

SURPRISE OF EDINBURGH CASTLE.*

A.D. 1341.

THE Castle of Edinburgh, which had long been in ruins, was rebuilt by Edward III. of England, in one of his invasions of Scotland, to support the pretensions of Edward Baliol to the crown, and his own to the superiority of the kingdom. He placed a strong garrison in it, under the command of Richard Limosin, who appears to have acted as the deputy of Thomas Rokesby, who, from the minutes of the thirteenth Parliament of Edward III., was governor of the Castles of Edinburgh and Stirling. But the fortress of Edinburgh did not long remain in the hands of the English. The garrison had for some time scoured the surrounding country, and annoyed the Scots by their re-

* Fordun's Scotichronicon ; Arnot's History of Edinburgh ; Annals of Scotland ; Tytler's History of Scotland.

peated incursions. It was therefore resolved to obtain possession of this stronghold, and as the Scots were unable to bring any force sufficient to invest it, recourse was had to stratagem.

The plan of surprise was suggested by William Bullock, an ecclesiastic of eminent abilities, who had formerly been in the confidence of Edward Baliol, and to whom various fortresses in Scotland had been entrusted. It was arranged by Bullock that Walter Curry, the master of a merchant vessel belonging to Dundee, assisted by a person named William Fairley, should sail into the Frith of Forth, under the pretence of being an English victualling vessel, and to make an offer of supplying the garrison with provisions. Curry brought up his vessel near Inchkeith, and sent a message to the garrison, intimating the stores he had on board, and which he was ready to send to the fortress. His messenger produced as a specimen a sample of the wine, strong beer, and biscuits, with all of which the governor was highly pleased, and having agreed about the price, it was stipulated that the pretended merchant should deliver the provisions early on the following morning, that he might not be intercepted by the Scots.

In Curry's vessel were Douglas, the celebrated Knight of Liddesdale, William Frazer, and other persons of note, with about two hundred resolute men. Those determined assailants landed near Newhaven during the night, and proceeding to Edinburgh, contrived to conceal themselves near the base of the castle rock. Early in the morning the pretended merchant appeared with several waggons at the castle gate, and attended by twelve armed men disguised as drivers of the vehicles containing the supposed goods. The porter without suspicion opened the outer gate, and lowered the drawbridge to admit the waggons and hampers, when Curry and his attendants contrived to overturn the vehicles, which prevented the shutting of the gates and the raising

of the drawbridge ; and throwing off the grey frocks which covered them, they stabbed the warder and the sentinels. At the given signal the Knight of Liddesdale and his companions appeared, and entered the fortress sword in hand.

The waggons had been so dexterously placed, that it was found impossible to let down the portcullis. The cry of treason alarmed the governor, and the soldiers armed in haste, and rushed towards the gate, where a desperate encounter took place ; but the gallantry of Douglas and his followers was invincible, and the exploit was soon decided. Limosin and six esquires escaped ; the most of the garrison, however, were put to the sword, and the command of the fortress was given to William Douglas, the illegitimate brother of the Knight of Liddesdale. This gallant exploit was achieved on the 17th of April 1341, and soon afterwards the English were entirely driven out of Scotland.
