



CASTLE CAMPBELL

From a Copy of a Drawing by James G. Campbell

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CASTLE CAMPBELL.

ON a knoll in a narrow glen of the Ochill range of mountains in the parish of Dollar and county of Clackmannan, and overlooking the romantic scenery of the South Devon in its course to the Forth, including the Crook of Devon, and such localities as the Rumbling Bridge and the Devil's Mill, are the massive and solitary ruins of Castle Campbell, anciently and most appropriately designated "Castle Gloom." The name of the parish is supposed to express a dark or sombre district, and tradition furnishes the explanation. A daughter of one of the Scottish monarchs is alleged to have been expelled for improper conduct from the royal palace of Dunfermline, a few miles distant, and immured in this Castle, which was termed "Castle Gloom." This imaginary Princess, whose name is unknown, called the hill on the east of her prison Gloom Hill, a name which it still retains, and she conferred the titles of "Care" and "Sorrow" on two streamlets meandering on the east and west sides of the Castle.

The lordship of Campbell, on which the Castle is situated, was in 1465 the property of Colin, second Lord Campbell, created Earl of Argyll by James II. in 1457. This lordship continued in the possession of his successors, the Earls and Dukes of Argyll, till 1805, when it was sold by John, fifth Duke, to Crawford Tait, Esq., the proprietor of the adjoining estate of Harvieston. Whatever authority may exist for the above tradition of the captive princess, the ancient or original name of the Castle was "The Gloom;" and in 1489, in the reign of James II., the name was altered to Castle Campbell, which has since designated the ruins. It is stated in the Act of the Scottish Parliament—"Our Sovereign Lord of his royal authority, at the desire and supplication of his cousin and trusty counsellor Colin, Earl of Argyll, Lord Campbell and Lorn, his chancellor, has changed the name of the castle and place which was called the 'Gloom;' pertaining to his said cousin, and in this his present Parliament makes mutation and changing of the said name, and ordains the same Castle to be called in time to come Campbell."³ The origin of this "mutation" is not stated, and it is difficult to ascertain when the great family of Campbell of Argyll acquired property so far distant from their hereditary possessions in the West Highlands. The territory on the Ochills, however, seems to have been obtained by the first Earl of Argyll as the marriage-portion of his Countess, who was Isabella, daughter of

¹ Registrum Episcopatus Glasguensis, vol. ii. p. 580.

² Two views of the ruined archiepiscopal palace are given in Dr. Smith's (of Crutherland) "Burgh Records of Glasgow." In Slezer's "Theatrum Scotiae," folio, published in 1693, and again in 1718, three views are inserted of Glasgow, in one of which, representing the Cathedral and the then city, the episcopal palace is prominent, and is apparently accurate. It was, from that delineation, a large edifice, in the style of the old baronial castles, the principal part a keep or tower, flanked by circular battlements, and entered by a gateway. A

view of the Royal Infirmary as it appeared when the drawing was taken in 1799, is in "Scotia Depicta," from etchings by James Fittler, Esq., and drawings by John Claud Nattes, published in 1804. In this view of the edifice which succeeded the archiepiscopal palace, the east gable, surmounted by a spire, of the chapel of St. Nicholas, as it then existed, is introduced among the old houses in that antique and curious quarter of the city. An account of the "Bishop's Castle" is in Stuart's "Glasgow in Former Times," 4to. 1848, pp. 9-17.

³ Acta Parl. Scot. folio, vol. ii. p. 222.

John Stewart, third Lord of Lorn and Innermeath. As his brother succeeded him, that nobleman left no son, and he had three daughters, of whom the Countess of Argyll is supposed to have been the eldest. The lands of Lord Lorn were divided among his three daughters, and the "Gloom" is in that portion of his estate inherited by the Countess, which is detailed in a charter of confirmation by James IV. Her sister Margaret married Sir Colin Campbell of Glenorchy, and her other sister married Arthur Campbell of Ottar, from which it may be inferred that the ladies were considered wealthy heiresses by their Highland spouses. A sasine, dated 9th April, 1465, records "all and hail the third part of the lands of Dollar and Gloom in favour of Duncan Campbell, son of Sir Colin Campbell, Knight," and this is conjectured to indicate Sir Colin Campbell of Glenorchy. A second sasine, of the same date, is in favour of Dame Isabella Stewart, Countess of Argyll, and a third sasine, also of the same date, is in favour of Marion, sister of the Countess, and wife of Campbell of Ottar. The third of the lands possessed by Duncan Campbell of Glenorchy through his mother, the daughter of Lord Lorn, was acquired by the first Earl of Argyll, in 1481, by a deed of renunciation on the part of the said Duncan Campbell of all right he possessed to the third part of the lands of Dollar. The Earl of Argyll obtained, either legally or by force, the other third part held by Marion Stewart, and in a charter of confirmation by James IV. of a charter of George Brown, Bishop of Dunkeld, in whose Diocese the district was included, it is expressly stated, under date 11th May, 1497, that the said Bishop granted to Archibald, second son of Argyll, "all and hail the lands of Campbell," formerly "Dollar" or "Gloom." It would thus appear that the lands belonged to Lord Innermeath, and were inherited by the third Lord's three daughters as heirs-portioners, while his brother Walter, the fourth Lord, succeeded to the other estates. The Lorn property in Argyllshire had been added to Innermeath by John Stewart of Innermeath, who about 1386 married Ergradia, a daughter of the Celtic proprietor.¹

The Earls of Argyll frequently resided at Castle Campbell, which seems to have been their favourite retreat until the conflagration by the troops of the Marquis of Montrose in 1645. Various feu charters to certain inhabitants of Dollar specify the services they were to perform to the family, such as the supplying of bread, animal food, beer, coals, and oats for the horses. Some of the vassals were bound to convey wine from the port of Alloa, and others were to furnish horses for the transit of the Earls and their household from Stirling. In 1556 Archibald, fourth Earl of Argyll, entertained John Knox in the Castle, and the Reformer edified him by sermons. It is even asserted that Castle Campbell was the scene of the first administration of the Eucharist after the Reformation, which is contradicted by authentic statements, though it is probable that the dispensation was observed, as Knox records that he was the guest of the "old" Earl of Argyll some days.²

Castle Campbell was burnt by the Marquis of Montrose in 1645, as already noticed. He was on the march to the Southern and Western counties, after his important victories at Auldearn and Alford in the North, with the intention of annihilating the Covenanters, which he soon nearly achieved at Kilsyth. He advanced to Castle Campbell from Kinross, and it is probable that he could not prevent the infliction of summary vengeance on the stronghold of his mortal enemy, to retaliate the depredations committed by the Campbells in the Hebrides. The Macleans were the parties in Montrose's army who consigned Castle Campbell to the flames.³ With the exception of a tenement which was supposed to belong to the Abbey of Dunfermline, another thought to have been within the parish of Fossaway, and a sheep-cot, the Macleans burnt all the houses of Argyll's vassals in the parishes of Dollar and Muckhart. Castle Campbell was nevertheless habitable for a small garrison in 1715, and is now an impressive ruin. A considerable part of the pile has disappeared, and the remaining portion is hastening to decay, though it is still in its romantic solitude a stately memorial of feudal power and baronial grandeur, resisting every storm, and as if surveying with indifference the lovely and captivating scenery which it overlooks. The tower, the oldest part of the ruin, is nearly entire, and is ascended by a spiral stair to an oblong summit covered with turf. This tower is of considerable height, and the view it commands is one of the finest in Scotland. The outlines of the hall with its lofty ceiling, and other large apartments, are easily traced, and the narrow openings for windows in walls of enormous thickness indicate that the edifice was built as a stronghold, when the Scottish barons

¹ New Statistical Account of Scotland — Clackmannanshire, pp. 105, 106.

² *Historie of the Reformation of Religion in Scotland*, by John Knox, fol. 1732, p. 93.

³ *Montrose and the Covenanters*, by Mark Napier, Esq., Advocate, vol. ii. p. 434.

were continually at war with each other. The Castle was erected at different times, or large additions were made to the original keep or tower. Extensive vaults were under the south division of the Castle, for stables, cellars, prisons, and other purposes, and are supposed to extend under ground to a considerable extent beyond the walls.

The ruins of Castle Campbell are of difficult access, and the road or approach is steep and rugged. The view from the public road from Stirling to Kinross is peculiarly romantic and impressive, but the grandeur and variety of the scenery can only be appreciated by a near view. After crossing the bridge in Dollar village, and advancing northward along the banks of the rivulet which descends from the castle, and traverses the ravine of Campbell Wood, entirely covered with trees, the mass of ruins appears as perched on a conical hill embosomed in the surrounding mountains. The acclivities on each side of the ravine are densely wooded, and render the localities particularly romantic. Some have attempted to reach the Castle by following the bed of the stream upwards, and have forced their way to the junction of another rivulet, both of which surround the lofty knoll, but the overhanging rocks, nearly meeting at the top, present an insuperable barrier. The Castle, however, is accessible on foot on the east and west sides of the wooded ravine, and that on the east, through the village of Dollar, is the only approach for vehicles. This road is steep and rugged, passes the Castle on the east, then winds round to a bridge, and forms the entrance on the north, at the only point where the prominence is connected with the surrounding mountains. The approach on the west side, which is no regular foot-path, is interesting for the diversified views of the ruins, and the wooded banks on the opposite side. After reaching the highest part of the bank on the west side, nearly in front of the Castle, a narrow winding foot-path, every turn of which presents new views, leads to the bottom of the ravine below; and a rustic bridge made of the trunks of two trees, without any hand-rail, is thrown over the often violent torrent descending from the mountains, and flowing round the Castle on the west to the junction with the stream on the other side immediately south. Several beautiful cascades on this stream are almost obscured by the woods. A steep path leads from the bridge to the carriage-road, which conducts to the entrance at the back of the Castle, where are the remains of the principal gateway looking to the north. In the vicinity of this entrance are a few ancient and splendid sycamores, which represent the former avenue. The area round the Castle is so narrow, that the walls cannot be left for a few yards without the danger of falling into the depths below. On the east side the steep acclivity is so abruptly occupied by the walls as to preclude any passage. A beautiful green area of some extent slopes gradually from the base of the ruins on the south side to the margin of the precipice in front. Near the south-western extremity of this area is the formidable chasm in the rock called "Kemp's Score," and adjoining are the remains of an old outwork, imparting additional interest to the scenery. Passing this outwork, and advancing a few paces to the brink of the precipice, is a half-formed foot-path extending down the wooded front of the rocks, and leading to a projection about twelve feet above the bed of the torrent, which forces its passage, almost concealed from view, beneath shelving masses. The descent of this path is extremely dangerous, as one false step would be most fatal, and the locality can only be examined by laying hold of shrubs and roots of trees. About thirty yards from the entrance to Castle Campbell on the north is a group of old plane-trees, one of which measures eighteen feet in circumference at about eight feet from the ground, and is known as the "Maiden Tree."

The remarkable fissure, or chasm, called "Kemp's Score," or "Cut," in front of the Castle, is supposed to be an artificial opening for obtaining water from the rivulet. It is said that steps were cut in the rock down to the stream, which, if existing, are completely concealed by loose earth several feet thick. The chasm is dark and repulsive, upwards of one hundred feet in height, and six feet broad, and the ascent steep and difficult. Tradition alleges that this chasm was the work of a man of gigantic stature and strength, and of a bold and resolute temper, named William Kemp. He is said to have committed many depredations, and on one occasion he abstracted the King's dinner from Dunfermline Palace. A young nobleman, who happened to be in disgrace at Court, killed this freebooter in a conflict, and threw his body into a pool of the Devon, since designated "Willie's Pool."

The scene round the ancient Castle Campbell or "Gloom," consisting of rocks, woods, rivulets, cascades, glens, and mountains, captivates the spectator by the pleasing mixture of the beautiful, the picturesque, and the romantic in nature.