

SIEGE OF LEITH.*

A.D. 1559-60.

THE years intimated in the title of this narrative were the years of the Reformation of religion in Scotland, and were

* Lindsay's (of Pitscottie) History; Chalmers' Life of Queen Mary; Knox's Historie of the Reformation in Scotland; Life of the Regent Moray; Spottiswoode's History of the Church of Scotland; Campbell's History of Leith; Buchanan's History of Scotland; Sir James Balfour's Annals; Maitland's History of Edinburgh; and Local Traditions still remembered in Leith, obtained from private sources.

characterized by a more than ordinary share of strife, turbulence, and sedition. Mary of Lorraine, or of Guise, as she is variously designated, the widow of James V. and mother of the young Queen Mary, was Regent of the kingdom, and her well-known adherence to the Roman Catholic system contrasted strangely with the bold, energetic, and occasionally not over civil conduct and sentiments of the association of Protestant noblemen who called themselves the Lords of the Congregation. After the violent and disgraceful demolition of the cathedral churches and monasteries by lawless mobs, stimulated by incendiaries, the Queen Regent came to an open rupture with the insurgent noblemen, and both parties prepared to settle the contest by an appeal to arms. Several threatening movements ensued, which were more serious in appearance than in reality, yet each side was in arms, and ready to join issue in battle.

The Queen Regent had been compelled to retreat from Fife to Dunbar, and while in that town her deputies held several ineffectual conferences with the leaders of the confederated noblemen, both in that town and at the village of Preston, about half a mile inland from the village of Prestonpans. In the meanwhile Henry II. of France died, and his son Francis, the Dauphin, the husband of Queen Mary, ascended the throne. Powerful reinforcements were now expected from France; and on the 30th of July 1559, the Queen Regent suddenly left Dunbar, and encamped on the well known common called Leith Links.

Several of the chief leaders of the Congregation were then in Edinburgh, but they had relaxed their authority, and were by no means unanimous among themselves. The Queen's unexpected movement from Leith to Dunbar threw them into great perplexity. They had little time to assemble their adherents, but they marched to Leith with such a force as they could muster under the command of the Prior of St Andrews, afterwards the celebrated Earl

of Moray. Before the Prior arrived, however, short as the distance is from Edinburgh, the Queen Regent moved her troops quietly into Leith and took possession of the town, which she ordered to be fortified, as there was no other place of safety to which she could then retire.

The Queen Regent had now the advantage of the insurgents. She was advised to attempt a negotiation, and a treaty was concluded not unfavourable to her opponents, but her mildness was returned by them with ingratitude; the desire of peace was evidently neither mutual nor sincere, and they issued manifestos in open defiance of the government. The treaty was broken, and the Regent prepared to meet her enemies. They publicly declared that they would seek the assistance of the English, because they were of the same religion as themselves; and they went the length of depriving the Queen Regent of the government, refusing to obey her as the representative of their sovereign.

This unconstitutional procedure was of course treated with contempt. The Queen Regent continued in Leith, the inhabitants of which she is accused of duping of L.3000, which they never afterwards recovered, but this accusation rests on very questionable authority. She commenced a thorough repair of the ramparts, assisted by a French force under her command—operations which greatly alarmed the Congregation, and materially widened the rupture between both parties. Accordingly, they dispatched to her a remonstrance, dated at Hamilton, 29th September 1559, of which the following is a modernized passage:—“Madam, We are credibly informed that your army of Frenchmen have instantly begun to plant Leith, and to fortify the same, with the intention of expelling the ancient inhabitants, our brethren of the Congregation, therefrom, wherefore we marvel not a little that your Majesty should so manifestly break the appointment made at Leith, without any provoca

tion given by us and our brethren : And seeing the same is done without any manner of consent of the nobility and council of the realm, we esteem the same not only oppressive of our poor brethren and indwellers of the said town, but also very prejudicial to the commonweal, and contrary to our ancient laws and liberties. We therefore desire your Majesty to cause the same work enterprised to be stayed, and not to attempt so rashly and so manifestly against your Majesty's promise to the commonwealth, the ancient laws and liberties thereof, which things, besides the glory of God, are most dear and tender to us, and our only pretence ; otherwise assuring your Majesty we will complain to the whole nobility and commonalty of this realm, and most earnestly seek for redress thereof."

The "appointment made in Leith," which the Queen Regent is in the above unceremonious manner accused of having broken, was a contract between her Majesty and the Lords of the Congregation, dated the 24th of July, on Leith Links, six days before she marched from Dunbar, and occupied the town of Leith. This conference was managed on the part of the Queen by the Duke of Chatelherault, at that time in her interest, the Earl of Huntly, and the French commander D'Ossel ; and the Earls of Argyle, Glencairn, and others, in behalf of the Lords of the Congregation. The substance of this negotiation was, that the Queen Regent was not to molest the Protestant preachers ; while the Lords of the Congregation bound themselves to be dutiful and obedient subjects, and to observe all the laws and customs of the realm. It appears, however, that among other causes of offence the Queen Regent thought proper, while she occupied Leith, to order the Roman Catholic ritual to be celebrated in South Leith parish church, and the minister's pulpit to be turned out of the edifice—no great infringement of the treaty, when we consider that the Regent was in possession of the town

in the name of the sovereign, and that very probably the Protestant minister had fled. The Protestant religion had not yet been established by law—the Roman Catholic system was still the authorised ecclesiastical ritual, and besides these considerations, the Queen Regent acted in a constitutional manner as long as the law existed, whereas those very noblemen and gentlemen who now abused her for infringing the treaty, with which she had not in the least interfered, for she merely bound herself *not to molest* the preachers of the Reformed religion, had themselves been recently guilty of the greatest enormities, the grossest violence, and the most outrageous and wanton destruction of valuable and sacred property, having perambulated the country followed by mobs of excited enthusiasts, and pulling down and dilapidating cathedrals, churches, monasteries, and other religious buildings.

Mary of Lorraine was too sagacious not to see through the flimsiness of this remonstrance, not to say its unreasonableness, and among other arguments which she urged in reply to her *particular friends*, the Lords of the Congregation, in defending her conduct, she adduces one in which she puts herself in the situation of a feeble and harmless bullfinch or linnet, surrounded by a crowd of most ferocious hawks, as if she were in constant danger of being clutched by the talons of Arran and Argyle, or gored with the beaks of Ruthven and others of a similar stamp. In answer to the charge of fortifying Leith her Majesty says:—“ And like as a small bird, being pursued, will provide some nest, so her Majesty could do no less, in case of pursuit, but provide some sure retreat for herself and her company; and to that effect chose the town of Leith, a place convenient for that purpose, because it was her dearest daughter's property, and no other person could claim title or interest thereto; and also because in former times it had been fortified”—probably alluding to the fortifications raised by

Monsieur D'Essé ten years previously, for it does not appear that there were any military works in Leith before the arrival of that commander. The Queen Regent concluded by urging her said *particular friends*, the Lords of the Congregation, as they styled themselves, to submit to her constitutional authority as loyal subjects, and to trust to her generosity and clemency.

But it was no part of the policy of the Lords of the Congregation to comply with the modest recommendation of the Queen Regent. On the contrary, they sent her a reply, in which they took the liberty of favouring her with their opinion of the French troops with her in Leith, and complimented them by saying that "no honest men durst commit themselves to the mercy of such *throat-cutters*." As all hope of an amicable adjustment of their differences with the Queen Regent was now at an end, they resolved to adopt summary measures, and prepared to attack Leith. They mustered their forces, and sat down before the town in October 1559. Before proceeding to extremities they sent a messenger to the walls, with a long winded summons in the name of their "sovereign lord and lady" Francis and Mary, demanding that all "Scots and Frenchmen, of whatever estate and degree, depart out of the town of Leith within the space of twelve hours," alleging at the same time that they entertained "no hatred at either the one or the other"—a statement a little inconsistent with the endearing appellation of *throat-cutters*, by which, in their reply to the Queen Regent, they had very charitably designated her French troops. No answer was returned to this summons, and the assailants prepared for the attack, when upon applying their scaling ladders to the walls, those necessary instruments were found to be too short. It ought to be mentioned that those scaling ladders had been made in St Giles' church, Edinburgh, which greatly irritated the preachers, who publicly declared that God would not allow such

wickedness and irreverence to pass unpunished, as it betokened contempt for the place where the people assembled for divine service. This view of the proceeding was both rational and commendable, and it had the desired effect. The forces of the Congregation, imagining that the vengeance of Heaven was impended over them, and ready to burst upon them on the first opportunity, for their sins in general, and for the iniquity of constructing the ladders in a church in particular, and, what was probably as effectual and convincing a consideration as the other, having become mutinous for want of pay, showed no inclination to fight. "The men of war, who," says Knox, "were men without God or honesty, made a mutiny, because they lacked a part of their wages. They had done the same in Linlithgow before, where they made a proclamation they would serve any man, to suppress the Congregation, and set up the mass again."

The sinews of war being thus wanting, their coffers empty, and the soldiers mutinous, the Lords of the Congregation were not a little puzzled about their procedure. It was first proposed to make a collection, and this shift was actually tried, but it would not do, and little or nothing was raised, there being either a scantiness of cash on the part of the friends of the Congregation, or an unwillingness to part with it. The "Rob Roy" plan of raising subsidies was too dangerous to be attempted by men engaged in a religious warfare, and it would have done immense injury to their cause. In the midst of their difficulties they resorted to the extraordinary and treasonable measure of erecting a coining-house or mint, and it was proposed that every nobleman and gentleman should produce such gold and silver plate as he possessed to be converted into money. The management of this bold measure, it was agreed, was committed to two persons, named David Forrest and John Hart, but here another disappointment awaited them,

for when matters were ready for commencing operations, it was found that Mr John had decamped with the instruments of coining, and doubtless he would not disappear empty-handed in other respects. Whither he had fled no one knew, but he carried off with him every article and tool belonging to the mint, to the no small annoyance and exasperation of his employers.

Thus foiled by Mr John Hart's proceedings, there was no other resource than to apply to England for a temporary supply to silence the clamours of their soldiers. They sent Cockburn of Ormiston in East-Lothian, a devoted adherent of the Congregation, to Sir Ralph Sadler and Sir James Crofts, who both commanded jointly at Berwick, to implore assistance. Queen Elizabeth had anticipated some demand like this, and, glad of an opportunity to interfere, she had placed a sum of money at the disposal of these gentlemen. To prevent accidents, as far as possible, he was sent upon his errand with the greatest secrecy and expedition. It appeared, however, from the result, that the ban of the preachers, on account of the scaling ladders made in St Giles' church, was more potent than the Lords of the Congregation supposed, and it was evident that nothing would succeed with which those unfortunate implements had, or were likely to have, any connection. Notwithstanding all his precaution the Laird of Ormiston did not set out to Berwick so quietly as to prevent the Queen Regent getting notice of his departure, and of the object of his mission. When he arrived at Berwick he was presented by Sir Ralph Sadler and Sir James Crofts with four thousand crowns, and was, as he thought, securely and secretly on his way to Leith, when he was waylaid by the Earl of Bothwell, the same who was afterwards notorious as the husband of Queen Mary. The Laird made all the resistance he could offer, but it was of no avail against such a personage as Bothwell. The Earl severely wounded him,

and robbed him of the whole sum, which he contrived to appropriate to his own use, for none of it ever reached the Queen Regent; but as her Majesty was in no want of money, this was probably the acknowledged reward of his adventure. The Laird of Ormiston was in consequence obliged to appear among his friends without a coin in his pocket, and the loss was peculiarly mortifying in the state of their affairs.

The Lords of the Congregation were greatly exasperated against Bothwell, who had deceived them for some time with professions of regard; and the Earl of Arran, accompanied by the Prior of St Andrews, afterwards Earl of Moray, set out in pursuit of him. But the Earl was nowhere to be found—literally *non inventus*—and they could only revenge themselves by pillaging his castle of Hales, in the parish of Morham, near Haddington, where, in anticipation of such a visit, he had taken care to leave very little of any thing valuable. Arran and the Prior did not choose to extend their excursions to Bothwell's castle of Dunbar.

The forces of the Congregation were now completely disheartened, irresolute, and disorderly. They positively refused to obey their leaders, despising alike the threats of the noblemen and the spiritual denunciations uttered against them by the preachers; but, to do the latter justice, the construction of the scaling ladders in St Giles' seems to have made them on the whole somewhat lukewarm. When the Earl of Arran and the Prior of St Andrews returned from their very foolish and unnecessary pursuit of such an unscrupulous personage as Bothwell, they were told that the French intended to intercept some provisions destined for the use of their soldiers, which were in the act of being forwarded along the shore from Dalkeith and Musselburgh. The French, who were assiduous in their look-out, soon recognised the expected carts, and putting out of the harbour in boats, landed a chosen body of men on the ground

between Leith and Portobello, anciently known as the Figgate Whins. Arran and the Prior advanced with a party to protect the carts, but the French fell upon them with such fury that they narrowly escaped with their lives. They were driven from the shore into the narrow irrigated defile between Restalrig and the Palace of Holyroodhouse behind the present Piershill Barracks, and it was with the utmost difficulty that they found shelter from the fire of the French. This conflict ended in a total flight on the part of the Scots, the Prior and Arran in vain endeavouring to rally their men, although they dismounted, and fought in the thickest of the conflict with the greatest intrepidity.

Misfortunes, according to the proverb, never come single, and the Lords of the Congregation experienced the truth of the adage on this occasion. The French seizing a favourable opportunity, when the horsemen of the besiegers were absent on a foray to raise provisions, and while the foot soldiers were for the most part at dinner, such as it was, made a furious and desperate sally from the town. Instantly the rout of the army of the Congregation, unprepared for this unexpected attack, became general and bloody. They fled across the fields between Leith and the Calton Hill towards Edinburgh in the utmost confusion and disorder, without offering the least resistance. Resolved to complete, as far as they could with safety to themselves, what they had successfully begun, the French pursued the fugitives to the Watergate in the Canongate and the foot of the steep street called Leith Wynd, then the chief entrances to the city on the north and east, putting every man whom they overtook to the sword. Hallyburton, provost and constable of Dundee, attempted at the head of a party of his own townsmen to make something like a stand against the assailants, and even threatened an attack on Leith, but he met with no better success, and he was quickly compelled to consult his safety by flight. The

French returned from this assault in triumph to Leith, where they were joyfully welcomed by the Queen Regent, who ascended the ramparts for this purpose. Observing several of them carrying such plunder as they had picked up, chiefly pots, pans, and, it is said, *kirtles and petticoats*, which, however, may intimate the plaids and kilts of Argyle's Highlanders, her Majesty jocularly inquired *where they had bought their ware*.

Completely disunited and discomfited, and the men clamorous for pay, the Congregation evacuated Edinburgh, and marched to the more genial region of the west. So great was their alarm that they scarcely halted till they reached Stirling, accompanied by John Knox, and on their arrival in that town he convened them to be edified with a sermon on the 80th Psalm. They here appointed a special deputation to Queen Elizabeth for assistance, and then divided into two parties. As plunder was now the order of the day, and as they were by no means scrupulous as to the manner in which it was obtained, the one division marched to Glasgow under the Duke of Chatelherault, where they demolished the religious fabrics, the cathedral narrowly escaping their fury. The other division, under the Prior of St Andrews, honoured the county of Fife with a visitation, and among other exploits harassed some French troops in the towns along the south coast by their skilful manœuvres.

The Queen Regent now obtained possession of Edinburgh, accompanied by her friends and the French troops, and took up her residence in the Castle. Her Majesty is accused by Lindsay of Pitscottie of restoring "all the altars and images, erecting the mass in the kirks, and blotting out the Lord's Prayer, the Belief, and the Ten Commandments, which were patent upon the kirk walls." It appears from a letter of Sir James Crofts and Sir Ralph Sadler to Cecil, dated 5th November 1559, that the Queen Regent's army

at this period amounted to no more than 3000 men. "As far as we can learn," say Cecil's correspondents, "there be no Scots of any note with her in Leith but the Lord Seton and the Lord Borthwick, with the inhabitants of the town. For the rest, the Earl of Bothwell, who is on her side, and such others as seem to favour her party, do remain at home by her consent, until she require their aid."

While the deputation from the Congregation were engaged at the English court procuring assistance from Elizabeth, and the Queen Regent was in possession of the Scottish capital, the country was in a state of great disorder, as the following notices abundantly prove. The French marched from Edinburgh, and ravaged the towns and neighbouring country of Linlithgow and Stirling. Crossing the celebrated bridge, they proceeded down the north side of the Forth, making similar havoc. They entered Fife at Torryburn, the western extremity of the county, and plundered the towns of Kinghorn, Dysart, and Wemyss, killing all the cattle, spoiling several villages, and blowing up the house of the Laird of Grange with gunpowder.

In this marauding expedition a French officer was detached with fifty men to plunder Dunnikier near Kirkaldy. He was opposed by the Master of Lindsay and the Laird of Craighall, at the head of a select party of their retainers. The French intrenched themselves within the ruins of an old house, and their commander bravely defended himself for a considerable time with a halbert. The Master of Lindsay encountered him sword in hand, and after a severe conflict killed him by a stroke on the forehead with a broadsword. Many of the French were slain, and the rest were carried prisoners to Dundee.

While these disorders were in progress, the Scottish deputation at the English court were successful, and Elizabeth from motives of policy readily complied with their

request. The Prior of St Andrews and some of his associates met the Duke of Norfolk at Berwick, where a treaty was concluded between the Lords of the Congregation and the English Queen. This was soon known to the Queen Regent, but the French felt little alarm, as they daily expected reinforcements by sea from France. Before again directing our attention to the second siege of Leith in 1660, which is intimately connected with the unsuccessful attempt already narrated, it will not be out of place, before the arrival of the English army, to glance at what was going on in the "kingdom of Fife."

While the French detachments were in Wemyss, which seems to have been their head-quarters, they were informed that vessels were daily expected from France with supplies, and being stimulated by this announcement they resolved to march to the county town of Cupar, where there was a gathering of the adherents of the Congregation. After consulting whether they should proceed thither by the nearest road, or go round the coast by Pittenween, Anstruther, Crail, and St Andrews, they chose the latter road on account of the depth of the snow, which would retard the march of their horsemen. They accordingly set out eastward, keeping as close as possible to the shore of the Frith, passing the village of Methel, Leven, and Lower Largo. Rounding Largo Bay they came to Kinraig Point, which forms the eastern boundary of the bay. Here, while refreshing themselves, they descried some English vessels bearing gallantly up the Frith, which so terrified them that they speedily retreated, some to Kinghorn, others to Burntisland, where they had a garrison, and not a few of them as far west as Dunfermline, the Abbot of which, like the Laird of Wemyss, was a devoted adherent of the Queen Regent. In this disorderly retreat the Laird of Grange revenged himself for the explosion of his house by killing several. The French were opposed in their attempt to

pass the Forth above Alloa by a party of the Congregation from Stirling, and many of them were killed before they could effect a crossing of the river near Tulliebody.

Fortune had now declared against the French, and disaster followed disaster in quick succession before they could again concentrate themselves in Leith, after sustaining very considerable loss in several skirmishes on the way. The Lords of the Congregation issued a proclamation, ordering a general muster at Leith on the 30th of March 1660, with provisions for thirty days. Lord Grey of Wilton entered Scotland with a force variously stated at 6000 and 8000 men, and on the 1st of April this army, protected by an English fleet under Admiral Winter in the Frith, encamped at Restalrig, a now decayed little village between Edinburgh and Leith on the east, and at that time the property of the family of Logan, a fragment of whose ruined castle is still perched upon a rock overlooking the sheet of water called Lochend in the vicinity. Here the English were joined by the Earls of Argyle, Montrose, and Glencairn, Lords Boyd and Ochiltree, the Prior of St Andrews, the Master of Maxwell, and several other influential persons, with 2000 men. On this occasion the Town-Council of Edinburgh, in the plenitude of their wisdom, contributed from the funds of the Corporation L.1600 Scots money as a month's pay for four hundred men to assist in the reduction of Leith—a sum which enabled each of those warriors to live at the rate of *twopence halfpenny* a-day.

The Queen Regent, whose health was greatly impaired, did not choose to expose herself to the hazard of a siege in Leith, and remained in the Castle of Edinburgh, from the ramparts of which she daily and anxiously watched the operations of her adversaries and their English allies. As soon as the French garrison of Leith were informed of the approach of the English army, and before the latter could complete their encampment at Restalrig, they despatched

nine hundred harquebussiers against the enemy. This detachment, regardless of the vastly superior numbers which they were well aware they would have to encounter, crossed Leith Links, and took possession of a now wooded eminence which gives its name to a modern mansion near it called Hawkhill, where a severe and bloody contest with "hagbuts, pistolets," and other weapons, almost immediately ensued. The French galliantly maintained this unequal contest for several hours, but were at length compelled to retire, and were driven back to the town with great slaughter. The English took possession of Hawkhill, on which they planted their artillery, and they occupied the rising ground extending to Hermitage Hill, which completely overlooks the town and the Links on the east.

Soon after the repulse of the French at Hawkhill, they attempted another *ruse* as unsuccessful as the open attack. They sent a special messenger to Lord Grey of Wilton, requesting a short cessation of hostilities, which his Lordship readily granted. Taking advantage of this truce, numbers of the French soldiers flocked about the English encampments at Restalrig, Hawkhill, and Hermitage, pretending to be attracted thither by mere curiosity, while many concealed themselves in the neighbourhood. When they thought their numbers sufficient, while still affecting to be mere loungers, they purposely approached the English camp so near as to give offence to the sentinels, their object being to pick a quarrel, that an excuse might be furnished for breaking the truce. When Lord Grey was informed of this conduct he ordered them instantly to retire, but the reply of the French was that they would like to know his right to order them off the ground of their mistress, meaning the Queen Regent. They were told that if it were not for the cessation of hostilities granted at their own request, they would have been compelled to keep at a respectful distance. This answer irritated the

French, who, after defying the English to do their worst, deliberately discharged their pieces in the faces of those nearest them. A volley of oaths followed this unceremonious compliment, which was the signal for a general attack, and it commenced in right earnest. Those who were in concealment rushed to join the *melée*, assisted by those who were lounging about the camp. The English, thus taken by surprise, were thrown into confusion; their whole army resounded with the noise of a sudden and desperate affray; soldiers were seen running to arms in all directions, and yet no one could tell what was the cause of this dreadful uproar. At every turn they were met and slaughtered by the exasperated French, and the shouts of the assailants were mingled with the incessant discharge of fire-arms. At length the English recovered from their panic, and succeeded in driving their assailants to the town, to which the latter retired in excellent order. The French lost one hundred and forty men in this bold affray, besides twelve gentlemen and five soldiers taken prisoners. The loss of the English is not recorded, but it may be reasonably concluded, as they were taken unawares, that it would exceed that of their assailants.

There is an old poem still extant, by Thomas Churchyard, who accompanied the English in this expedition, and who was present during the whole of the siege, entitled *The Siege of Leith*, or, according to the quaint opinion of the author, *more aptly called the Schole of Warre*. In the following stanzas he thus celebrates this uproarious affray:

Among our men might Scottish vitlers haunt,
 Who with the French a treason tooke in hand;
 A wyfe, a queane, did make the French a graunt,
 Upon this rock in sight of Leith to stand,
 And there to make a signe to Dozis band,
 When that the wards were careless, and at rest,
 Which she did kepe—herself the same confest.

The French came on, as they thus warned were ;
 Lyke men of war they chose their tyme full well ;
 Our men start up, amazed with sudden fear,
 But what was best to do they could not tell.
 Some loving fame, his lyfe did dearly sell ;
 Some hating death, did sone from danger shun,
 Some, past all shame, full fast away did run.

Some made defence, but still they strove in vain,
 Once order broke, farewell the fight that hour.
 So in this heat was many a souldier slain,
 There was no help, they were o'erlayed with power.
 Thus have you heard how fortune 'gan to lour
 Upon our men. The chance of war is such,
 A man may not, at no tyme, trust it much.

The position occupied by the English on the rising ground extending to Hermitage Hill was sufficiently commanding and well chosen, but it was soon found to be too far distant to enable the artillery, such as it was in those times, to do any injury to the town or fortification. They remained in this position several days, digging trenches and throwing up bulwarks to protect themselves from the frequent sallies of the French, who were nothing undaunted either by the frequent and sanguinary repulses they experienced, or by the superior numbers of their opponents. The English, instead of waiting patiently within their intrenchments to repel the assaults of the French, now resolved to become aggressors, and whenever they perceived any detachments of the besieged advancing from the town, they immediately sent an equal force to meet them. These parties generally met about midway on Leith Links, which thus became the scene of repeated encounters. These conflicts, occurring between the town and the English encampment, were often of a sanguinary nature, both parties being conscious that their conduct was witnessed by their respective commanders and fellow-soldiers.

But the English soon began to tire of this desultory warfare, which was attended with no advantages, and was

rather more likely to weaken their army. Finding that their cannon did no execution from the high grounds near Hawk-hill and Hermitage, they descended to the Links, where they threw up mounds of earth on which they placed their artillery. It is interesting to observe that two of these mounds still remain on Leith Links, covered with verdant turf, and are memorials of Elizabeth's soldiers at the siege of Leith. One is close to a well on the south-east side of the Links bordering on the road from the Easter Road to Seafield Baths, near the toll-bar leading to Summerfield and Restalrig, called *Lady Fife's Well*, which was probably the first thrown up by the English; the second is of considerable elevation about two hundred paces east from the Grammar School, and is familiarly known to the children of Leith by the soubriquet of the *Giant's Brae*. There are still some traces on the side of this mound opposite the town of a broad path or way, leading obliquely to the summit, by which it is probable the besiegers dragged their artillery to the top, where there is a slight excavation apparently formed for the operation of cannon. This mound was, it is conjectured, the second thrown up by the English. A third mound was thrown up about two hundred and fifty feet south-east of the new stone bridge at Leith Mills, and was evidently formed by the besiegers when they removed their encampment to the west side of the town. This mound was levelled when the ground was converted into a timber-yard. It appears from the relative positions of the mounds on the Links that the English made regular approaches to the walls.

In a narrative connected with Leith in the present work, the opinion of the valiant Captain Colepepper in the *FOR-TUNES OF NIGEL* is quoted, and he speaks with ridicule and contempt of the whole fortifications, alleging that the town was a mere hamlet, "with a plain wall or rampart, and a pigeon-house or two at every angle." With all due respect

for the opinion of the gallant Captain, the defences of any place could not be paltry which kept at bay 6000 English and 2000 Scotch soldiers, who were also in possession of the adjacent heights, and had a powerful fleet in the Frith of Forth. This is proved from the unsuccessful attempts on several occasions to carry the town by storm. It appears that the rampart of Leith was of an octangular form, with eight bastions, one at each angle. An intelligent writer on the history and localities of this ancient sea-port thus describes the fortification and bastions:—"The first of these, called *Ramsay's Fort*, was for the defence of the harbour, and was situated a little north of the foot of Bernard Street, to which the houses on the shore did not then extend, there being none lower down than the old palace called the *King's Wark*, which stood between the foot of the street and the Broad Wynd. From this fort the wall took a south-east direction towards the Exchange Buildings, where stood the second bastion;* hence it continued its course south-south-west, and nearly on the line of Constitution Street, but considerably to the east of it, and was intersected by the third bastion, nearly opposite the junction of Coatfield Lane with Constitution Street, or about three hundred feet north-east of South Leith Church. From this point the wall proceeded in a south-west direction, or with an angle, towards the top of the Kirkgate, where it joined the fourth bastion, near to which stood also the gate or port of St Anthony, so called from its vicinity to the Preceptory

* "Where the Exchange Buildings now stand, there was a narrow mound of earth, of considerable height, and probably about one hundred yards long, which used to be much frequented as a promenade, on account of the view which it afforded, by the *belles* of Leith, from which circumstance it obtained the name of the *Ladies' Walk*. This mound, to which there was an ascent by stone steps, was the remains of the bastion spoken of in the text, and part of the wall."

of that name. The rampart now ran nearly in a straight line to the Water of Leith, intersecting the fifth bastion, the site of which cannot now be pointed out with any degree of certainty. Here the wall was connected, with its continuation on the west side by the river, by a wooden bridge, which stood exactly a hundred and fifteen yards below the new stone bridge at the Saw-mills. On the west side of the Water of Leith, and a little way above its banks, the rampart joined the sixth bastion. Hence, running nearly due north, it passed through a part of the Citadel, where it was again intersected by the seventh bastion. Taking now an easterly direction, it terminated at the Sand Port, where, to correspond with Ramsay's Fort on the other side of the river, stood the eighth bastion, and which, along with the former, being intended for the defence of the harbour, was strongly built, and wholly of stone. No trace whatever of this once formidable wall now remains, although several vestiges of it existed in the time of Maitland [1753], and more lately in that of Kincaid, the latter of whom distinctly traced between the Chapel of Ease in Constitution Street [now the church of the *quoad sacra* parish of St John] and Laurie Street, and thence, with some interruption, to the west end of Cables Wynd. Before the formation of Constitution Street, the rampart intersected, and having in due course of time been reduced to a mere ridge of earth, also formed a part, of South Leith Burying-Ground. An unfortunate and unthinking wight of a ship-captain, tempted we presume by the devil, once took it into his head to ballast his ship with this sacred earth. The consequence, tradition has it, of this sacrilegious act was, that neither the wicked captain nor his ship, after putting to sea, was ever heard of again."

The English, now at a convenient distance from the town, opened a fire upon the besieged from the artificial mounds, especially from the one, popularly called the

Giant's Brae, near the Grammar School After several days' battering with eight pieces of cannon, they succeeded on the 20th of May in breaking down the steeple of St Anthony's Preceptory, on which the besieged had placed several guns, which from this commanding situation did great injury to the English. The Preceptory of St Anthony stood at the south-west corner of St Anthony's Wynd, and was founded in 1435 by Logan of Restalrig. No vestige of this ecclesiastical establishment now remains except some old vaults, and the ground which contained its church, gardens, and burying-ground, is now covered with houses. Religious zeal afterwards completed the destruction of what was left by the battering of the English cannon. This feat of beating down St Anthony's steeple, which any artilleryman of the present day with a couple of ordinary cannon would have done in less than half an hour, afforded the greatest exultation to the besiegers, who actually contemplated with wonder the effects of their prowess.

Admiral Winter's fleet now seconded the efforts of the force who invested the town, and several of the ships sailed close to the pier, where the crews commenced a most destructive fire, by which many of the inhabitants and soldiers were killed. Nevertheless the besiegers, finding all their efforts unavailing to take the town, removed their encampment to the west side of the Water of Leith, in the hope that the fortifications in that quarter would be less capable of resistance than those on the east. Here they threw up mounds, as they had done on the Links, and renewed their operations.

The siege had continued nearly a month without any prospect of a termination, and hitherto it had been attended with no other effect, exclusive of the loss of life, than of reducing the garrison to such extremity for want of provisions that they were compelled to eat their own horses. Yet the besieged endured their privations with the greatest

cheerfulness, and continued to feed upon their dead horses with a gusto which showed that they were determined to hold out as long as a horse was left, their officers exhibiting that politeness in the science of gastronomy which is recorded of the Mareschal Strozzi, whose *maitre de cuisine* during the blockade maintained his master's table with twelve covers every day, although he had nothing better to set upon it now and then except the quarter of a carrion horse, and the grass and weeds which grew on the ramparts.

The patience of the English was at length exhausted by this protracted warfare, and they resolved to try the effect of a general assault upon the town. The whole army was drawn up in order of battle, and amongst other arrangements Sir James Crofts was ordered, with what was considered a sufficient force, to assail the town on the north side at the place now called the Sand Port, where at low water there was an easy entrance to the place. But Sir James, instead of performing his important duty, thought proper to keep aloof during the whole time of the assault, and remained inactive, which caused him to be afterwards loudly accused of treachery—a charge which some thought was sufficiently proved from the circumstance that he had a few days before been seen holding a colloquy with the Queen Regent, who addressed him from the walls of Edinburgh Castle. The soldiers in this general assault marched with their scaling ladders, but these implements, like their unfortunate predecessors constructed in St Giles' church, were found too short. Old Thomas Churchyard thus records the fact :

— Our soldiers lackt no will
To clyme the walls, where they receive much ill,
For when they layd their ladders on the dyke,
They were too short the lengthe of half a pyke.

The besiegers, after many desperate and fruitless efforts, were driven back with great slaughter, and, singular as it may appear, the success of the garrison was not a little aided by the exertions of certain *ladies*, whom the French, with their usual gallantry and devotion to the fair sex, entertained in great numbers in their quarters. It is recorded that those heroines mounted the ramparts, and remained there during the whole time of the assault, employing themselves in loading the musquets of the soldiers, pelting the English with whatever missiles they could procure, throwing down, according to John Knox, whole chimneys of burning fire upon the foe, and particularly exerting themselves when the Englishmen began to turn their backs. The great Reformer's account of this singular display of female heroism is quite unique. "The Frenchmen's harlots," he says in his plain way, "of whom the maist pairt were Scotch strumpets, did no less cruelties than did the soldiers, for besides that they charged their pieces, and ministrated unto thame uther weapons, some continewally cast stones, some carried chimneys of burning fyre, some brocht timber and uther impediments of weight, quhilk with grit violence they threw over the wall upon our men, bot especially when they began to turn thair backs." A writer on the history and antiquities of Leith, which in his estimation is the most interesting place in the world, anxious to vindicate the fair Leithians of that day from the odious charge of being the Frenchmen's courtezans, ingeniously "inclines to ascribe the honours of this day to *some detachment from the Canongate of Edinburgh*, it being more probable that the Frenchmen drew the greater part of their forces from that far-famed district." He might just as well have said the Cowgate, the High Street, or the West Port, or any where else. Whoever were the Amazons in question, it is really too much to charge the Canongate of Edinburgh as in those times furnishing such female detachments.

It should be kept in mind what the Canongate *once was*, not what it *now is*, or at least what a part of it is said *to be*; and it is not too much to say that in whatever repute that old baronial suburb of Edinburgh may now be held, there have always been certain localities in Leith which are any thing than like Cæsar's wife—"above suspicion."

During the whole of this singular assault, which completely failed, it is said that the Queen Regent, although labouring under an illness which in a few days proved mortal, sat upon the walls of Edinburgh Castle, regarding with intense anxiety the vicissitudes of the fight. When her Majesty saw the English repulsed, and the French ensigns again waving triumphantly on the walls, she was unable to repress her joy, and she is accused by Knox of saying—"Now will I go to mass, and praise God for that which mine eyes have seen;" and she immediately proceeded to the Castle chapel in this pious resolution. According to the Reformer, or at least as it is stated in the "Historie" which is ascribed to him, when she entered the chapel she found a certain Dominican Friar named Black, probably her own chaplain, or belonging to the Castle, ready to assist in her devotions. It seems that this worthy friar's reputation for gallantry was very considerable in those times, and it is alleged that the Queen Regent had not long before detected him in a very unbecoming situation with a female paramour in the very chapel. The fame of this friar is perpetuated in a scrap of doggrel poetry, abounding with puns on his name, and the order of Dominicans or Black Friars to which he belonged—

There was a certain Black Friar, always called Black,
 And this was no nickname, for black was his wark,
 Of all the Black Friars he was the blackest clark,
 In the Black Friars born to a black wark.

It is, however, only justice to Friar Black to notice that, remarkable though the association is, he was as much cele-

brated as a theologian as a gallant, for in 1561 he publicly disputed with Mr John Willox in defence of the Roman Catholic doctrines two successive days, and it is admitted that he gave the Protestant divine an infinitude of trouble in refuting him. But the whole story, as far as the Queen Regent is concerned, is very apocryphal. Knox remarks on it—"But whoredome and idolatrie agree weel together, and that our Court can bear witness this day, the 16th of May 1560." Now, the first edition of Knox's "Historie" has this date the 20th of May 1566, and so undoubtedly Knox wrote it, for he alludes in his own way to King Henry Darnley, against whom he charges some scandal.

The French, elated at their success in repulsing the besiegers, are accused of expressing their exultation in a very atrocious manner. As soon as the English had retired to their encampments, the French issued out, and stripped naked all the dead bodies of the assailants. They then carefully ranged and suspended the corpses along the ramparts, the under parts of which were composed of earth, and consequently sloping, and there they exhibited the dead bodies several days. When these were shown to the Queen Regent from a window in Edinburgh Castle, she is reported to have exclaimed—"Ah! yonder is the prettiest tapestry I ever beheld. Would that all the fields between me and Leith were covered with the same stuff." The Queen Regent must have had keen powers of vision indeed if she or any other person could have recognised a range of dead bodies on the ramparts of Leith from Edinburgh Castle. Whether she said it is another thing, though it is not very likely, as she was then labouring under a mortal illness, which caused her death a very few days afterwards, and it is utterly inconsistent with the authentic and undoubted account of her last moments, when she had an interview with the Earls of Argyle,

Glencairn, Marischal, and the Prior of St Andrews, her four greatest opponents; and after exhorting them to be loyal to their young Queen, and lamenting in the most feeling manner the distracted state of the kingdom, the loss of life occasioned by intestine strife, and the unhappy prospect which the future afforded, she asked forgiveness of those noblemen if she had at any time offended them, and died in the most pious and Christian manner. Yet Knox maintains that she uttered this very improbable exclamation, and says that he "openly and bouldly affirmed in the pulpit, that God would revenge that contumelie done to his image, not only on the godless and furious souldiers, but even on such as rejoiced thereat. And the very experience declared that he was not deceived, for within few days efter, yea, some say the same day, began hir belly and loathsum legs to swell, and so continewed, till that God did execute his judgements upon hir." It is melancholy to find such a man as Knox indulging in such atrocious, revengeful, and positively false language, as historical documents prove, connected with the last illness and death of the Queen Regent, and assuming to himself at the same time prophetic powers. Her death was peaceful and affecting, and posterity has done justice to the memory of this able and illustrious princess.

The failure of the general assault on Leith, and the repulse of the English, did not materially interrupt the blockade, nor did it induce the besiegers to abandon the enterprise. On the contrary they continued to annoy the town, by keeping up an incessant cannonade from those artificial mounds of earth in the Links and elsewhere, throwing up others in the most commanding situations. One of these, it is conjectured, was situated at the east end of Chapel Street in North Leith, and the cannon on it must have been particularly destructive if skilfully managed, as it would sweep the most crowded part of the town called the

Shore, along which none could pass without running the greatest hazard of being killed. But whatever were the acts of cruelty of which the French were guilty, it ought not to be forgotten that the English rivalled them. Among other atrocities they burnt the mills of Leith, after having actually murdered every individual whom they found therein.

The length of the siege, which had now continued upwards of two months, either shows that the English artillery was of comparatively little use, or that the besiegers were very ignorant of ordinary military operations. Every attempt to take the place by storm had failed; the loss of men they had sustained in their repeated assaults was immense; and the besieged, in the midst of famine and privations of every kind, not only remained unshaken, but continued with unremitting activity to harass their enemies by frequent sallies, engaging them even in their new trenches. The French were chiefly induced to hold out in the hope of receiving succours from their own country, which were indeed promised, but never arrived. At length both parties became weary of a contest which promised little advantage to either, and in this frame of mind an amicable arrangement was readily entertained. A treaty was concluded between the Bishop of Valence on the part of his countrymen, who came from France for the purpose, and Lord Burleigh on the part of Queen Elizabeth. This treaty was probably the more willingly entered into by the French from a circumstance recorded by Knox. He says that during the continuance of the siege, there broke out a fire in the town, which "devoured many houses and meikle victual; and so began God to fecht for us, as the Lord Erskine said to the Queen Regent in plaine words—'Madame, I can say no more, but seeing that men cannot expell unjust possessors forth of this land, God himself will do it, for yon fire is not kindled by man.'" This observa-

tion gave great offence to the Queen Regent, but she had now become too ill to attend to public affairs. She requested particularly to have an interview with Monsieur D'Ossell, and to bid him farewell, as he had been long one of her intimate friends, but this was not permitted. She wrote to him, telling him of her illness, and requesting some medicines. This letter was intercepted, and presented to Lord Grey of Wilton, the English commander, who quietly observed—" Medicines are more abundant and fresher in Edinburgh than they can be in Leith ; there lurketh here some mystery." He then held the paper before a fire, and some secret writing appeared which he read. He threw the letter into the flames, saying to the messenger—" Albeit I have been her secretary, yet tell her I shall keep her counsel ; but say to her that such wares will not sell till there is a new market."

The Queen Regent did not live to see the termination of an affair in which she had all along taken a deep interest. She died on the 10th of June 1560 in Edinburgh Castle, and the treaty was not concluded till nearly a month afterwards. By this treaty it was agreed that the French should be allowed to embark unmolested for France in English ships, and it was stipulated that the English should commence their march homewards on the day the French evacuated the town. On the 16th day of July the French embarked, and the English army began its route southwards. The French, before they embarked, plundered the town, and safely deposited their trunks and haversacks, well filled with whatever spoil on which they could lay their hands, on board the vessels in which they were to sail. Thus ended the siege of Leith, an event which was attended with much effusion of blood, and which almost ruined the trade of the port.

Immediately after the conclusion of the treaty it was re-

solved to demolish the walls of Leith, and accordingly an order was issued by the Privy Council to the Provost, Magistrates, and Town-Council of Edinburgh, peremptorily enjoining them to "appoint ane sufficient number to cast down and demolish the south pairt of the said town wall of Leith, beginning at Sanct Anthonie's Port, and passing westward to the Water of Leith, making the *block-house* and *courteine* equal with the ground." This block-house, or Gate of St Anthony's, was the principal entrance into the town, and was the scene of the greatest carnage at the general assault. As this order at the same time only enjoined the demolition of a part of the wall, that on the east remained tolerably entire long afterwards. In an old chart of Leith published about the middle of the 17th century, that part of the wall is distinctly laid down which began with Ramsay's Fort, and terminated at the top of the Kirkgate, near the spot where St Anthony's Gate stood. All, however, has long since disappeared, and the chief if not the only memorials of Elizabeth's soldiers and those of the Lords of the Congregation are now the artificial green mounds on Leith Links, which remind the spectator of the days of other years, and tell him of events which afford a striking contrast to the present state of the ancient sea-port of Edinburgh and its former denizens. The contests in which Leith was occasionally the scene in the olden time were more recently succeeded by those of a very different description, now happily adjusted, namely, an incessant warfare between the inhabitants with their superiors, and very often their oppressors, the Corporation of Edinburgh, the details of which, as given by the indignant historian of Leith, are of the most amusing and ludicrous description. If all the facts and statements of Mr Campbell are authentic, he may well complain of the "ruin and subjection of that *most unfortunate of all people*, the unhappy Leithers," who were ruled in the reigns of Mary and James VI., and

their successors, on the most approved principles of despotism.

Little more than thirteen months after the evacuation of Leith by the French, and the death of her mother the Queen Regent, Queen Mary, the lovely and the unfortunate, landed at Leith from France, on the 20th of August 1561, and the town presented a very different aspect than it did on the previous year, when Elizabeth's artillery thundered against its fortifications. In the admirable lines of the Ettrick Shepherd—

Slowly she ambled on her way,
Amid her lords and ladies gay ;
Priest, Abbot, Layman, all were there,
And Presbyter with look severe.
There rode the Lords of France and Spain,
Of England, Flanders, and Lorraine ;
While serried thousands round them stood
From shore of Leith to Holyrood.
