

BATTLE OF NEVILLE'S CROSS,

OR OF DURHAM.*

A. D. 1346.

WHILE Edward III. was occupied in foreign wars, David II., at the instigation of France, resolved to invade England. The Scottish King assembled his army at Perth, whither his barons repaired to the royal standard with their retainers. Among those barons appeared William seventh Earl of Ross, and Raynald or Ranald of the Isles—the latter a personage whose descent and parentage have been a matter of serious controversy among the different septs of Macdonald. It happened that the Earl of Ross had a quarrel with Ranald, and he assassinated him in the monastery of Elcho on the banks of the Tay, after which he withdrew from the royal army, and led his feudal followers back to their native mountains.

The first exploit of importance recorded in this enterprise is the storming of the castle of Liddell on the Borders by David, who ordered Walter Selby the governor to be beheaded. It appears that Selby was a robber as well as

* Hutchinson's Antiquities of Durham; Lord Hailes' Annals of Scotland; Rymer's *Fœdera*; Rapin's History of England; Ridpath's Border History.

a warrior, and he is mentioned as one of a band who plundered two cardinals and the Bishop of Durham. At this stage of the expedition Douglas, the Knight of Liddesdale, earnestly advised the King to dismiss his army, and not to advance into England; but this advice was vehemently opposed by the Scottish barons. "What!" they exclaimed, addressing Douglas, "must we fight for *your* gain? You have profited by the spoils of England, and do you now grudge us *our* share? Never had we such an opportunity of taking vengeance on our enemies. Edward and his chief commanders are absent, and we have none to oppose our progress except ecclesiastics and base artizans." The barons, in this reply to Douglas, particularly alluded to the storming of the castle of Liddell, which was connected with the western territory of the Knight of Liddesdale, and served as a frontier garrison to his castle of Hermitage.

Disregarding the advice of Douglas, the King continued his march. At Hexham he numbered his forces, and found them to consist of 2000 men-at-arms, completely armed, and a considerable number of light-armed infantry. Such is the moderate statement of one authority, but another informs us that David left Perth at the head of no fewer than 60,000 foot and 3000 horse—a statement utterly incredible. He crossed the Tyne at a place called Ryton, above the town of Newcastle, and marched into the bishopric of Durham. The Scots are accused of giving full scope to their revenge against the English, sparing neither sex nor age, ecclesiastics or sacred edifices. It is also said that David took the episcopal city of Durham, and committed many sacrilegious ravages in the patrimony of St Cuthbert; but this is altogether a mistake, and there is no mention of it by either the English or Scottish historians.

David pitched his camp, on the 16th of October 1346, at Beaurepaire or Bear Park, in the parish of St Oswald

at Durham—a beautiful ecclesiastical retreat, which had been pillaged and defaced by the Scots, among other depredations committed by them in the neighbourhood of the city, in the reign of Edward II. The ruins of this ancient residence where King David encamped still exist, beautifully situated about two miles to the north-west of Durham, on a lofty eminence overhanging the rivulet called the Brune, having a long extended level meadow to the south, and the prospect from the north rendered highly picturesque by the town and church of Witton-Gilbert and the adjacent hamlets.

At this critical juncture Edward III., who had previously obtained a signal victory at Cressy, lay before Calais, which he blockaded with the flower of the English army. As soon as the invasion of the Scots and their desolating progress through Cumberland was known, the English regency issued a proclamation of array, and appointed William de la Zouch, Archbishop of York, Henry de Percy, and Ralph de Neville, or any one of them, to the command of all the forces in the north of England. It is said by Froissart that Philippa, the queen of Edward III., was the leader of the English forces on this occasion; and that she summoned the prelates and military retainers to attend her at York, where measures were concerted for opposing the invaders; but, as Lord Hailes observes, “a young and comely princess, the mother of heroes, at the head of an army in the absence of her lord, is an ornament to history, yet no English writer of considerable antiquity mentions the circumstance, which, if true, would not have been omitted.”

While King David lay at Beaurepaire, the Archbishop of York and his colleagues mustered their forces in the park of Bishop-Auckland, and, according to one statement, the army amounted to 1200 men-at-arms, 3000 archers, and 7000 footmen, besides a chosen band of veteran soldiers

sent from Calais, the whole amounting to 16,000 men; but this is justly considered to be greatly exaggerated. It is also remarked, that there were many ecclesiastics in the army—a monastic boast in proof of their zeal, for it is certain that the sheriffs of the northern counties, and many of the most powerful barons of those parts, attended with their retainers.

It appears that the English marched towards Sunderland Bridge, with the view of occupying an advantageous post to oppose the progress of the Scots. The Knight of Liddedale, at the head of a chosen body of men engaged in procuring forage and provisions, reconnoitred the English forces, and unexpectedly encountered them near Merrington, or at a place called Ferry-of-the-Hill. Douglas would have avoided any engagement, and attempted to retreat, but he was pursued, attacked, and defeated, with the loss of five hundred men, and he escaped with much difficulty with the remains of his party, carrying the alarm to the Scottish camp, and leaving his illegitimate brother, William Douglas, a prisoner.

The English advanced to Red Hills, on the west side of the city of Durham. The ground where the battle was fought is hilly, and in many parts so steep towards the river Wear, which waters the ancient city of St Cuthbert, that it is surprising how a numerous army could have been arranged to engage in any order. David looked upon the English, notwithstanding the defeat of Douglas, as a raw and undisciplined army, unable to oppose his hardy veterans, and evinced the utmost impatience to commence the action, presuming that the victory was certain, and that the riches of the adjoining city would amply reward his soldiers. In the front of the English army a crucifix was carried amid the banners of the nobility. But the monks of Durham were not behind in their zeal to animate their countrymen, knowing well that if the Scots were victorious they

would be plundered without ceremony. In that age a miracle was readily believed. On the night before the battle there appeared to John Fossour, the prior of the abbey of Durham, a vision, in which he was commanded to take the holy corporax cloth with which St Cuthbert covered the chalice when he celebrated mass, place it on a spear, and next morning repair to Red Hills, where he was to remain till the end of the battle.

On the morning of the 17th of October the Scots prepared for battle, but the ground on which their army formed was intersected by ditches and inclosures. The Scots were arranged in three divisions. The first was led by the High Steward of Scotland and the Earl of March; the second by the Earl of Moray and Douglas, the Knight of Liddesdale; and the third, consisting of the choice troops, in which were the principal Scottish nobility, and a body of French auxiliaries, was commanded by the King in person. According to the statement of Lord Hailes, the Scottish right wing or van was commanded by the Earl of Moray and the Knight of Liddesdale, the centre by the King, and the left by the High Steward and the Earl of March.

The English drew up in four divisions. Lord Henry Percy commanded the first, supported by the Bishop of Durham and several noblemen of the northern counties; the second was led by the Archbishop of York, accompanied by the Bishop of Carlisle, and Lords Neville and Hastings; the third division was led by the Bishop of Lincoln, Lord Mowbray, and Sir Thomas Rokesby; in the fourth were the Archbishop of Canterbury, Lord Roos, and the Sheriff of Northumberland. Edward Baliol is said to have commanded this division, but for this statement there is no proof, though it is admitted that he was in the battle. Each of these divisions consisted of about four

thousand men, with a proportionable number of archers and men-at-arms. The statement of Queen Philippa being present at a distance, surrounded by a strong and gallant party commanded by Lords D'Eyncourt and Ogle, is unsupported by historical evidence.

Meanwhile the ecclesiastics of Durham followed the injunctions received by the prior in his alleged vision. On a hillock called the Maiden's Bower the banner of St Cuthbert was displayed, and thither the monks and their superior repaired, within hearing of the noise and bustle of the conflict, to beseech Heaven to prosper their countrymen. This locality is still pointed out in the depth of the valley near the hedges of Shaw Wood. It is beside the Red Hills, a short distance from a piece of ground called the Flasse, and there the prior and monks stood offering their prayers with the holy relic of St Cuthbert. This banner cloth is described as "a yard broad, and five quarters deep, the bottom indented in five parts, and fringed, and made fast all about with red silk and gold. It was made of red velvet, on both sides embroidered with flowers of green silk and gold; and in the midst was the corporate cloth inclosed, covered over with white velvet, half a yard square every way, having a cross of red velvet on both sides, being fringed about the edge and skirts with red silk and gold, and three fine little silver bells fastened to the skirts of the said banner cloth, like unto sacring bells." During the battle the monks also occupied themselves in forming and erecting a beautiful wooden cross in remembrance of the holy banner carried to the battle.

While the hostile armies were drawn up against each other, a Scottish knight named Graham offered to attack the English archers in flank if one hundred men-at-arms were placed under his command, but the attempt appeared

too hazardous, and no one volunteered his services. The battle began at nine in the morning of the 17th of October, and lasted three hours. The Scots, by command of their King, commenced the attack; and the High Steward of Scotland, who led the van, being sorely galled by the English archers, rushed against the enemy with such impetuous fury that he threw them into confusion, and drove them back on Percy's division. The Scots now pushed onward so vigorously with their battle-axes and broadswords, that they almost put the English in that part of the field to the rout. At this crisis Edward Baliol is said to have rushed into the thickest of the battle with a body of horse, and, throwing the Scottish battalions into confusion, he gave the English time to regain their ground, while the High Steward was compelled to retreat and reform his distracted forces, who, now entangled among ditches and inclosures, had no room to act. Baliol sustained little loss by this manœuvre, which he executed in the most gallant manner, and, cautiously avoiding to pursue the retreating battalions of the High Steward, he gave his troops time to recover themselves, and then rapidly charged the division in flank commanded by King David in person. The son of the great Bruce fought desperately, repeatedly bringing back his flying troops to the charge, and encouraging them by his example and exhortations. The battle was now complicated, and the King's division was also attacked in front, while the English archers incessantly annoyed the Scots; yet the contest was still maintained. Ashamed to desert their sovereign, a brave phalanx of Scottish noblemen and knights threw themselves around him, and fought till their numbers were reduced to little more than eighty. Although wounded in the head, and in another part of the body by an arrow which pierced so deep that its point could not be extracted, yet he still encouraged his few surviving followers in the expectation of being relieved.

At length the holy banner of St Cuthbert, as the monks gave out, procured the victory for the English, but in reality the Scots fought on disadvantageous ground. A tumultuous multitude, with shouts of victory, rushed upon the King, and he was disarmed and taken prisoner by John Copeland, a gentleman of Northumberland, though not without having first wounded Copeland with his gauntlet in the struggle to disengage himself. The Knight of Liddesdale, the Earls of Fife, Menteith, and Wigton, and about fifty barons, were also made prisoners. The division under Douglas and the Earl of Moray, panic-struck at the fate of the royal legion, and the number of persons of distinction who were slain, was soon broken and fled; but the High Steward and the Earl of March succeeded in retreating with their division, though not without loss. It is said by Boece, that this retreat was the cause of all the disasters which ensued, and that the Steward and March, "perceiving that the forces under their command were dispirited, and unwilling to fight any longer, withdrew them to a place of safety;" but Lord Hailes justly maintains, that "the death of the Earl of Moray, the captivity of the Knight of Liddesdale, and the discomfiture of the right wing, brought on the ruin of the centre, and thus the battle was lost.—That the Steward fought, and that he did not retire without loss, is evident from the number of barons of the name of Stuart who were either killed or made prisoners; for it must be presumed that some of them, if not all, fought under the banners of the chief of their family. Besides, two Maitlands and Adam de Whitsome were slain, and Patrick de Polwarth made prisoner; and it is probable from their names that they were with the forces under the command of the Earl of March."

The capture of David II. is thus related on the authority of Rymer and Froissart:—"The Scottish King, though he had two spears hanging in his body, his leg des-

perately wounded, and being disarmed, his sword having been beat out of his hand, disdained captivity, and provoked the English by opprobrious language to kill him. When John Copeland, who was governor of Roxburgh Castle, advised him to yield, he struck him on the face with his gauntlet so fiercely that he knocked out two of his teeth. Copeland conveyed him off the field as his prisoner. Upon Copeland refusing to deliver him (the King) up to the Queen, who stayed at Newcastle during the battle, the King (Edward) sent for him to Calais, where he excused his refusal so handsomely that the King sent him back a reward of L.500 a-year in lands, where he himself should choose it, near his own dwelling, and made him a knight banneret."

It is traditionally said, that many jewels and banners belonging to the Scottish noblemen fell into the hands of the victors, together with what is called the *black rood of Scotland*, and were offered to the shrine of St Cuthbert. The Prior and Monks, accompanied by Ralph Lord Neville, his son Lord Percy, and many others, returned to the Abbey church of Durham in procession, and there joined in prayer and thanksgiving to God for the conquest they had obtained by the assistance of St Cuthbert. The loss sustained by the English is not mentioned. One writer says, that only four knights and five esquires fell in the field; and another states that Lord Hastings was mortally wounded. It may be safely asserted, that in such a battle many of the English army must have fallen, and among them not a few persons of distinction.

The loss of the Scots was immense, and is estimated at 15,000; but, as Lord Hailes observes—"of the common sort, slain or made prisoners, there is no certain computation."—"That day," according to an English historian, "would have been the last of Scottish rebellion had the English, neglecting the spoil and the making of captives,

urged the pursuit of the fugitives, and cut off from the land of the living that nation which has ever been rebellious." This statement is a proof of the hatred which once existed between the English and Scots, and the wish expressed now only excites a smile. Among the persons of distinction who fell in this battle were Randolph Earl of Moray, the last of the male line of that heroic family, Maurice Earl of Stratherne in right of his wife, the Constable Hay, the Marischal Keith, Thomas Charteris, Chancellor, and a number of barons and gentlemen. Among the prisoners, exclusive of the King, the Earls of Fife, Wigton, and Menteith, the Knight of Liddesdale, the Bishops of St Andrew's and Aberdeen, and Sir Malcolm Fleming, were many knights and gentlemen of rank, but no correct list can be given, as ransoms were privately taken for not a few of the prisoners, who were allowed to depart—a practice which became so general that it was officially prohibited under pain of death in November and December 1346. Most of the prisoners of distinction were ordered to be conveyed to the Tower of London. Graham Earl of Menteith, so called in right of his wife, was put to death as a traitor, for having renounced fealty he had sworn to Edward III., and the same doom was pronounced against the Earl of Fife, but was not inflicted. David II. was carried to a dreary captivity in the Tower of London, and was, it is said, conducted to that celebrated fortress under an escort of 20,000 men, accompanied by the different Companies of the city in their proper dresses. In 1351, in consequence of an agreement between Edward and the commissioners from Scotland, David was allowed to visit his kingdom, on his making oath to return into custody, for the performance of which seven young men of the first rank were given as hostages, and in 1354 a treaty was concluded at Newcastle for his ransom, which was fixed at 90,000 merks sterling, to be paid at the rate of 10,000

marks annually for nine years. During that space there was to be a truce between the two kingdoms. "It was provided," says Lord Hailes, "that the King of Scots, the bishops, abbots, and all the nobles of Scotland, should become bound, after the strictest form that could be devised, as well for payment of the ransom as for observance of the truce; and in like manner the merchants and burgesses of Aberdeen, Perth, Dundee, and Edinburgh, for themselves, and for all the other merchants in Scotland."

On the west side of the city of Durham an elegant cross of stone work, to commemorate this victory, was erected by Lord Neville, which was known by the designation of *Neville's Cross*, a name from that circumstance often applied to the battle. The Cross is thus described by a local antiquarian, who has given a long account of the battle, to which is prefixed an ancient historical poem in Latin, from the Harleian Collection in the British Museum, celebrating the battle. "The Cross had seven steps about it every way squared, to the socket wherein the stalk of the Cross stood, which socket was fastened to a large square stone, the sole, or bottom stone, being of great thickness, viz. a yard and a half every way. This stone was the eighth step. The stalk of the Cross was in length three yards and a half up to the boss, having eight sides all of one piece. From the socket it was fixed into the boss above, into which boss the stalk was deeply soldered with lead. In the midst of the stalk in every second square was the Neville Cross, a saltire, in an escutcheon, finely cut, and at every corner of the socket was a picture of one of the Evangelists finely set forth and carved. The boss at the top of the stalk was an octangular stone, finely cut and bordered, and most curiously wrought; and in every square of the nether side thereof was Neville's Cross in one square and the bull's head in the next, and also in the same reciprocal order about the boss. On the top of

the boss was a stalk of stone, being a cross a little higher than the rest, whereon was cut, on both sides of the stalk of the said Cross, the picture of our Saviour Christ crucified, the picture of the Blessed Virgin on one side, and of St John the Evangelist on the other, both standing on the top of the boss ; all which pictures were most artificially wrought together, and finely carved out of one entire stone, some parts thereof through carved work, both on the east and west sides of the Cross, with a cover of stone likewise over their heads, being all most finely and curiously wrought together out of the said hollow stone, which cover of stone was covered over. It remained till the year 1589, when the same was broken down and defaced by some lewd and wicked persons."
