

THE FORTUNES OF KING ROBERT BRUCE'S
CASTLE.

LOCHMABEN CASTLE, the paternal residence of Bruce, stood on the extreme point of a heart-shaped peninsula which juts a considerable way into the south side of the Castle-loch. Across the isthmus at the entrance of the peninsula are vestiges of a deep fosse, which admitted at both ends the waters of the lake, and converted the site of the Castle into an island, and over which a well-guarded drawbridge gave ingress or refused it to the interior. Within this outer fosse, at brief intervals, are a second, a third, and a fourth, of similar character. The last stretched from side to side of the peninsula immediately at the entrance of the Castle; it was protected in front by a strong arched wall or ledge, behind which a besieged force could shield themselves while they galled, at a distance, an approaching foe; and it had at the centre a drawbridge which led into the interior building, and which was probably the last post an enemy required to force in order to be master of the fortress. Two archways at the north-eastern and south-western angles of the building, through which the water of the fosse was received or emptied, remain entire. But no idea can now be formed of the original beauty or polish either of this outwork or of the stupendous and magnificent pile which it assisted to defend. Gothic hands began generations ago to treat the Castle of the Bruce as merely a vulgar and convenient quarry; and, for the sake of the stones, they have peeled away every foot of the ashler-work which lined the exterior and the interior of its walls. So far has barbarian rapacity been carried, that now only the heart or packing of some of the walls is left, exhibiting giant masses of small stones and lime, irregularly huddled together, and nodding to their fall. Many portions of the skinned and ghastly but once noble and aerial pile have been precipitated

from aloft, and lie strewed in heaps upon the ground; the stone and the lime so firmly cemented, that scarcely any effort of human power can disunite them. The Castle, with its out-works, covered about 16 acres, and was the strongest fortress in the Border, and, till the invention of gunpowder, all but impregnable. But what remains can hardly suggest, even to fancy itself, the greatness of what the Goths have stolen. Only one or two small apartments can be traced, and they stand in the remoter and less frequented part of the Castle, and, therefore, excite but little interest. But a few years ago a farmer's dwelling-house and offices, built of the stones of the ancient edifice, profaned the precincts; the potato-house was dug into the brow of the third fosse; and the bold features of the military works around were smoothed down to suit the convenience of a man who cared exemplarily for his pigs and oxen, but had not a nook in his recollection for a line of patriot Kings, or the stirring occurrences of the most eventful periods of Scotland's history. Many houses in Lochmaben, including the new school-house, are built of materials torn from the Castle; and one inhabitant of the burgh warms his toes beside a pair of fine jambs which once rested on the paternal hearth of the Bruce.* The enclosed spot around the Castle is naturally barren, and fitted only for the raising of wood; and its present growth of trees, if allowed to bend their branches quietly over the ruin to the solemn music of the winds, would harmonize well with the solitude of fallen greatness. The view of the loch and of the

* A curious example will illustrate the surpassingly Gothic spirit of the modern Lochmaben-men. An inhabitant of the Heck, one of 'the King's kindly tenants,' in the immediate vicinity of the Castle, found, many years ago, a key of very vast proportions, supposed to have been that of the Castle's chief gate. The key was put up to auction among the hobnails for 2s. 6d.; and not finding a purchaser at a price believed to exceed by a few farthings the value of its metal in pounds' weight, it was coolly handed to a blacksmith to be converted into a pair of spades for cutting turf! .

circumjacent scenery, from all points in the vicinity, is calmly and impressively beautiful, and strongly disposes a reflecting mind to indulge in teeming and pleasingly tumultuous reminiscences of the past. The date of the Castle is uncertain, but probably was the latter part of the 13th century,—the period of the competition of the Crowns.

Tradition, though unsupported by documentary evidence, asserts the Castle to have been not the original Lochmaben residence of the Bruces, but only a successor of enlarged dimensions, and augmented strength.* At a brief distance

* It is asserted in the Old Statistical Account, that "this Castle was built by Robert Bruce, the first of that name, King of Scotland." This, however, is extremely improbable, for the following reasons urged by Dr. Jamieson. Before the assertion of his right to the Crown, he could not have engaged in the erection of so strong a fortress, without exciting the suspicion of Edward I. He had neither opportunity nor means for carrying on such a work during the time of his arduous struggle; and when this was terminated by the defeat of his enemies, and the establishment of peace, he had business of far more importance to occupy his attention. We discover no vestige, in any of our public records, of his being thus engaged. Besides, had King Robert been more partial to castle-building than he was, he would most likely have given the preference to Turnberry. It is to be observed that, in several deeds of Edward III., mention is made both of a castle and of a peel at Lochmaben; as in a letter from him to Adam de Corry, whom he designs his "seneschal of the castle, peel, and lands of Lochmaben and Annandale," in a grant to William de Bohun, and in another to Henry de Percy. [Rotul. Scot. i. 276. b. ; 399, a. ; 479, b.] Distinct from both these castles, there appears to have been one more ancient than either of them, erected in one of the seven or eight lochs reckoned up in this neighbourhood. According to tradition, there was a nunnery in the largest of them, where a castle afterwards stood; and some who are acquainted with the Gaelic, contend, that *Lochmaben* signifies 'the Loch of the Maidens,' or 'the Loch of the Fair' Dr. Jamieson says: "I should be disposed to doubt this derivation, were it for no other reason than this, that although *maighdean* is rendered in modern Gaelic, a maiden, it is obviously a term borrowed from the Gothic, as not a vestige of it appears, either in the old British, or in its kindred dialect, the Armorican. In the latter, the only similar words are the derivatives of the verb *maga*, which conveys rather a different idea from

south of the town, on the north-west side of the loch, is a large rising ground called Castle-hill, and pointed out as the site of the original Castle, and even as the alleged birth-place of the first royal Bruce. That a building of some description anciently crowned the eminence, is evident from the remains of an old wall still dug up an inch or two beneath the surface of the summit, and from the vestiges of a strong and deep intrenchment carried completely round the base. Tradition says that the stones of this edifice were transferred from the Castle-hill, across the intervening part of the lake, to the point of the heart-shaped peninsula on the southern shore, as materials for the more modern erection; and it adds, that a causeway was constructed, and still exists, across the bed of the lake, to facilitate the convenience. But here monuments, documents, and physical probabilities, concur in refusing corroborative evidence. The original castle, situated at such convenient nearness to the burgh, was, we may conclude, devoured piece-meal by the proved castle-eaters of the town; and the more modern Castle seems, as to its ashler-work, to have been constructed of stone from Corncockle-moor, a quarry in the parish which still continues to be worked. The Castle-hill commands a fine view of the burgh, of the beautiful lakes, and of a considerable expanse of the luxuriant How of Annandale. Near it is a lower hill or mount, called the Gallows-hill, on which, in ancient times, a formidable gallows constantly stood, and was seldom seen during the Border

that of 'maid,' as signifying to act the part of a nurse. As this fortress was apparently within the limits of the kingdom of Strat-Clyde, the name may have been formed from the Welsh *llwch*,—*mebyn* and *maban*,—'a babe.' Another mode of orthography, however, occurs in one old deed. Robert I. grants a charter to Thomas, son of John of Carruthers, of Musfald, &c., dated at 'our manor of Lochmalban.' Could we view this as the original form of the word, it might be traced either to the Gaelic *loch maol ben*, or to the Welsh *llwch moel ban*, both signifying 'the Lake of the bald,' or 'smooth eminence.'—*Palaces of Scotland*, pp. 101, 102.

wars without the dangling appendage of one or two rivers. The baronial courts of Lochmaben, and even occasional warden courts, were probably held on the summit of the Castle-hill, whence the judges beheld their sentences promptly and rigidly carried into execution.

The first mention that is made of this place is by Humphrey Lluyd, who has said that Constantine, King of Cumbria, was killed at Lochmaben about 870. But this seems to be a mere fabrication. Robert de Brus, the son of that noble knight of Normandy, who came into England with William the Conqueror, and first possessed the manor of Skelton, being in a state of friendship with our David I., while prince, received from him, when he came to the throne, the lordship of Annandale, with a right to enjoy his castle there, with all the customs appertaining to it. This grant was made A. D. 1124. A charter, granted by William the Lion to Robert, third Lord of Annandale, confirming to him the property possessed by his father in that district, is dated at Lochmaben; and this is supposed to have been granted between the years 1165 and 1174. The church of Lochmaben was one of those which Robert Bruce, Lord of Annandale, gave to the monks of Gyseburn, in Yorkshire, about the year 1183. Bruce, the competitor for the throne, and the grandfather of Robert I., died at his Castle of Lochmaben, A. D. 1295, or, according to Leland, 1296. In the year preceding his death, he granted a charter, dated at this fortress, confirming a convention between the monks of Melrose, and those of Holmcultram. "This old castle of Lochmaben," it is said by Chalmers in his Caledonia, "continued the chief residence of this respectable family, during the 12th and 13th centuries. Robert de Brus, the first Earl of Carrick, of this dynasty, probably repaired the Castle at Annan." As a stone, taken from the ruins of Annan-castle, bears his name, with the date 1300. the conjecture seems to be formed, with great probability, that the family had continued previously to reside at Loch-

maben. According to the testimony of our venerable minstrel, that hero, who so long withstood all the power, and all the bribes, of the royal Norman usurper,—he whom English writers have called ‘a public robber,’* who could be vanquished only by the vilest treachery,—the immortal Wallace,—took the Castle of Lochmaben. As he had only a few men with him, the deserted state of the place made it comparatively an easy acquisition. He thus addressed himself to the gallant Sir John Grahame, and his other companions:—

“ I wald sailye,^a giff^b ye think it may be,
 Lowmaban hous, quhilk now is left allayne;
 For weill I wait^c power in it is lewyd^d nane.^e
 Carlauerok als yeit^f Maxwell has in hand;
 And we had this, thai mycht be baith^g a wand
 Agayne^h Sotheroun,ⁱ that now has our cuntre.
 Say quhat ye will, this is the best, think me.”^k
 Schir Jhone the Grayme gaiff^l fyrst his gud consent;
 Syne all the layff,^m rycht with a haill entent.ⁿ
 To Lowmaban rycht haistely thai ryd.

The old bard subjoins a characteristic trait of the invariable conduct of Wallace to the defenceless:—

—Quhen the ladie had thaim seyne,
 “ Grace,” scho cryit, “ for him that deit^o on tre.”
 Than Wallace said, “ Mademe, your noyis lat be.^p
 To wemen yeit we do bot litill ill;
 Na yong childir we lik for to spill.”^q

WALLACE, B. V. v. 997. 1033.

* Quidam latro publicus, Willielmus Waleys. Knyghton, col. 2513—Ille latro, *ibid.* 2516.

a Assail. b If. c Know. d Left. e None.
 f As yet, still. g Both. h Against. i Englishmen.
 k In my apprehension. l Gave. m Remainder n Design.
 o Died. p Cease to cry. q Destroy.

After the death of John Bohun, Earl of Hereford, this Castle was given to Edward, of the same name. It was A. D. 1335, in the keeping of William Bohun, whom Randolph, Earl of Moray, "found in his own Castle of Lochmaben, and bearing sway over all his own lands of Annandale, when he returned from his captivity in France." In the year 1366, it is spoken of as the property of Humphrey de Bohun, who is authorized to victual and repair it. In July 1298, Edward I. took possession of Lochmaben-castle; and, in 1300, when we find him here a second time, he strengthened this fortress, with that of Dumfries, placing adequate garrisons in them, with ample supplies, and appointing a governor for each. To this fortress Bruce fled, A. D. 1304, on his way from London, before erecting his royal standard. Having met, near the west marches, a traveller on foot, whose appearance was suspicious, he found, on examination, that he was the bearer of letters from Comyn to the English king, urging the death or the immediate imprisonment of Bruce. He beheaded the messenger, and pressed forward to his Castle of Lochmaben, where he arrived on the seventh day after his departure from London. Hence he proceeded to Dumfries, where the fatal interview between him and Comyn took place.

At the accession of the Bruce to the Scottish throne, he conferred his paternal inheritance, with its chief seat, the Castle of Lochmaben, on Randolph, Earl of Murray. When Edward III. obtained from the inglorious Edward Baliol the county of Dumfries as part of the price for helping him to a usurped and dependent throne, he appointed a variety of officers over Lochmaben-castle, and garrisoned the fortress in defence of the wrongful cause of England. In 1342, the Scots made a strenuous attempt to capture the Castle, but were repulsed; and next year, David II.'s particular forces, whom he was imprudently leading into England, were stoutly resisted and severely harassed by its garrison. David, exasperated by the repeated disasters inflicted on him, in 1346

vigorously assaulted the fortress, took it, and executed Selby its governor. By the fatal upshot of the battle of Durham, which speedily followed, the Castle changed both its proprietor and its tenants. John, Earl of Moray, falling in that battle, the Castle passed by inheritance to his sister, Agnes, the Countess of March, and from her was transmitted, through the reigns of Robert II. and Robert III., to her son, Earl George; and David II. becoming the English king's prisoner, the Castle once more opened its gates to an English garrison. Even after David II.'s restoration, Edward III. retained the district of Annandale, and kept the fortress well-garrisoned to defend it; but though connived at by the pusillanimity of the Scottish king, his dominion was pent up, by the bravery of the people, within the Castle's own narrow limits. Sallies and forages of the garrison, provoked frequent retaliations, occasioned incursions into England, and led, in particular, to a hostile race, in 1380, into Westmoreland, and the carrying away of great booty from the fair of Penrith. In 1384, the Earl of Douglas, and Archibald Douglas, lord of Galloway, whose territories had been infested by the garrison, marched in strong force against the Castle, besieged and captured it, and, by effecting its reduction, drove the English from Annandale. In 1409, the Castle was resigned by the Earl of March to the Regent Albany, and conferred, along with the lordship of Annandale, upon the Earl of Douglas. In 1450, when the Earl of Orkney was sent to quell some fierce outrages of the dependents of the Douglas, and, though acting by the King's authority, was opposed and defied, James II. marched an army into Annandale, and took and garrisoned Lochmaben-castle.

In 1455, the Castle, in common with the lordships of Annandale and Eskdale, became the property of the Crown by the attainder of the Earl of Douglas. Till the union of the Crowns it was preserved as a Border strength, and belonged either personally to the kings or to their sons; and it was

maintained and managed by a special governor. In a progress made by James IV., in the year 1504, against the disorderly inhabitants of the south, he, on the 17th of September, left Lochmaben, on his way to Edinburgh, by Peebles. It appears, from the treasurer's accounts, that, in 1503-4, this prince built a large hall in the Castle of Lochmaben, and made great repairs and improvements on that fortress, from 1503 to 1506. We may perhaps view it as a proof of the interest which James IV. took in the preservation of this royal fortress, that he consigned the custody of it to Robert Lauder of the Bass. For there is extant a grant, dated 16th March, 1511, to the said Robert, of the offices of captain and keeper of Lochmaben-castle, for seven years, with many perquisites. Among others, the 'land stolen frae the king' is bestowed upon the captain as his property. During the minority of James V., Robert, Lord Maxwell, being a favoured counsellor of the queen-mother, was by her intrusted with the keeping of the castles of Lochmaben and Thrieff, for nineteen years, with the usual privileges. In the year 1565, when Queen Mary pursued, into Dumfries-shire, those who had broken out into rebellion on account of her marriage with Darnley, she, accompanied by him, visited Lochmaben-castle, which was then in the custody of Sir John Maxwell. In 1588, when James VI. was prosecuting his quarrel with Lord Maxwell, he summoned his various castles to surrender. They all obeyed, except Lochmaben, which was defended by one of the same name. It was given up, however, after two days' firing.

In consequence of the forfeiture of Lord Maxwell, and the vesting of all his estates and offices in the Crown, A. D. 1609, James, in the year 1612, granted the government of this Castle, with the barony of Lochmaben, to John Murray, 'grome of his Maiesties bedchamber,' who was created Viscount of Annand, and Lord Murray of Lochmaben, and afterwards Earl of Annandale. From him descended the noble

family of Stormont, now merged in that of Mansfield. The title of Constable and Hereditary keeper of the palace of Lochmaben is claimed, both by the Earl of Mansfield and by the representative of the Marquis of Annandale. During the troubles in the reign of Charles I., the Earl of Nithsdale, (formerly Lord Maxwell,) having suffered greatly in consequence of his steady adherence to the King, was obliged to sell, not only great part of his estate, but also his offices of Steward of Annandale, and constable of Lochmaben-castle, with the lands and emoluments which were attached to the constabulary. James Murray, the second Earl of Annandale, dying without issue, the honours of Lochmaben were, A. D. 1661, transferred to James Johnston, Earl of Hartfell. The governor had a salary of £300 Scotch—a considerable sum in former days—together with the fishing of the lochs. He had also, for the maintenance of the garrison, from every parish of Annandale, what was called *Laird a Mairt*, or a lairdner mart cow, which, it was required, should be one of the fattest that could be produced, besides thirty-nine meadow geese, and 'Fasten's e'en' hens. A century has not elapsed since this tax was exacted. Although the right of fishing in all the lochs is granted, by a charter of James VI., to the borough of Lochmaben, yet the proprietors of the Castle have always enjoyed the exclusive privilege of fishing in the Castle and mill-lochs with boats, nets, &c. About the year 1730, the inhabitants of Annandale, galled with the exactions made upon them by the Marquis of Annandale, the hereditary constable and nominal governor, resisted payment of his wonted claims, stoutly litigated his rights, and obtained from the Court-of-session a decree forbidding the future levying of his usual receipts. At the abolition of hereditary jurisdictions, in 1747, the Marquis claimed £1,000 as compensation for his governorship; but was not allowed a farthing.

The dilapidation of the Castle was probably commenced not long after the place was abandoned as useless; but it

must have been mainly incited by the triumph of the people over pretensions based on the ludicrously sinecure office of its noble hereditary governor. Our good old Bellenden, in his translation of Boece, has given a very curious picture of the character of the ancient inhabitants of this district, and of the original reason of the erection of the Castle. "In Annandail is ane loch namit Lochmaben, fyue mylis of lenth, and foure of breid, full of uncouth fische. Besyde this loch is ane castell, vnder the same name, maid to dant the incur-sion of theuis. For nocht allanerlie in Annandail, bot in all the dalis afore rehersit ar mony strang and wekit theuis, in-uading the cuntre with perpetuall thift, reif, & slauchter, quhen thay sé ony trublus tyme. Thir theuis (becaus thay haue Inglismen thair perpetuall ennymes lyand dry marche apou thair nixt bordour) inuadis Ingland with continewal weris, or ellis with quiet thift: and leiffis ay ane pure and miserabill lyfe. In the tyme of peace, thay are so accustomit with thift, that they can nocht desist, bot inuadis the cuntre—with ithand heirschippis.—This vail of Annand wes sum tyme namit Ordoutia, and the pepill namit Ordouices, quhais crueltis wes sa gret, that thay abhorrit nocht to eit the flesche of yolding prisoneris. The wyuis vsit to slay thair husbandis, quhen thay wer found cowartis, or discomfist be thair ennymes, to give occasioun to otheris to be more bald & hardy quhen danger occurrit." Whatever might be their character in that early period, they have in later ages showed, at least, a good deal of humour in their depredations. Of this we have an amusing proof in the ballad of the 'Lochmaben Harper,' who, having been seized with a strong attachment to the Lord Warden's 'Wanton Brown,' made his way to Carlisle-castle, although blind, and so enchanted the whole company, and even the minions, by the charms of his music, that he found means, not only to send off the warden's charger, but to persuade him, that while he was exerting himself to the utmost to gratify the company, some one had stole his

own 'gude gray mare,' and thus to secure far more than the value of all his pretended loss.

“ ‘ Allace! allace!’ quo’ the cunning auld harper,
‘ And ever allace that I cam here!
In Scotland I lost a braw cowt foal;
In England they’ve stown my gude gray mare!’ ”

“ Then aye he harped, and aye he carped;
Sae sweet were the harpings he let them hear:
He was paid for the foal he had never lost,
And three times ower for his ‘ gude gray mare ’ ”
