

SOME SCOTCH CASTLES AND THEIR STORIES

BY CHARLES TURNER

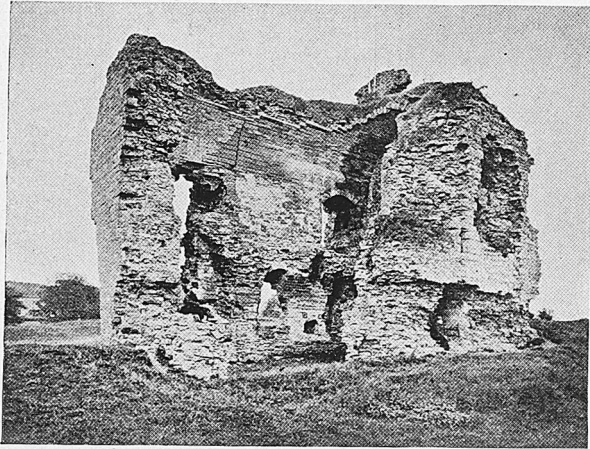
Illustrated from recent photographs.

WITHOUT a doubt, Scotland, in the number and variety of its military relics, has no peer. One of the historical writers has claimed for Belgium the title of the cock-pit of the world, but he was mistaken. It is Scotland that is entitled to that appellation by twenty centuries of such military comings and goings, such continuity, and such variety of bloody conflicts, as no other spot can even approach to. Roman and Celt, Pict and Briton, Gael and Saxon, Scotchmen and Norsemen, Highlanders and Scandinavians, Lowlanders and Danes, Borderers and Mercians, Covenanters and Moss-troopers, Royalists and Cromwellians, French levies and Hanoverians, for two thousand years have waged incessant and interminable war against each other over every inch of its rugged mountains and moors, and covered it with such a network of material evidences of their rivalries as no other portion of the earth can show. And, when no foreign foe has had to be baffled or beaten off, then the internecine wars of clan against clan, such as that betwixt Clan Chattan and Clan Quhela, so graphically described in "The Fair Maid of Perth," have flooded the land with gore.

Even the union of the crowns of Scotland and England, by the accession of the Scotch James to the English throne, gave only a short respite; for his son Charles brought about the civil war 'twixt crown and parliament, and his grandson James II gave rise to the sanguinary and hopeless efforts of the Scotch Jacobite followers of "Bonnie Prince Charlie."



EDINBURGH CASTLE



RUINS OF TORTHORWALD PEEL-TOWER

Through all this Scotland has been a hard nut to crack, and has justified the national motto: "He who plays with a thistle must expect to get pricked."

The Romans, in the first three centuries of the Christian era, found this out to their cost. After covering the land with a greater number of their wall-girt camps than can be counted in all other parts of Europe put together, they gave up the attempt at complete conquest as hope-

less, and, forestalling the Chinese example, built a wall entirely across the country, from the Forth on the North Sea to the Clyde on the Irish Sea, with a fort every two miles; then they settled down, satisfied to keep the demons of the northern hills on the yon side of it. The wall of Antoninus is indeed a significant tribute to the warlike nature and stubborn courage of the sons of Scotia.

Not less significant, and even more massive in structure, are the fortifications of the early British invaders. Nothing at all comparable to them remains in England itself. The walls of Dun-da-lamh in Invernesshire, four hundred and twenty feet long, with enclosing walls thirteen to fourteen feet wide and twenty-five feet thick, all of piled stones, without cement, are the most perfect example of ancient British fort-building in the United Kingdom. Yet earlier than the foundation of these, the rocky coasts and commanding heights of the North were thickly studded



CAERLAVEROCK CASTLE

with the gigantic fortresses of the Picts, even to touch upon which would lead us farther afield than the limitations of space allow.

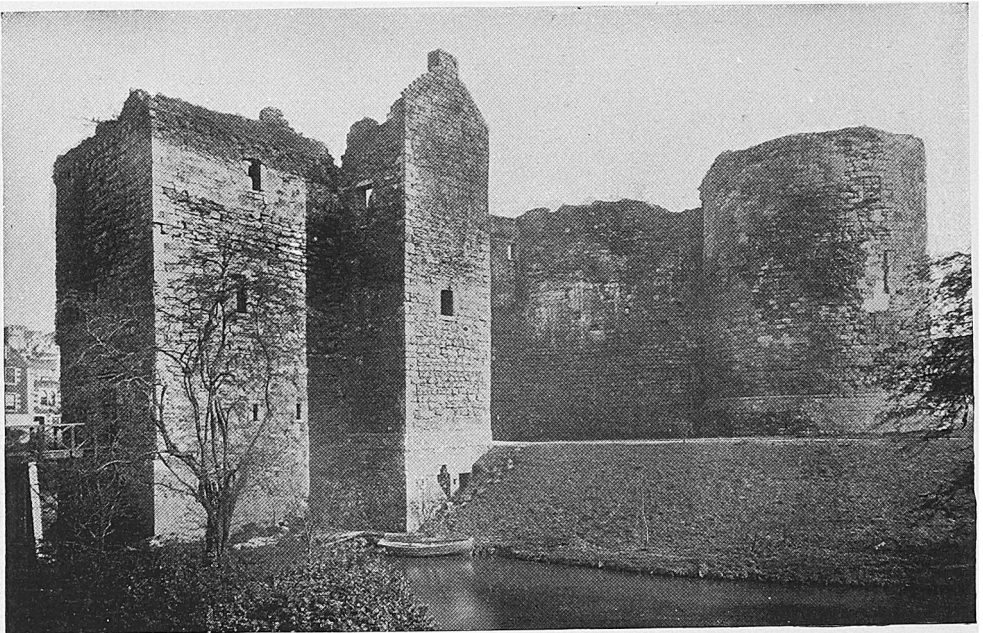
It is no surprise, recalling the conditions outlined above, to find that even civil life pertained more to life in a fortress than a home-

stead, and that, on the borderland especially, there was no safety for human life, or the beast of the field, or even the harvested crops, except within the impregnable walls of a fortress-home. 'Tis this that has covered the lowlands with peel-towers or bastel-houses, an example of which, from Torthorwald, near Dumfries, is pictured herewith. Within these, in an ascending scale, oxen, retainers, and landowners retired for safety in time of trouble. The very ruins attest the security they gave. They needed but a small garrison to defend them, but the heaviest engines of the ante-gunpowder period would have assailed them in vain. It was among the traditionary lore of the peel-castles of the borders that Sir Walter Scott gathered the principal material for many a work which has held the world in charm. He spent his childhood in the peel-tower of Smailholm.

The more strictly military castles of feudal times, owe their origin largely to that fierce fighter and determined Englishman, Edward I, and were either built by him or for defense against him. It is somewhat misleading, however, to say built for or against him, for most frequently the site had been selected and defensive works erected centuries before his reign. He or his opponents did but destroy or re-



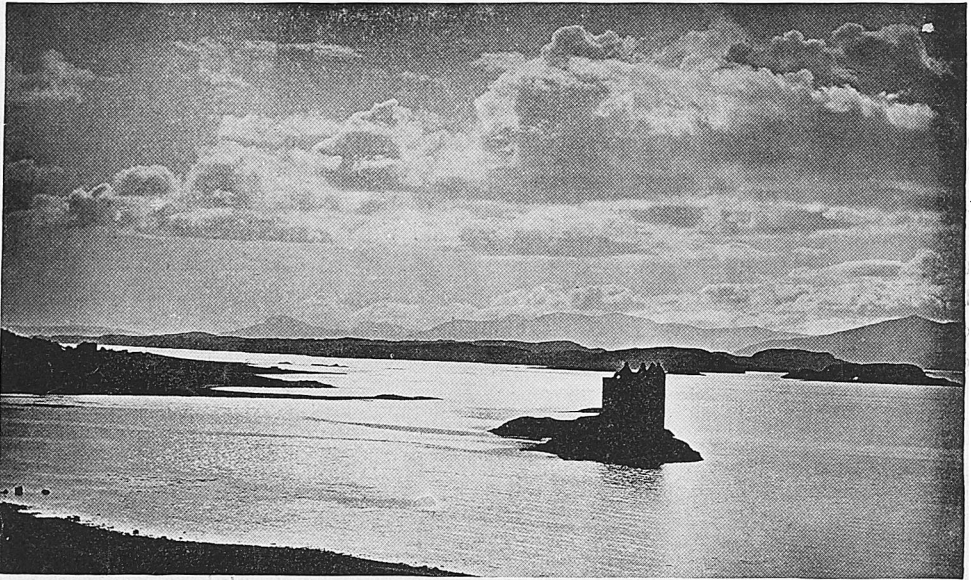
CASTLE URQUHART, LOCH NESS



ROTHESAY CASTLE, BUTE

store. For instance, Caerlaverock (of which an illustration is given), was besieged by him in 1300, and in its present state may be largely due to his restoration; yet the site had been occupied by defensive works as early, if not earlier, than the reign of the Roman Emperor Ptolemy; whoever it may have been that selected it, it was done with a master's eye. With the sea in front and an impassable moss-bog behind, the castle was really impregnable, and became the key to southwest Scotland. No wonder, therefore, that three times in the fourteenth century alone, it changed hands like a shuttlecock. Its fate was at last sealed in the sixteenth century by its owner's adhesion to the cause of the romantic Mary, Queen of Scots, and by its final dismantlement when it capitulated to the Covenanters, after a prolonged siege, in 1640. Its checkered history and impressive ruins doubtless provided Scott with his model for Ellengowan, in "Guy Mannering," although that honor is claimed also by Barholm and Carsleith.

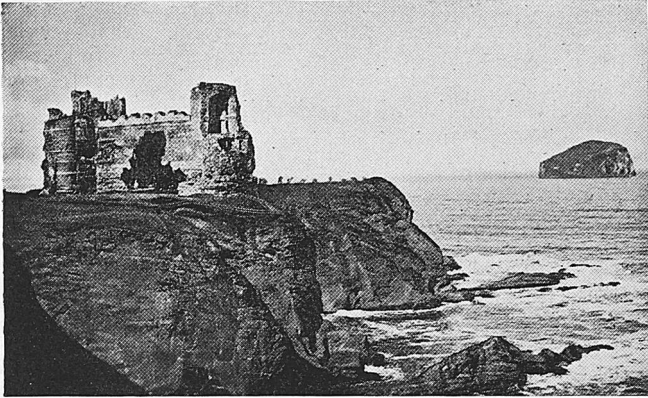
Of the many other castles of the Edwardian era, we give a picture of Castle



CASTLE STALKER, APPIN, ON LOCH LINNHE

Urquhart, not so much for its history as for the fact that its Edwardian claim does not rest on tradition. The engineers of Edward the First built it in 1303, but they, too, had first to destroy a predecessor whose origin is unknown.

Another king built Rothesay,—King Robert III; and I would not have mentioned it, but for the fact that still an earlier king, and that a foreign one, had preceded him. The original castle is ascribed to Magnus Barford, king of Norway, with every probability of truth, for not only is it on the Clyde, which these Norse pirates harried, but it is well known that this Norwegian king had obtained territorial rights in Scotland as early as 1100. The method by which he determined the boundaries of his cession is worth a line or two, as an early example of Yankee shrewdness. He had bargained for as much land as he could pass around in his ship, and, to extend the circuit, he had his ship portaged across the peninsula, two miles wide, which divides Loch Lomond from the sea—an instance of practical cunning worthy of Laban.



TANTALLON CASTLE AND BASS ROCK

Dunnottar's origin is lost in antiquity, as must needs be with a castle that figures in the romance of the Knights of the Round Table. One of the labors imposed upon Fergus, before he could be admitted to that noble company, was to secure the sword guarded by the witch of Dunnoten: The early bard, who waxes eloquent upon this traditionary subject, is

tantalizingly silent as to whether the knight was successful, or the witch retained her treasure. If she saved it, she was doubtless able to do so in a more dignified way than the owners of Dunnottar, who, as Earl Mareschals, were charged with the custody of the royal crown and scepter, and preserved these regalia from the stern Puritan soldiers of the Commonwealth, on one occasion, only by the undignified subterfuge of hiding them beneath the petticoats of the minister's wife. From that place of concealment the regalia went into another one more effectual, in Kennall Church, where the good wife buried them in a grave, and there they might have lain, but for an accident, till doomsday, to the no great loss of the world, seeing that Scotch kings have no longer a separate personality, and that regalia are somewhat of a drug in modern systems of government; yet we gladly keep them as historical relics.

Dunnottar in its day, however, has filled a high rôle in the world, and has



THE CASTLE, ST. ANDREWS

left us one of the most typical examples of the crag-crest castle of Scotland. Few situations are more impressive, or suggestive, and scarce any could have offered greater difficulties to besiegers. The wonder is, in looking at it in its ruins, how even the followers of Wallace, trained to the hills and skillful mountaineers as many of them were, could have captured it, in its prime. The same remark indeed applies to many another of the castles of Scotland—Castle Stalker, for example, on a tiny islet in Loch Linnhe, Argyleshire. It seems impossible that it should ever have been taken by assault.

Some of them certainly made a brave stand, and one is rather led to hazard the conjecture that want of food was often the only weakness leading to their downfall. Take as an instance St. Andrews castle, which once stood a siege against the combined land forces and the French fleet for fourteen months, before yielding up its garrison; among whom, by the bye, was that fiery zealot and reformer, John Knox, whose sacred office did not save him from the galleys at Nantes.



DUNNOTTAR CASTLE, FROM THE SOUTH

One can imagine, indeed, that his militancy in church matters rather ensured his fate than tempered it; and certainly the modern church-goer, who scarcely tolerates the old-fashioned three-quarters-of-an-hour sermon, would be likely to think that a priest who, as Knox did in St. Andrew's cathedral, preached sermons which lasted four whole days, might very well be spared for a much longer vacation than was given to him.

The story of this episcopal castle, built eight hundred years ago, by cardinals, who, like so many of the early churchmen, wore the warrior's shirt of mail beneath the cassock of the priest, is extremely interesting, and its illustrative reproduction aptly closes these brief notes on some of the castles of Scotland.