

the boss was a stalk of stone, being a cross a little higher than the rest, whereon was cut, on both sides of the stalk of the said Cross, the picture of our Saviour Christ crucified, the picture of the Blessed Virgin on one side, and of St John the Evangelist on the other, both standing on the top of the boss; all which pictures were most artificially wrought together, and finely carved out of one entire stone, some parts thereof through carved work, both on the east and west sides of the Cross, with a cover of stone likewise over their heads, being all most finely and curiously wrought together out of the said hollow stone, which cover of stone was covered over. It remained till the year 1589, when the same was broken down and defaced by some lewd and wicked persons."

SIEGE OF ROXBURGH, AND DEATH OF JAMES II.●

A. D. 1460.

ON an eminence of considerable extent, at the west end of a fertile plain, over against Kelso, and on a peninsula formed by the Tweed and the Teviot, was situated the old town of Roxburgh, once the fourth burgh of distinction in Scotland; and here stood its celebrated Castle, the history of which, on account of the many struggles between the Scots and English for the possession of this fortress, is of more importance than perhaps any on the Scottish Borders. Its foundations are now almost razed, and there are few traces of those halls which witnessed royal births and nuptials—where princes and nobles were wont to sit—where fugitive,

● Tytler's History of Scotland; Pinkerton's History of Scotland; Haig's History of Kelso; Statistical Account of Scotland; Ridpath's History of the Borders.

turbulent, or exiled ecclesiastics and nobles were often confined or found refuge. The stanzas of Leyden are remarkably appropriate in reference to this ancient relic of warlike feud, surveying plains where thousands of combatants have successively drenched the earth with blood :—

“ Roxburgh ! how fallen, since first in Gothic pride
 Thy frowning battlements the war defied ;
 Called the bold chief to grace thy blazon'd halls,
 And bade the rivers gird thy solid walls.
 Fallen are thy towers, and, where the palace stood,
 In gloomy grandeur waves yon hanging wood ;
 Crush'd are thy halls, save where the peasant sees
 One moss-clad ruin rise between the trees—
 The still green trees, whose mournful branches wave
 In solemn cadence o'er the hapless brave.
 Proud Castle ! Fancy still beholds thee stand
 The curb, the guardian, of this Border land.
 As when the signal flame, that blaz'd afar,
 And bloody flag proclaimed impending war,
 While in the lion's place the leopard frown'd,
 And marshall'd armies hemmed thy bulwarks round.”

Only a few fragments of the wall which seems to have formed the exterior defence of the Castle of Roxburgh remain, and display vast strength from their thickness and solidity. The elevation on which it stood was surrounded on the north and west sides by an outward rampart of earth. It had a deep moat, the remains of which are still visible, which was filled with water from a dam formed in an oblique direction across the Tweed, and which was again discharged into the river upon the east. Roxburgh was a royal residence, and its constable was an officer of great power and responsibility. Its situation on the Borders of the two kingdoms rendered the possession of it of

the first importance to the contending parties in those wars which for centuries devastated both countries. It was generally the first place of attack when hostilities commenced, and consequently often changed masters.

The occasion of the siege of the Castle of Roxburgh by James II. is by no means clear. It is true it was in possession of the English; but the King sent ambassadors to England in June 1460 to confirm a truce, and yet on the 3d of August he was slain. James was doubtless induced, by the situation of affairs in England, to attempt the recovery of those places within his kingdom which the English had long held; and towards the end of July, with a numerous army, well furnished with cannon and warlike machinery, he proceeded to the siege of Roxburgh Castle. The town, which was incapable of defence, was taken and destroyed; but the garrison refused to surrender, and it was regularly invested. One of the pieces of artillery, brought by James II. to this siege, was called the *Lion*, on account of its immense size. It was cast in Flanders by order of James I. in 1430, and was the first cannon of any size brought to Scotland. It was made of brass, and contained an inscription in Latin intimating its name—the *Lion*, and that of the King.

The Earl of Ross had joined the King with a very considerable reinforcement of Western Highlanders, but James, instead of employing this force in the siege, sent most of them into England upon predatory incursions, retaining only the Earl and a few of his followers. Shortly afterwards the Earl of Huntly arrived, and the King, desirous to make a display to this nobleman of the vast power of the artillery he had brought into the field, took him to witness the effects of a single discharge upon the walls of the Castle. The cannon of that age were rudely contrived, and consisted of iron bars girded with circles of metal. Incautiously approaching one of these pieces, it suddenly burst; a splin

ter from it struck the King on the thigh, and otherwise severely wounded him, as also the Earl of Angus and some others who stood beside him. The death of James, from the great effusion of blood, almost immediately followed, though not before he had given strict orders that no intimation should be made of the misfortune which had befallen him, lest the army should be discouraged, and the siege abandoned.

But it was impossible to conceal the death of the King, and the grief of the army and of the kingdom at the loss of a sovereign universally beloved, in the flower of his age, was aggravated by the circumstances attending it, and the prospect of a long minority, the eldest son of James, who succeeded him, being only in the seventh year of his age. The heroism of the Queen, Mary of Gueldres, however, roused the courage of the desponding Scottish army. As soon as she received intelligence of the King's death she immediately hastened to the camp, taking with her the infant sovereign, now James III., and presented him to the nobles. "Lose not the time and labour," she exclaimed, "which you have bestowed on this siege, neither let the loss of one man deprive you of all courage. I give you another king. Forward, therefore, my lords, and put an end to this honourable enterprise, revenging yourselves on your enemies, rather than lamenting at present the fate of your prince." With tears in her eyes, and a bursting heart, the Queen showed the infant sovereign to the soldiers, and conjured them by every domestic tie, by the memory of their deceased King, and by the fame of Scottish valour, to destroy this calamitous fortress. The effect of this address was what may be easily anticipated. The siege was rigorously pressed, and the fortress assaulted so fiercely that the garrison surrendered on the condition of being allowed to depart with their arms and baggage. To prevent it ever becoming a stronghold for the English,

it was levelled with the ground. Upwards of one hundred years afterwards, when the Protector Somerset invaded Scotland, he encamped on the peninsula where the town and castle of Roxburgh formerly stood, and he is said to have either rebuilt the old castle, or to have erected a fort within its ruins. But these buildings and fortifications were soon afterwards demolished by the treaty of 1550 between the Scots and English.

A holly tree is said to mark the spot where James II. was killed on the north side of the river Tweed, and a little below Fleurs, the seat of the Duke of Roxburgh. Near this tree stood formerly a considerable village called *Fair Cross*, from a cross which remained there till the latter part of the eighteenth century. But in a note affixed to the Statistical Account of Kelso, there is the following traditional account of the origin of the name. When Queen Mary of Gueldres repaired to Roxburgh Castle, and viewed the lifeless body of her husband lying on this particular spot, she is reported to have exclaimed, "There lies the *fair corpse*." The place received the name of *Fair Corpse*, or *Corse*, and in process of time the erection of the cross made the change easy. A number of tall trees, the wide spreading roots of which are completely intermixed with the few remaining ruins, are the only representatives of a fortress celebrated in Scottish history for the many remarkable scenes it has witnessed, for its prodigious strength and great magnificence. In this locality of many a bloody combat have been often found medals, coins, and sundry instruments of machinery, pieces of spears, guns, and swords, spurs, and other articles of harness, while the remains of paved streets and subterraneous vaults are all which indicate the once populous town, or *city*, as it is sometimes called, of Old Roxburgh.