

BATTLE OF ROSLIN.*

A.D. 1302.

THE romantic banks of the Esk, from Roslin to Lasswade, contain many objects of attraction. Here is the ruined and once princely castle of the St Clairs, who resided in it in almost royal splendour, though little notice is taken of it in history till the reign of James II., when we read of Sir William Hamilton's imprisonment for engaging in the opposition to that prince headed by the Douglasses. Nearly half a mile down the river is situated the house of Hawthornden, in the midst of the most beautiful and picturesque scenery to be found any where in the south of Scotland. The celebrated caves of Hawthornden are immortalized in Scottish history. It was from them that the brave Sir Alexander Ramsay of Dalhousie sallied forth when occasion offered, during the contests for the crown be-

* Chalmers' Caledonia; Abercrombie's Martial Achievements; Statistical Account of Scotland; Historical Account of the Family of Fraser; Sir Walter Scott's Lord of the Isles; Lord Hailes' Annals of Scotland; Buchanan's History of Scotland; Wynton's Chronicle; Fordun's Scoti-Chronicon; Crawford's Officers of State.



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Robt. Scott and Co.

tween Baliol and Bruce, and made dreadful havoc of the English. The peaceful groves and the wooded banks of this delightful locality have in the olden time oft resounded to the clash of arms, and the Esk has been coloured with the mingled blood of English and Scottish foemen.

After the expiration of a truce concluded between Edward I. and the Scots, the former, resolved to persist in his attempts to conquer the country, sent an army into Scotland under the command of Sir John Segrave, who conducted his troops to Edinburgh. For the conveniency of quarters Segrave marched his forces in three divisions, and unfortunately for the English general these were so far separated as to be unable to support each other. The army advanced to the Scottish capital, in number thirty thousand, according to the statement of some writers, while the whole force which the Scots could bring into the field to oppose such a formidable army consisted of little more than eight thousand men. The English are accused of plundering on every side; but it may be safely concluded that on account of the previous distraction of the times, as well as the unsettled state and poverty of the country, little of importance or value would fall into the hands of the invaders.

At the period of this invasion of Scotland by the English army, Sir William Wallace, in an assembly of the nobility at Perth, had resigned the commission with which he had been entrusted to administer the government of the kingdom, but which their pride, notwithstanding his splendid services, rendered of little avail. Sir Simon Fraser, then Warden of the Forest of Selkirk, and Sir John Cumine of Badenoch, were unanimously promoted to the chief command. Those two heroes resolved to offer battle to the English without being in any way intimidated by their vast superiority in point of numbers. The Scottish commanders came up with the first division of the English under Segrave near Roslin.

at break of day, having made a forced march during the night. The English general scorned to avoid the enemy, and, boldly advancing, he attacked the Scots. A battle ensued, in which his troops were completely repulsed with great loss, and himself dangerously wounded.

The second division of the English was soon informed of the disaster which had befallen their countrymen by those who escaped, and they hastened to revenge their defeat. They found the Scots in the immediate vicinity of the scene of action, busily engaged in plunder, and slaughtering their enemies. A second battle ensued, in which the English were again defeated, and several officers of distinction fell, among whom is mentioned Sir Ralph le Cofferer, who is so called because he acted as a kind of commissary-general, or was the paymaster of the army.

The third division of the English now appeared, and found the Scots busily engaged in putting their prisoners to the sword, to preclude them from any trouble of guarding them. This shocking circumstance is mentioned by Fordun, and sanctioned by Buchanan, who states that while the Scots were engaged with the third division of the English in this third battle, and were in "great terror, for many being wounded, and the greater part fatigued by the toils of the double fight, they saw themselves threatened with imminent danger in the combat, and certain destruction if they fled; at length, by order of the commanders, the *prisoners were slain*, lest, while all were engaged with the army, they should rise in their rear, and the servants being armed with the spoils of the slain, exhibited the show of a larger army to the enemy." This third battle is, however, controverted by the English historians. They assert that Sir Robert Neville and his men remained behind to *hear mass*, and that when they came up they repulsed the Scots in a great measure, and recovered many of the prisoners. It is added, in the true spirit of monkish craft—that "of all

those who stayed behind to hear mass, no one was either killed, wounded, or taken prisoner." This pretended miracle concerning Neville and his attendants proves that the loss of the English was very great. Lord Hailes says—"The truth of the story as to the miracle I take to be this. Neville, not suspecting the approach of an enemy, had remained in his quarters performing the devotions of the day, it being the first Sunday in Lent. Before he came up, the English had been totally routed and dispersed. Neville found some Scottish stragglers in the field, occupied probably in stripping the dead. He dispersed them, and retook some prisoners. All this, as well might have happened, was achieved without loss."

Sir James Balfour states that the English left twelve thousand men dead upon the field, and that the pursuit was continued as far as Biggar, during which many of the English were slain. Sir John Cumine, or Comyn, is the same who was within three years afterwards stabbed by Robert Bruce in the church of a monastery at Dumfries. This competitor of Bruce's crown, and mortal enemy of Bruce himself, is commonly called the Red Cumine. According to the traditional account, Bruce made this proposal to Cumine—"Support my title to the crown, and I will give you my estate; or give me your estate, and I will support yours." To the former Cumine agreed. The conditions were signed and sealed by both parties, and a mutual oath of secrecy was taken, but Cumine thought proper to violate it, and he revealed the whole matter to Edward I. Bruce was then at the English court, and the letters of his accuser were shown to him by the King. Bruce, if he did not allay the suspicions of Edward, found means to soothe him by mild and judicious answers. But the King secretly resolved to draw all the brothers of Bruce within his power, and cut off the whole family at one blow. The Earl of Gloucester discovered the danger of the Scottish hero, and sent a mes-

senger to him with some money and a pair of spurs, as if he was returning what he had borrowed. Bruce understood that this was a warning to save himself by flight, and he instantly set out for Scotland accompanied by two attendants. As much snow had fallen during the night, it being about the beginning of February 1305-6, he ordered a farrier to invert the shoes of his horses, lest he might be traced. When approaching the Western Marches of Scotland he observed a passenger on foot, whose behaviour excited his suspicions. This man was ordered to be seized, and he acknowledged himself to be the bearer of letters from Cumine to Edward, urging the death or immediate imprisonment of Bruce. Acting on the principle too common in those unscrupulous times, that *dead men tell no tales*, Bruce beheaded the messenger, and pushed forward to his castle of Lochmaben, where he arrived on the seventh day after his departure from London. Repairing to Dumfries, where the Red Cumine then resided, he requested an interview with his rival. They met in the church of a monastery before the great altar, the site of which is doubtfully ascertained, as scarcely a vestige exists of the buildings in which the assassination took place; but the spot generally pointed out by the local antiquaries is the site of an *outside stair*, in a recess at the south end of a small street called the Grey Friars' Lane, in the north-west quarter of the town. Bruce indignantly reproached Cumine for his treachery. "You lie!" exclaimed Cumine, and Bruce instantly stabbed him. Hastening out of the church, and leaving Cumine weltering in his blood, he called—"To horse." His attendants, Kilpatrick and Lindsay, perceiving him in extreme agitation, asked him what was the matter. "I doubt," replied Bruce, "I have slain Cumine." "You *doubt*," exclaimed Kilpatrick, "I'll make siccar!" (sure.) Rushing into the church, he fixed his dagger in Cumine's heart. The words—*I make sure*—are still the

motto of his descendants—the Kirkpatricks, Baronets, of Closeburn in Dumfries-shire.

As it respects Sir Simon Fraser, the other commander at Roslin, he disdained to enter into the capitulation with the English King formed by Cumine in 1304, by which the latter saved his own followers at the expense of his country, and he was banished three years from Britain, Ireland, and even from France. He was also fined in three years' rent of his estate. He was in 1306 taken prisoner in a battle fought at Methven in Perthshire against the English by Bruce, in which the latter was defeated, and compelled to take shelter with a few followers in the Western Highlands. In this conflict Bruce was thrice dismounted, and as often rescued and replaced by the gallant Sir Simon Fraser. After he was taken prisoner, he was committed to the custody of Aymer de Valence, who sent him to London, where he was executed under circumstances of great barbarity. His head was exposed on London Bridge, beside that of his friend Sir William Wallace.

There is a tradition that the Esk at Roslin after the battle was coloured several days with blood, and that where the river makes its deboucheur into the Frith of Forth at Musselburgh, it had the appearance of a bloody bay. As to Roslin Castle, the residence of the steel-clad barons of the House of St Clair, much less is said of the sieges which it must have sustained than of the hilarities which enlivened its massive walls in former times. Although built on an almost insulated rock in the delightful glen of the river Esk, which is wooded to the water's edge, it is ill chosen for a castle, as it is completely commanded by hills on both sides of the river. Roslin, with its celebrated chapel, and Hawthornden with its caves, distinguished as the retreats of the brave asserters of their country's independence, as well as rendered sacred by the muse of Drummond, are still objects of interest to the admirers of

beautiful and picturesque scenery. Throughout the whole course of the Esk every scene is delightful, especially from "Roslin's rocky glen," and the "Classic Hawthornden," to Dalkeith, "which all the virtues love."

Sir Simon Fraser, the "flower of chivalry," as he is called, left no son to avenge his wrongs, and his two daughters inherited his estates.

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