

CAMPAIGN OF EDWARD III.*

A.D. 1327.

ABOUT the commencement of the year 1327, Edward III. of England received information that the Scots had assembled in great force on the Border, with the intention of violating the truce made by his father Edward II. in the preceding year before his deposition. Negotiations for peace were then in progress, and the Scots had decided that unless it was instantly concluded they would ravage the northern English counties. Various reasons are assigned for this violation of the truce on the part of the Scots. One writer asserts that they had detected the bad faith of the English, and another that the English had seized some Scottish ships bound for the Low Countries, killed the crews, and refused to make satisfaction; but it will readily be admitted that a monarch of such prudence as Robert Bruce would not have involved himself in a war with England, unless he had sufficient causes of complaint.

The Scots, under the command of Randolph Earl of Moray, and Douglas of Liddesdale, entered England by the Western Borders on the 15th of June, and their army, com-

* Ridpath's Border History; Sir David Dalrymple's Annals of Scotland; Rymer's *Fœdera*; Fordun's *Scotichronicon*; Leland's *De Rebus Britannicis Collectanea*; Barnes' *Life of Edward III.*; Barbour's *History of Robert the Bruce*; Carte's *History of England*; Froissart's *Chronicles of France and England*; Home of Godscroft's *History of the Houses of Douglas and Angus*; Hollingshed's *Chronicle*.

posed chiefly of mounted troopers, is said to have amounted to nearly twenty thousand men. Edward III., who was then only fifteen years of age, arrived at York—that city being considered the most conveniently situated for observing the movements of the Scots, and for collecting the national forces. When the English army mustered, it contained at the lowest computation fifty thousand men, and the whole marched on the 10th of July from York in three divisions. During the collection of these forces the Scots marked their progress by the usual devastations, penetrating through Cumberland into the south-western parts of Northumberland, and thence into the western parts of the Bishopric of Durham, which are extremely wild and mountainous.

The first division of the English army was led by the young King in person, and lay the night of the 10th of July at Topcliff, where they halted two days until the other divisions came up. The English auxiliaries consisted of heavy-armed cavalry, and a gallant body of Flemish horsemen commanded by the Count of Hainault. It is said that the English army was far too numerous and encumbered to follow the Scots through the desert and rugged paths into which they were led by the experienced invaders from the North. On the 13th of July the English decamped from Topcliff before daybreak, and arrived by a forced march at Durham, a distance of nearly fifty miles. Here they remained four days expecting intelligence of the motions of the enemy.

On the 18th of July the English descried at a distance the smoke of the flames kindled by the ravages of the Scots. They marched from Durham in order of battle, the infantry ranged in three bodies, supported by the cavalry on their flanks, and proceeded towards the quarter whence they discerned the smoke. They marched two days without receiving intelligence of the Scots, which induced them to

conclude that the latter were in the act of retiring. Their march was excessively fatiguing, through woods, morasses, and uncultivated tracts of country, yet with wonderful celerity they pressed onwards. On the evening of the 19th of July the English encamped at a wood near a rivulet, where they disencumbered themselves of their heavy baggage. As yet, however, there was no appearance of the Scots. Their ravages were too visible, but the perpetrators were no where to be seen. The speed with which they moved or retreated astonished the English, and the rapidity of their marches was almost miraculous. It was resolved, in a council of war held in a monastery, that they should endeavour to gain the river Tyne by a forced march, and attempt to intercept the Scots, who were supposed to be returning to their own country. The army was put in motion at midnight, and on the evening of the 20th of July, after a most laborious march over rugged and unfavourable ground, without any order being observed by the soldiers, the cavalry, who had left the infantry behind, reached the Tyne, and crossed that river at a place called Haidon. It happened to be peculiarly rainy weather, and before the infantry could come up the river was swollen by the incessant rains, and was no longer fordable. This unexpected occurrence caused the army to be divided for several days, during which they lay on both sides of the Tyne almost destitute of provisions and forage, and without any accommodation for quarters.

The Scots were still invisible, and the perplexity of the English was increased by their deplorable situation. Day after day there was no intelligence of the enemy; the few provisions obtained from Newcastle and other towns in the neighbourhood were sold at exorbitant prices, which served to increase the discontent. The troops began to murmur, and it was loudly alleged that false traitors had led the King and the army into a wild and uncultivated district, to

perish through fatigue and famine without encountering the enemy. The infantry at length succeeded in passing the river, and engaged in a new pursuit with the same want of success. Not a Scot was to be seen, and the rustic inhabitants had all fled.

It was now resolved to march southwards, and at this stage of the campaign the King promised a reward of lands to the value of one hundred pounds sterling annually for life, together with the honour of knighthood, to any person who should conduct the King in sight of the Scots, in a place where they could be attacked on dry ground. Several knights and esquires swam across the Tyne, and set out on this singular search. Meanwhile the cavalry marched some miles up the river, which they crossed with great difficulty, many soldiers being drowned in the passage. The whole army reassembled at the village of Beltingham, above the junction of the Allan with the Tyne, which had been burnt by the Scots.

The offered reward for discovering the Scots was gained by Thomas Rokeby, an esquire, who brought certain accounts of them on the 31st of July. This gentleman reported that they were encamped on the side of a hill about nine miles distant washed by the river Were, which gives the name of Were-Dale to a district in the western part of the Bishopric of Durham. Rokeby informed the English leaders that he had been "made prisoner by the Scots, and that their commanders, when informed of the nature of his business, had dismissed him, saying, that they had remained eight days on the ground no less ignorant of the motions of the English than the English were of theirs, and that they were desirous and ready to combat." The English were then at the Cistercian Abbey of Blanch on the river Derwent, still called *Blanchland*.

On the 1st of August the English army, under the guidance of Rokeby, advanced towards the Scots, whom they

found drawn up in three divisions on a hill similar to that which they occupied when discovered by the English esquire. It is curious that the English in this campaign seem to have been utterly ignorant of their own country. They marched throughout the northern counties as if the whole district had been an unknown region which none of them had ever traversed previously, and it is not a little extraordinary that such difficulties should have occurred to discover the motions of such a large body of men as twenty thousand Scots. The river Were was in front of the Scots, whose flanks were well secured by rocks and precipices. The English dismounted and advanced, expecting to allure the Scots from their advantageous position, but the latter remained immovable. Marching to the side of the river, which they could not pass, on account of the rapidity of the current and the strong position of their enemies, without the greatest danger, they used their utmost exertions to induce the Scots to hazard a battle. They even offered to leave sufficient space for the Scots to draw up their army if they would descend from the heights, cross the river, and fight on equal ground, but Randolph and Douglas were too sagacious to be moved by this bravado. It is stated that Edward sent a herald to the Scottish commanders, the import of which was—"Either suffer me to pass the river, and leave me room for arranging my forces, or do you pass the river, and I will leave you room to draw up your forces, and thus shall we fight on equal terms." Randolph and Douglas scornfully answered—"We will do neither: on our road hither we have burnt and despoiled the country, and we are fixed here, where we intend to remain as long as it suits our convenience. If the King of England is offended, let him come over and chastise us."

The English monarch was compelled to swallow this mortifying reply. Though destitute of every accommoda-

tion, his troops remained on their arms till the morning, and the Scots, after placing their guards, returned to their camp. During the night, the latter kept numerous fires constantly burning—a circumstance which has provoked the following severe observation from an English historian—“ They made so many and so great fires of English wood, as if they designed thereby to provoke their enemies, by *wasting prodigiously that fuel of which they themselves had so little!*” Lord Hailes properly says—“ This observation is ridiculous, and betrays gross ignorance.” During the night the Scots also sounded horns without ceasing, “ as if,” says an old chronicler of the campaign, “ all the fiends of hell had been there.” Hence Lord Hailes infers, that “ the intention of the Scots in lighting up great fires, and in sounding horns throughout the night, was probably to call in the parties who were occupied in pillaging the country.”

On the following day there were several skirmishes and rencounters with adventurous knights, but when the English saw that the Scots were resolved to maintain their position, they called in their parties. It was reported that provisions were becoming scarce in the Scottish camp, and the English now resolved to blockade their enemies, and reduce them by famine ; but on the morning of the 4th of August, the latter perceived with astonishment that the Scots had decamped during the night, and had posted themselves still more favourably, and on ground of more difficult access, higher up the river Were, amidst a wood of considerable extent. The English stationed themselves on a hill opposite, near Stanhope Park. During the first night of the encampment at this place Douglas distinguished himself by a gallant exploit. In the middle of the night, attended by two hundred horsemen, he crossed the river, and approached the English camp. Under the guise of a commander making the chief rounds, he exclaimed—“ Ha ! St

George! is there no watch here?" He thus eluded the sentinels, and passed without discovery to the royal tent. His followers now shouted—"A Douglas! a Douglas! English thieves, you shall all die." They forced their way in defiance of all opposition, and furiously assaulted the tent. The King's domestics rushed to the defence of their master, and several of them, including his chaplain, were slain. Edward narrowly escaped, and some of the cords of his tent were cut. Douglas, after committing great slaughter, forced his way through the English, and succeeded in regaining his camp with inconsiderable loss, according to some authorities; but one writer states that he lost the greater part of his followers, not above forty of them escaping. Another states that he had *five hundred* horsemen with him, and that the Scots cut the tent poles and slew the English as they came out of their tents naked and unarmed.

On the following day a Scottish knight was brought a prisoner to the English camp, and from him they learnt that general orders had been issued to all the Scots to hold themselves in readiness that evening, and follow the banner of Douglas. Apprehensive of a second night attack, the English made themselves ready for battle, kindled fires, and doubled their guards. Two trumpeters were taken prisoners on the following morning, and they intimated to the astonished English that the Scots had left their camp before midnight, and were rapidly marching to their own country. At first this report was treated as a fiction, and the English continued some hours under arms prepared for battle, but they soon ascertained from their scouts, who had passed the river, that the Scottish camp was totally deserted. When Edward was informed that the enemy had escaped he wept bitterly.

This masterly retreat of the Scots is said to have been contrived by Douglas. Taking advantage of the darkness

of the night, he led the army over a morass upwards of two miles broad, and formerly deemed unpassable, by laying brushwood and the branches of trees cut down in the neighbourhood of their encampment. The soldiers who came behind removed this artificial and ingenious pathway, by casting the wood into the marsh. By this contrivance the cavalry and foot passed over in safety, and were several hours on their march towards Scotland before the English were informed of their retreat. The Scots left behind them five prisoners, in a state of nudity, and bound to trees, some of whom had their legs broken according to some writers. Probably they were wounded men, otherwise it is difficult to account for this act of barbarity.

It would have been vain to pursue the Scots, now many miles distant, and the English cavalry were worn out by long marches and scanty subsistence. A writer mentions, however, that about two thousand stragglers in the rear of the Scottish army, who had thrown away their arms to retreat with facility, were cut off by a party of light cavalry sent after them. "The English," says Ridpath, "who passed over to view the deserted camp, saw in it proofs of that simplicity and hardness of living which gave their enemies, when under proper direction, a superiority to forces far more numerous and regular, but at the same time more luxurious than themselves. The skins of the beasts they had slain for food, being in the form of a bag, suspended loosely on stakes, were hanging over the remains of the fires; these hides serving as kettles for boiling the flesh. A great number of spits contained meat ready for roasting. Many carcasses of black cattle, and of red and fallow deer, were also found, with some thousand pairs of shoes (brogues) made of raw hides. The beasts, on the half-boiled flesh of which they chiefly fed, were the stores of the mountains and fields they traversed and ravaged. The rest of their provision consisted of oatmeal, which

they were wont to carry in bags behind them, and of which they made a thin paste baked into cakes, by the help of iron plates trussed in their saddles. Their drink was the nearest fountain, stream, or lake."

The Scots reached their own country without molestation, and the English lay during that night at Stanhope. Here Edward issued a summons for the meeting of a parliament, in which he mentions the escape of the Scots. He says that having "contemptuously refused to enter into a treaty of peace, and invading England with an army, they had committed great devastations; and when this army was beset by the army of England in the Park of Stanhope, the former secretly and in the night made their escape out of the Park like vanquished men, and returned to their own country—some of them being pursued and slain by a part of the English army; yet the King was informed they purposed again to assemble and perpetrate still farther mischiefs" On the 8th of August the English marched from Stanhope, and encamped in the neighbourhood of a religious abbey upwards of six miles from Durham, where they found abundance of forage for their horses, by this time so reduced by long marches and scanty subsistence that they could scarcely walk. On the 10th they marched into Durham, and found the baggage left in the fields on the 19th of July, which had been conveyed thither by the citizens. On the 15th the army arrived at York, where the King thanked his barons for their service, and dismissed the soldiers. The auxiliaries of Hainault were also dismissed. It is said that the latter were necessitated to procure horses to convey them to the south of England, their own having died or become unserviceable in a campaign of three weeks. "Thus," adds Lord Hailes, "after foreign auxiliaries had been hired at an enormous expense, and the whole power of England had been exerted against the Scottish invaders, the enterprise

of Edward III. terminated in disappointment and dishonour."

The King of England was correct in intimating that the Scots intended to assemble and perpetrate further mischief. A military expedition was speedily undertaken against the Eastern Borders, and the castles of Norham and Alnwick were besieged. King Robert Bruce conducted the siege of the former in person, and the attempt against the latter was entrusted to Randolph and Douglas. Norham was gallantly defended by Robert Manners, who was nevertheless compelled to yield the stronghold, but the siege of Alnwick was unsuccessful, and the Scots retired with considerable loss.

The English treasury was exhausted to such a degree that the demands of the Flemish auxiliaries could not be discharged. This state of his finances, and a variety of other circumstances, induced Edward to make proposals for an accommodation of hostilities. Certain articles were prepared and submitted to the commissioners of both kingdoms assembled at Newcastle, a short truce was sanctioned, and in April 1328, peace was concluded with Scotland in a parliament held at Northampton. The articles of this treaty were honourable for the Scots, and necessary for England.

"Various causes," says Lord Hailes, "were assigned for the bad success of the northern expedition. Some men censured the auxiliaries of Hainault, and said that those foreigners were remiss in the public cause, through jealousy of the renown which the English would have acquired by overcoming their enemies. Others suspected treachery, and said that some of the English commanders, having been won by bribes, permitted the Scots to escape from Stanhope Park.—But all this is the language of pride and disappointment.—The cause of that disgrace which befel the English in the summer of 1327 may be easily discovered. Without

guides, and without intelligence of the motions of the enemy, they resolved at all hazards to pursue and attack the Scots, active, accustomed to sudden predatory incursions, and led by able commanders. Former events had taught the English not to despise their adversaries; they now erred through excess of caution, and began even from the gates of Durham to march in order of battle. In a country uneven and difficult, their motions were slow, and ill suited to the rapidity of the course of that enemy whom they had to encounter. No measures had been taken, and perhaps none could have been taken, for supplying the troops with provisions and forage. The forced march to the banks of the Tyne appears to have been ably planned; and if the English army could have maintained itself in those quarters, it would have been extremely difficult for the Scots to retreat home without engaging in a general action at great disadvantage. But it was not easy to find sustenance for an army of 50,000 men in the interior parts of Northumberland; and it was still harder to persuade bold-spirited and impatient barons to endure every sort of hardship in obscure and inactive cantonments, and quietly to wait for that enemy whom they were eager to seek. Troops ill disciplined, and unaccustomed to fatigue, are apt to murmur at the delays of war. In such circumstances the commanders of armies are often obliged to prefer the popular wishes to their own judgment; and, therefore, if the event proves disastrous, they are rather to be pitied than censured. Every thing which befel the English after they quitted the banks of the Tyne must be ascribed to the superior skill and vigilance of the Scottish commanders. What wonder that an inexperienced monarch of sixteen, a court favourite, some foreign officers unacquainted with the country, and a crowd of barons equally unfit to command or obey, should have been foiled by Douglas and Randolph?" His Lordship adds—"However harsh it may now sound,

it is acknowledged by the ancient English historians, that in the course of a twenty years' war the spirit of Scotland had attained an astonishing ascendant over the English."
