

SIEGE OF CARLISLE.*

A.D. 1315.

THE city of Carlisle has witnessed numerous remarkable transactions, and many an hostile army has encamped beneath its walls. Its situation near the Borders rendered it a frequent object of attack by the Scots when they carried war into England, and it was in consequence strongly fortified from the most ancient times. It was a place of considerable interest during the settlement of the Romans in Britain—its castle was often the abode of royalty, the seat of courts and parliaments, the rendezvous of mitred abbots and steel-clad barons, the boast of English and Scottish chivalry. The city is familiarly designated *Merrie Carlisle* in the legends of the olden times—an appellation at once appropriate and expressive.

In the year 1315 Carlisle was besieged by Robert Bruce, a few years after Cardinal D'Espagnol, the Pope's Legate, had "with candles light, and causing the bells to be rung, accursed in terrible wise the said Robert Bruce, as the usurper of the crown of Scotland, with his partakers." The city was then commanded by Andrew de Harclaw, who determined to make a bold defence. Bruce appeared with his forces before the walls on the 22d of July, and did great damage to the surrounding country. His men destroyed the suburbs, trod down the corn growing near the city, and carried off the cattle. An account of this siege is preserved in the Chronicle of Lanercost, and is not a little curious as illustrating the mode of warfare in those times.

The siege continued ten or twelve days, and on every

* The History and Antiquities of Carlisle; Ridpath's Border History.

day the Scots made an attack on one of the city gates, or on all the gates at one time. Darts, arrows, and stones, were discharged in such quantities by the besieged, that the Scots, it is quaintly observed, "questioned among themselves whether the stones did not increase and multiply within the walls." On the fifth day of the siege an engine was erected near the Cathedral, where King Robert had stationed himself, and immense stones were discharged towards the Caldew Gate and against the wall, but little injury was done, and only one man was killed. Within the city there were seven or eight circular engines, with springalls for throwing long darts, and slings for casting stones, which greatly annoyed the besiegers. The Scots erected what was called a *berefray*, resembling a tower, which considerably exceeded the height of the walls, but the moist and clayey ground prevented its operations, as it stuck fast by its weight, and could be of no use in the assault.

Long ladders were now applied by the Scots, who made some attempts to scale the walls in several places, and the military engine called the *sow* was employed, but in no instance with success. The besiegers also made bundles of straw and grass to fill up the moat without the wall on the east side of the city, and they constructed bridges running on wheels, which could be drawn rapidly with ropes, and carried across the ditch, but these contrivances failed, and sunk to the bottom of the moat. On the ninth day of the siege the Scots played all their engines, and made a general assault on all the gates of the city. The garrison repelled them with courage, and continued masters of the place. King Robert now attempted to obtain possession of the city by a stratagem. He caused the greater part of his army to make an assault on the eastern wall of the city near the monastery of the Grey Friars, with the view of drawing the whole strength of the besieged to that quarter, while Lord James Douglas, with a chosen company of war-

rriors. assailed the city on the west near the monastery of the Black Friars. Here ladders were posted, which were mounted by archers, who discharged their arrows at all who raised their heads above the walls ; but, according to the Chronicle, “ blessed be the Lord, they found such a resistance there that they were thrown to the ground with their ladders, and there and elsewhere about the walls some were taken, some slain, and others wounded : yet no Englishman was killed during the whole siege except the one above mentioned, and one man was struck with an arrow, but a few were wounded.”

On the eleventh or twelfth day of the siege King Robert was compelled to raise it, after losing a considerable number of men, and in his retreat several of his soldiers were killed and wounded. Some were taken prisoners, among whom were several persons of distinction. Harclaw was rewarded for his defence of the city by being made Earl of Carlisle and Lord Warden of the Marches ; but some years afterwards he repaired to Robert Bruce at Lochmaben and tendered him his services, which were readily accepted. They entered into a mutual engagement to support each other—a measure fatal to the unfortunate governor of Carlisle. The tidings of his defalcation soon reached Edward II. and he promptly commissioned Lord Lucy to apprehend him. Lucy chose for his associates in this enterprise Sir Hugh Lowther, Sir Richard Denton, and Sir Hugh de Moriceby. Attended by those knights, their esquires-at-arms, and a few followers, Lucy passed safely under the portcullis of the castle, and proceeded towards the inner ward, as if on a visit to the Earl. To prevent any suspicion of their intentions, their arms were concealed beneath their cloaks, and they passed the sentinels without exciting any alarm. A few of the men loitered at each gate under pretence of waiting for the others, but in reality to guard each avenue, and to prevent an alarm. When Lord

Lucy and his knights entered the private apartment of the governor they found him unarmed, and engaged in writing. He was informed by Lucy that he was his prisoner, and required either to defend himself, or to surrender as a traitor. The Earl had no alternative, but the loud voice of Lord Lucy was overheard by some of his followers, and instantly the vaulted arches of the castle resounded with the cry of treason. The keeper of the inner gate was killed by Sir Richard Denton, and the retainers were compelled to retreat. The governor was committed a close prisoner, until Edward should be apprised of his capture.

The Earl was soon brought to trial, but it is not certain whether at Carlisle or London. He was arraigned as a traitor, and degraded from his knighthood, which Tindal asserts is the first instance of the kind on record. He was led to the bar as a belted earl, booted and spurred, with his sword girt about him, and addressed in the following manner:—"Sir Andrew, the King, for thy valiant service, hath done thee great honour, and made thee Earl of Carlisle, since which time thou, as a traitor to thy Lord the King, leddest his people, that should have assisted him at the battle of Beighland, away by the county of Copeland, and through the earldom of Lancaster, by which means our Lord the King was discomfited by the Scots through thy treason and falsehood; whereas, if thou hadst come betimes he would have gained the victory; and this treason thou committedst for the great sum of gold and silver which thou receivedst from James Douglas, a Scot, the King's enemy. Our Lord the King willeth therefore that the order of knighthood, by which thou receivest all thine honours and worship upon thy body, be brought to nought, and thy state undone, that other knights of lower degree may after thee beware, and take example hereafter truly to serve." When the Earl was divested of all his distinctions of knighthood he was thus accosted—"Andrew, now thou art

no knight, but a knave, and for thy treason the King will-eth that thou shall be hanged and drawn, and thy head smitten from thy body, and thy body quartered." The Earl heard his sentence with an unchanged countenance, and simply said, "You have disposed of my body at your pleasure, but my soul I give to God." He was then executed, and his body was, according to the barbarous custom of the times, divided into four quarters, each of which was sent to York, Newcastle, Carlisle, and Shrewsbury, and his head placed on London Bridge.
