about the organizing of another reinforcement in aid of Edward; but the latter was far too restless and uncalculating to wait its arrival,—and, though weak in both men and council, rushed away to the south again to try his strength once more with the English.

Edward renewed the campaign in defiance of the advice and expostulations of all his principal officers; and though still supported and followed by some of the Irish chiefs, he no longer enjoyed their confidence as either a safe or a skillful military leader. He came in sight of a great English army at Faugher, in the vicinity of Dundalk; and when approaching it, he was first entreated by his Irish followers to withdraw and hide, and then told that they would not be so foolhardy as to take part with him in battle; and, when he resolved nevertheless to fight, he could not prevail on them to do more for him than make a show of their numbers at some little distance, as onlookers, while he and his Scots sustained the whole shock of the action. His Scottish supporters are computed by Barbour at two thousand, and by the Irish Chronicle, subjoined to Camden's *Britannia*, at three thousand. The English army was commanded by John Lord Bermingham; and is stated by Barbour to have comprised "twenty thousand trapped horse." The battle, on the part of the English, was a complete victory,—or rather a rush, an onslaught, and a rout. Edward Bruce and some of his most distinguished officers were slain on the field; and the body of Edward was afterwards sought out, and quartered, and distributed for a public spectacle over Ireland. A few stragglers of the defeated Scots were collected by John Thomson, the leader of the men of Carrick, and led through many difficulties into the north of Ireland, whence they escaped to their native land, the sad remnants and weary witnesses of the annihilation of the ambitious project of establishing a new and Scottish sovereignty over the Emerald Isle.