

SIEGE OF HADDINGTON.*

A.D. 1548.

THE defeat of the Scots at the fatal battle of Pinkie precipitated them into new engagements with France, which were zealously promoted by Mary of Guise, the Queen Dowager, who, after the murder of Cardinal Beaton, took a considerable share in the direction of public affairs. The English, however, were still powerful in Scotland, and a body of troops, by command of the Duke of Somerset, seized and fortified Haddington on the banks of the Tyne. Situated at a considerable distance from the sea, this town could not be defended without great expense and danger. Its supplies of provisions could easily be cut off, for the range of hills which intervene made it a difficult matter to supply the town with necessaries from the English Borders.

The spirit of the Scottish nobility was broken at Pinkie. They felt themselves weak, and at the mercy of the English victors; but by courting a closer alliance with France they relinquished their former principles, and disregarded their true interest. In an assembly which met at Stirling, as no prospect of assistance appeared except from France, they resolved to offer the young Queen Mary in marriage to the Dauphin, son of Henry II., and they even proposed to send her immediately to that country to be educated at the court of the French King. Henry II. was then at peace with England, but to gain such an acquisition to his power,

* History of the Campaigns of 1548 and 1549, translated from the French Account by an Eye-Witness; Sir James Balfour's Annals; Buchanan's History of Scotland; History of Haddington Parish, in the First Volume of the Transactions of the Society of Antiquaries in Scotland.

as an alliance with the Scots by the marriage of their young queen to his son, was to him of the utmost importance. He accepted the offers of the Scottish ambassadors without hesitation, agreed to their requests, and resolved to defend with vigour his new acquisition. Six thousand French soldiers, commanded by Monsieur D'Essé, assisted by some experienced officers, landed at Leith in May 1548, to assist the Scots in opposing the English, who had garrisoned various places throughout the kingdom. Of those troops 1000 were cavalry and men-at-arms, 2000 were French infantry, and 3000 were foreign infantry in the service of France.

Those troops who, as a writer quaintly observes, "did little good in Scotland, but spent the King of France's money," proceeded to Edinburgh, where they remained some weeks. Shortly after their arrival the Regent Arran received intelligence that an English army consisting of 40,000 men had resolved to advance into Scotland as far as Pinkie, within six miles of the metropolis. There was truth in the report, but the numbers of the English were grossly exaggerated. A considerable body of English troops encamped at a place called Fawside, in the neighbourhood of Pinkie, and the Regent with the French auxiliaries advanced to meet them. The English commander offered battle, but the Scots having become wiser from experience, and recollecting their recent defeat at that place, chose a situation where their opponents could not attack them with safety. The English commander did not deem it prudent under such circumstances to hazard an attack, and retired in good order toward Haddington. The French would not follow them, pretending that it was not their custom to pursue any except those who fled in battle.

It was now resolved to prosecute with vigour the siege of Haddington, and the town was invested by the Scots and French. The fortress erected by the English at Had-

dington is described by a contemporary as quadrangular, situated in the midst of a low plain, and commanded by no heights or eminences. It was "surrounded by a large flat bottomed ditch," says this eye-witness, "a strong curtain of turf, a spacious rampart, and good and safe breast-works. Four strong bastions were conveniently placed at the four corners of the walls, and behind these, towards the most champagne country, the English had raised several works of earth by way of platforms and ravelins, where they planted a great many guns of a middle size to annoy us as we sat before the place." This writer, who was in the French army, concludes a long account of the fortifications by expressing his opinion of the strength of the place. "In fine," he says, "the fort is so very convenient and spacious, that the garrison in case of necessity may retreat into it and draw up in order of battle, nay, and raise new fortifications for a farther defence."

Before Haddington was regularly invested several brisk sallies had taken place, which were attended with considerable loss, chiefly on the side of the English. A French officer named Villeneuve fell in one of those encounters. The auxiliaries were reinforced by some thousands of Scots, who repaired to the French camp in obedience to the Queen Dowager's commands. During the siege a Parliament was convened on the 7th of July 1548 in the Abbey of Haddington, now entirely demolished, which was situated about a mile east of the town, where there is still a little village called the *Abbey*. This Parliament ratified the young Queen's marriage to the Dauphin, and consented to her education at the court of France. It is stated that there was a violent dispute on those important arrangements, some contending that nothing but a perpetual war with England and slavery to France could be expected by the removal of the Queen, while others argued that the

should accept the proffered friendship of England, which would ensure them a long peace on the most favourable terms; but the majority carried the point, influenced by selfish motives, and not a little influenced by the Regent Arran, who had a liberal pension from France allowed him, and the command of a hundred cuirassiers.

The Scottish reinforcements consisted chiefly of Border moss-troopers and Highlanders, whose appearance astonished the French, and who, says the writer already cited, "were very good company to us for the space of eighteen or twenty days." The former wore coats of mail, and each had a large bow in his hand, their quivers, swords, and shields hanging as it were in a sling. The Highlanders were "almost naked; they have painted waistcoats and a sort of woollen covering variously coloured," alluding to their varied tartan clothing, "and are armed as the rest with large bows, broadswords, and targets." These auxiliaries soon commenced skirmishing with the English, apparently without waiting for orders. They had scarcely arrived when about 600 of the Highlanders marched deliberately to the very gates of Haddington in defiance. The advanced guards of the English were beaten off, and they designed to attack upwards of 500 of the besieged, who were posted between the port and the barriers; but the discharge of artillery from the fortifications, with the nature of which they were little acquainted, soon quelled their courage. The Highlanders held their ears at the sound, and threw themselves on their bellies at each shot. They were all thrown into disorder, and the English were preparing to take advantage of it, when Monsieur Linieres met them with a chosen party, and put a stop to their pursuit. A party of his musketeers fired upon their flank, while another French officer, at the head of fifty gentlemen, pushed the English back to their barriers. Here a French gentleman

advanced unattended, and singling out an English soldier who had wounded him a few days before, struck him dead with a halbert at one blow.

D'Essé, with Strozzi, D'Andelot, and upwards of twenty of his officers, began now to reconnoitre the vulnerable parts of the fortifications, in order to discover the places which could be advantageously battered, for the English made such a gallant defence that it was inevitable the siege must be turned into a blockade. They were exposed to a severe fire from some soldiers who were lying on their bellies incessantly loading and discharging their pieces, but a French party succeeded in dislodging those dangerous marksmen. D'Essé had leisure to view the works more narrowly, and while so doing he was amused with the exploit of one of the Earl of Argyle's Highlanders. He had probably never before seen a cannon, and having observed the conduct of the French, seeing them go fearlessly forward to the very mouth of the enemy's cannon, he walked straight to a party of English who were engaged with a few French, and seizing one of them, the Highlander flung him over his back, and in defiance of his violent struggles brought him in this plight to the French camp. It was there discovered that the enraged captive had bit poor Donald's shoulder in such a ferocious manner, that he had almost died of the wound. D'Essé rewarded the Highlander with the present of a coat of mail and seventy crowns, which he received with great gratitude.

Two days afterwards upwards of 800 Scottish pioneers, under the direction of a French officer named La Chapelle, began to cast up a trench on the left of the Abbey Port, and to construct such other works as were considered sufficient to protect the besiegers from the fire of the enemy. Some of the English sallied out to disturb the workmen, but they were beat back with the loss of seven men by Monsieurs Strozzi and D'Andelot. Some days afterwards

Monsieur Strozzi was dangerously wounded in one of those encounters which were of continual occurrence.

A deserter came over to the French camp from the town of Haddington, who positively assured D'Essé that the besieged had neither provisions nor ammunition to hold out for twelve days. This caused the French commander to push forward the work of the trenches, and they commenced a furious fire on the fortifications; but this did so little damage, that D'Essé called a council of war, to consider the practicability of attempting to carry the place by assault. This design, however, was abandoned, and D'Essé was mortified to find that every attack was unavailing. To prevent any succours reaching the town during the night, the French commander ordered an officer to be constantly stationed at one of the avenues which led to it from the camp, trusting that the Scots on the other side of the town would also exercise due vigilance. But a Scotchman, who was known by the singular soubriquet of *The man with the two heads*, contrived to deceive his countrymen. The expected succours reached the town, and the French were mortified to find in the morning that two hundred English, with their baggage and train, had succeeded in passing eight thousand Scots, at the distance of little more than two hundred paces.

Soon after this exploit, so ably managed by *The man with the two heads*, all the Scots, with the exception of about 600 dependants of the Earls of Arran and Huntly, thought proper to withdraw to their several homes. Their provisions and necessaries had become exhausted, and they were not a little annoyed at the length of the siege. The English now turned the tables against Monsieur D'Essé, and intimated to him that they intended to act on the defensive no longer, but compel him to raise the siege. The Frenchman received this notice with surprise and agitation, and, though he studiously contrived to conceal it from the sol-

diers, he communicated it to his officers, and to the Queen Dowager, who was then at Edinburgh. Lest his artillery, in case of a sally by the besieged, might be turned against his own troops, he sent off all the great guns to Edinburgh, keeping only six small field pieces in his camp. The English put their threat into execution. They made sallies upon the French from the town at all hours, sometimes on foot, and sometimes on horseback; the besiegers were compelled, in turn, to act on the defensive, though they caused some loss to their assailants.

The Queen Dowager now resolved to use her influence in behalf of D'Essé's troops. She had been informed that numbers of the French were idly spending their time at Edinburgh, and that most of the Scots had retired home. Her first object was to send a suitable supply of provisions to the French camp at Haddington, with a condescending message that "she meant not to repay the services she expected from their bravery with so small a compliment, but that they might trust to her word that she would employ all the means Almighty God had left in her hands, nay, and the favour of her friends, rather than that the particular merit of each of them should not be fully acknowledged."

This attention on the part of the Queen Dowager, who was their own countrywoman, pleased the French, who may be said to have in a manner raised the siege. Meanwhile the Queen Dowager began to bestir herself in Edinburgh. Mounted on horseback, and accompanied by several of her ladies, she visited the houses of the citizens, with whom she remonstrated for their apathy. As she rode along the High Street, a crowd of persons gathered around her, and, aware of her popularity, she addressed them in an energetic speech in their own language. "Is it thus, my friends," she asked, "that you second the French? Is this the example you have given them? If my eyes had not

informed me of this your forgetfulness of honour and duty, I would never have been prevailed upon to believe it. I ever thought, and am still willing to entertain the same sentiments, that no nation under the sun can excel yours in gallantry. After all, it may be that you crowd thither from mere curiosity, and that you have no wish to fight for the honour of your country, and to support the French your allies against your enemies the English. Forbid the thought, gracious Heaven! Rather let me persuade myself that you want arms and horses, to fight with the greater advantage. Convinced, therefore, that it is beneath the heroism of Scotsmen to incur the reproach of indifference to their country, I inform you that within two days we shall have a battle at Haddington. I know you would never forgive yourselves, if, through your own negligence, you lost this opportunity of repaying the injuries you have received from this very enemy—injuries no less than the ransacking your goods, the laying waste your properties, the slaughtering of the parents who gave you existence, and of those friends the familiar intercourse with whom makes life desirable.”

Addressing the French soldiers who were loitering in Edinburgh, and who had been drawn to the spot where the Queen Dowager was addressing the citizens, this princess said—“ I am indeed surprised that you, who have betaken yourselves to the profession of arms, and have already made noble advances in the path of honour, should not be afraid of being deprived, by your own listlessness and inactivity, of that reputation which you and all brave men must hold as of the greatest value. With the design of driving us from before Haddington five or six thousand English are at hand, but care is already taken, by the help of God, to frustrate their attempts. I am confident that you seek honour solely for the sake of honour, esteeming it a full return and compensation for all the valour you can

display, and that you would be truly grieved if you did not participate in the glory which awaits your fellow-soldiers in the camp. The truth is, that these brave men are sufficiently numerous to assure themselves of victory without your assistance; but the English in such a case would only feel the weight of their arms, and the world would loudly condemn your conduct. I persuade myself that you will not willingly incur such a degradation."

These addresses of the widowed queen of James V. and mother of the young Queen Mary had a powerful effect. The citizens responded by loud acclamations, and protested their willingness to defend her to the uttermost; the French understood the dignified reproof she had given them, and resolved to proceed to the camp at Haddington. An hour after the Queen Dowager had retired from the High Street to her residence in the Castle, every Scottish and French soldier in Edinburgh was on his way to Haddington—"They crowded," says one eye-witness, "with winged haste, and fought with unusual resolution. I shall not dwell upon the successful prudence of her Majesty—a princess born with every virtue, whose merits alone ensure respect and command obedience."

But it is necessary to return to Haddington. D'Essé had resolved to wait for the attack of the English in his camp, and having stationed sufficient guards of Scottish and French soldiers in all the outposts to prevent a surprise, he ordered his troops to repose in their armour. About two hours before sun-rise the English made their sally, in expectation of finding the besiegers asleep, but they found the latter prepared for their reception. D'Essé addressed his soldiers in a long speech, and from the tenor of it, the French commander had evidently little confidence in his troops. Various skirmishes took place, and a number fell; but at last a regular action commenced, in which, according to the French statement, the English lost 800 men killed, and

upwards of 2000 were taken prisoners. It is pretended that only *fifteen* fell on the side of the Scots and French—an assertion utterly at variance with the truth, for some hundreds were killed, and the English, if they were really defeated, retired in such a manner, that D'Essé did not venture to follow them—this commander having *sagaciously* resolved that “serious and important affairs are not to be hurried on with precipitation!” It appears that the same prudential consideration was so agreeable to the other officers, that there are great doubts if the Scots and French really obtained any important advantage. The whole of those prudential gentlemen agreed in this—“That recent success, by prompting men to greater but uncertain achievements has often been an occasion of their losing the real advantages they had gained; and that errors of this kind have in all ages proved fatal to states—therefore Mr D'Essé, accustomed to a *discreet use of his success*, to a due consideration of his powers, and to bound his hopes within the limits of prudence, *gave orders to sound a retreat!*”

Whatever was the nature of the battle, the whole affair was represented to the Queen Dowager as a splendid victory, and the Princess thought herself gratefully bound to visit the camp in person. She accordingly repaired to Haddington, and addressed the soldiers in the following language:—“I ever esteemed you, but now I cannot fail to love every one of you for the signal service you have done me. Assure yourselves that nothing in my power shall be wanting to testify the value I place upon your services, and since the present affairs of this kingdom and my service depend upon you, it is only reasonable that I should see you rewarded. I have ordered some presents for you, as an earnest of my further liberality. I hope to be at no distant period in a situation to make you acknowledge that the rewards of victory are greater than the hazards of war.”

The Scots are accused of expressing their hatred to the English by pulling out the eyes of the mangled bodies of the slain, and evincing other outrageous symptoms of revenge and indignity. It was at length resolved to turn the Siege of Haddington into a blockade, and to starve the garrison into a surrender. The Abbey was made the head quarters of the French commander, and here D'Essé resolved to remain quietly until he obtained possession of the town. But the English, who appear to have held the French in the utmost contempt, continually molested him by sallies. On one occasion about two hundred of them attempted to surprise his mounted guard. Leaving Haddington during the night, they took a circuit by Aberlady, and at the same time their chief commander at the head of a party attempted to seize a quantity of barley. A combat ensued, which was attended with no important consequences to either party. Seeing the English in a sort of night dress, the officer who led the French party exclaimed to his soldiers—"Fall on, comrades, and fear not a few rogues in their shirts." A personal combat took place between the English commander and Monsieur D'Anelot, a description of which, says the French eye-witness, would "to some people seem a story much of a piece with those of our old romances." The English retired, and D'Anelot also drew off his men, apparently satisfied with whatever advantage he had gained.

D'Essé at last found it necessary to raise the siege. The Regent Arran had promised him the assistance of 6000 foot and as many horsemen as were required, but he was unable to fulfil his stipulations. The French commander assembled his officers, and informed them of his resolution to leave the place, more particularly as he was unable to meet the forces of the English then advancing to expel him from Haddington. "There are none of you, gentlemen," said D'Essé, "who does not deserve to command an army,

and you cannot but know that the best of officers must retreat when unable to fight. Yet I am certain you would rather choose to stay and die with me on this spot, than flee in disorder before our enemy, though they were more numerous than they actually are. Good men lie under an indispensable obligation to obey the commands of honour, though such commands should be attended with the greatest dangers; for, as the desire of life is that which often brings inglorious death upon mankind, so the love of virtue proves the occasion of life, endless as immortality."

Having expressed himself in this philosophical manner, D'Essé commenced his retreat to Edinburgh, closely pursued by the English. Thus terminated the Siege of Haddington, which resisted the combined efforts of the Scots and their French allies. On the following year the garrison voluntarily retired to England, but not before they set fire to the town, and destroyed the fortifications.
