



CAMBUSKENNETH.

TOWER OF CAMBUSKENNETH ABBEY, AND TOMB OF JAMES III.

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THE Tower of Cambuskenneth Abbey is all that now remains of what was an important and extensive ecclesiastical building. It stands on the northern side of the River Forth, in one of the many crooks formed by that winding river. From Stirling it can be reached in a short time by crossing the river at the Ferry.

The buildings seem to have been of great extent. Some idea of this may be formed from the foundations, which were carefully traced and laid open about the year 1864.

The Abbey was founded in 1147 by David I., and was endowed by him and some of his successors with extensive lands and other property in different parts of the kingdom. It was appropriated for the Monks of the Order of St. Augustine, and dedicated to the Virgin Mary. For about fifty years after its foundation the Church was called St. Mary's of Stirling in all charters relating to it. In 1201, however, the name was changed into the Church of St. Mary's of Cambuskenneth. It flourished for four centuries, and during that time it was frequently the scene of transactions of national importance. It was here at the Feast of St. Barnabas, 1304, that the secret agreement was made between Robert of Bruce and William Lamberton, Bishop of St. Andrews, which decided the former to rise in rebellion against the English power in Scotland. Here, too, was held the first of representative Parliaments. For in the Parliament summoned to the Abbey by King Robert the Bruce, in 1326, Burgesses and Freeholders took part in the deliberations for the first time. So frequently were Parliaments held in this Abbey that one of the buildings came to be known as the Parliament Hall. Its foundations are still to be seen a little apart from the main building.

Of the original building of the 12th century, probably nothing now remains but the foundations. In 1385, the Abbey was pillaged and set on fire by Richard II. of England. The revenues of the Abbey at that time would scarcely admit of the extensive repairs necessary to restore it. The buildings seen now—the Tower and the doorway—are in all likelihood parts of a second Church erected about the end of the 15th

century. At the Reformation this Abbey, like many others, was plundered and demolished, probably in 1559. Three years afterwards, Queen Mary, by charter, granted the Abbey and all the lands of Cambuskenneth to the Erskine family. Later, the Earl of Mar took from the ruined Abbey much of the material required for the building of his house in Broad Street in Stirling, and very probably it furnished the building materials for the older houses in the village of Cambuskenneth.

Amongst the privileges granted by the Pope early in the history of the Abbey, was the right of free burial to such as from feelings of devotion should desire to be interred within that sanctuary. The successive Abbots and Monks of the Abbey were no doubt buried there. But the most distinguished persons of whose burial we have any record, were James III. and his Queen, Margaret of Denmark. Queen Margaret died at Stirling, and was buried near the High Altar of the Abbey in February, 1487. In June, 1488, King James was assassinated at Milton, about two miles south from Stirling, when fleeing from the battlefield at Sauchieburn. His funeral obsequies were solemnly performed at Cambuskenneth on 25th June, 1488, and his body laid to rest beside his Queen near the High Altar.

In 1864, extensive excavations were made, and the foundations of the nave, transept, chancel, and chapter-house were laid open. While the excavators were at work, they discovered the burial-place of King James and his Queen. The bodies were carefully re-interred, and by command of Queen Victoria, a tombstone was erected to mark their last resting-place.

