

STIRLING CASTLE.

(CONTINUED).

TWO Queen Regents, Margaret Tudor, widow of James IV., and Mary of Lorraine, the second wife of James V., spent much of their time in Stirling. Mary Stuart and her son, James VI., both spent their early years within its walls. During the stirring times of the Reformation, and the struggles between the King's men and the Queen's men, the Castle occupied almost as prominent a position as it had done during the war of independence.

When the Court removed to London in 1603, the Castle gradually declined as a royal residence, but again became of some importance as a fortress during the troublous times of the Revolution. In 1651 it was besieged and taken by General Monk. During Mar's Rebellion in 1715 it was held by the forces of the King under the Duke of Argyle, who effectually blocked the passage of the Forth, and suppressed the rising. In the "Forty-Five" the rebels marched to Stirling with the intention of seizing the Castle, but it was stoutly defended by Blakeney till relieved by the Duke of Cumberland.

The oldest existing buildings date from the 14th century. Entering from the Esplanade, the visitor crosses the drawbridge over a deep dry fosse; and, passing beneath two archways, reaches the original Entrance surmounted by the flag-staff. Passing under it he enters the *Lower Quadrangle*, on the left of which is the *Palace*, built by James V., and adorned with a profusion of grotesque statuary. The court in the centre is called the *Lions' Den*. The first floor contains a lofty and spacious suite of state rooms, and the floor above the residential rooms, now the officers' quarters. Through a low archway behind, we enter a battery overlooking the town, called the *Ladies' Look-Out*.

From here we can reach the *Upper Quadrangle*. On the right is the *Great Hall*, commonly called the *Parliament Hall*, attributed to James III. With the exception of Westminster Hall, it is the largest of any royal Castle in Britain, measuring 126 ft. by 36 ft. The roof has been renewed, but otherwise its general appearance remains unaltered. Since 1777, along with the Palace, it has been utilized as a barrack, and internally it has been considerably mutilated and defaced. In the vaults below, the Radical prisoners, Baird and Hardie, were confined previous to their execution in 1820. They were beheaded near the Market Cross with all the grim formalities, and not a little of the cruelty usually associated with barbarous times. To the west of the square is the *Douglas Room*, where James II. slew the Earl

of Douglas in 1452, because he refused to break his treasonable "band" with the northern Earls. The body was thrown from the window, and buried in the courtyard below. The end of the block containing this room was partially destroyed by fire in 1855, and its "restoration" was completed in a style entirely out of harmony with the surrounding buildings. The west side of the upper square is formed by the *Chapel Royal*, built by James VI. for the baptism of Prince Henry, his eldest son, in 1594. The Scottish Estates voted £100,000 for its erection. The ceiling was garnished with gold, and the walls were gorgeously adorned with pictures, sculpture, and other ornaments. The festivities connected with the ceremony were on a scale of unparalleled magnificence, comprising field sports, tournaments, masques, and tilting at the ring. A sumptuous banquet in the Great Hall followed.

Near the northern entrance, facing the *Ballangeich Road*, is the Mint, where bawbees, originally called babies, and half-babies, were coined by James V. in 1542. The erections between the original entrance and the present one were constructed in the reign of Queen Anne. The *Spur Battery* to the right and *Queen Anne's Battery* to the left of the present entrance belong to the same period.

The view from the Castle ramparts is unrivalled, both in natural beauty and in scenes of historic interest. The *Victoria Look-Out* (the name given to the spot whence the Queen and the Prince Consort admired the surroundings of Stirling in 1842), and *Queen Mary's Look-Out*, marked by the melancholy initials M. R. 1561, are both near the Douglas Room, and command the most extensive panorama. Stretching away to the west are the "varied realms of fair Menteith." In the background are the stately Grampians, Ben Voirlich, Ben More, Ben Ledi, Benven ue, and Ben Lomond; in the foreground the level plain with the wooded rock of Craigforth. To the east stretches the long line of the green Ochils, dappled o'er with alternate patches of light and shade, and the Abbey Craig, whose wooded crest is crowned with the *Wallace Monument*. Below are the massive tower of *Cambuskenneth Abbey*, and the Forth winding its tortuous way through the fertile carse, its "links" forming many beautiful peninsulas. Luxuriant woods and numerous mansion houses lend an additional charm to the banks of the river as it gradually widens out into the Firth. On a clear day the Castle of Edinburgh and Arthur's Seat are distinctly seen. The associations that cluster round "Gray Stirling with her towers and town" appeal to the imagination of every one conversant with Scottish history. Within historic times six great battles—Stirling Bridge, Falkirk (1298), Bannockburn, Sauchieburn, Sheriffmuir, and Falkirk (1746)—were fought within sight of its hoary ramparts.