

ART. XXVII.—*The Castle of Penrith.* By FRANCIS HASWELL, M.D.

I.—DESCRIPTIVE.

CLOSE to the Railway Station at Penrith, which indeed has absorbed part of its defences, stands the red stone castle of Penrith. Never a very imposing edifice, it is now in its decay even less so; in fact the side seen by the passer-by, or from the railway train, is bald even to ugliness and its chief feature is the excellence of workmanship of what remains. I do not think it was ever intended to be a fortress, but a place of residence, and as the grant to Bishop Strickland says:—"An aid and succour of the said vill of Penreth." It was a place to whose courtyard cattle might be driven and in whose buildings the inhabitants of the town might find refuge from a Scots foray, until relieved by the garrisons of Carlisle, Brougham or Appleby; and indeed the raiders seldom waited to invest castles, their chief object being plunder.

It has been a square building with a projecting tower at the north corner, and surrounded probably on all sides by a single ditch about 63 feet broad, and in some places even now 20 feet deep. At present this moat is only visible on the south-east and part of the north-east sides; the rest has either been filled in or obliterated in making the road to the station in 1846. There is a small spring of water at the bottom of the moat, but it would not rise to a height to fill the moat, and in all probability the ditch was usually dry and relied on the steepness of the scarp and counterscarp for its defensive character. Originally a marsh or morass which existed to the south about the site of the present goods station would be a further

defence. On the north-east side the ground slopes much more quickly towards the town which lies in the hollow below, and consequently the site, as seen from the Eamont Bridge road, appears more imposing than it is in reality. At these two sides there is a considerable platform between the walls and the scarp of the ditch; it is on this ground that the "uttergate house" mentioned in the Elizabethan survey would in all probability stand. I have made several trenches in this part but can find nothing definite, and this perhaps is not to be wondered at, as it was in 1565 "cleane for the moste parte fallen downe to the ground" and much stone was taken away into the town for building purposes.

The castle itself consists of a large rectangle from which the tower at the north angle projects a distance of 29 feet and, as far as can be seen from the present remains, it appears to have been all built about the same time, with the exception of part of the east corner. The walls are of dressed red sandstone in squared blocks, obtained no doubt from the quarries on Penrith Beacon; they are usually 4 feet 6 inches in thickness, except at the east end of the south-east face, where they are thickened to 6 feet 4 inches by addition to the internal surface, on account of the extra weight of an additional upper storey at this part; the white freestone, the difference of the mason-work, the unbonded courses of stone and some disused corbels all indicated alterations of a later date than the original structure at this corner of the building, and it seems probable that these additions were made when Richard, Duke of Gloucester, resided here and built "a tower, a porter's lodge, and some detached buildings." \*

There are angular buttresses at the south and west corners about five feet in section and one in the middle of

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\* The suggestion that the stone to build the castle was brought from Mayburgh (Nicolson and Burn, p. 404) is quite erroneous, and the remaining stone at the latter consists of limestone.

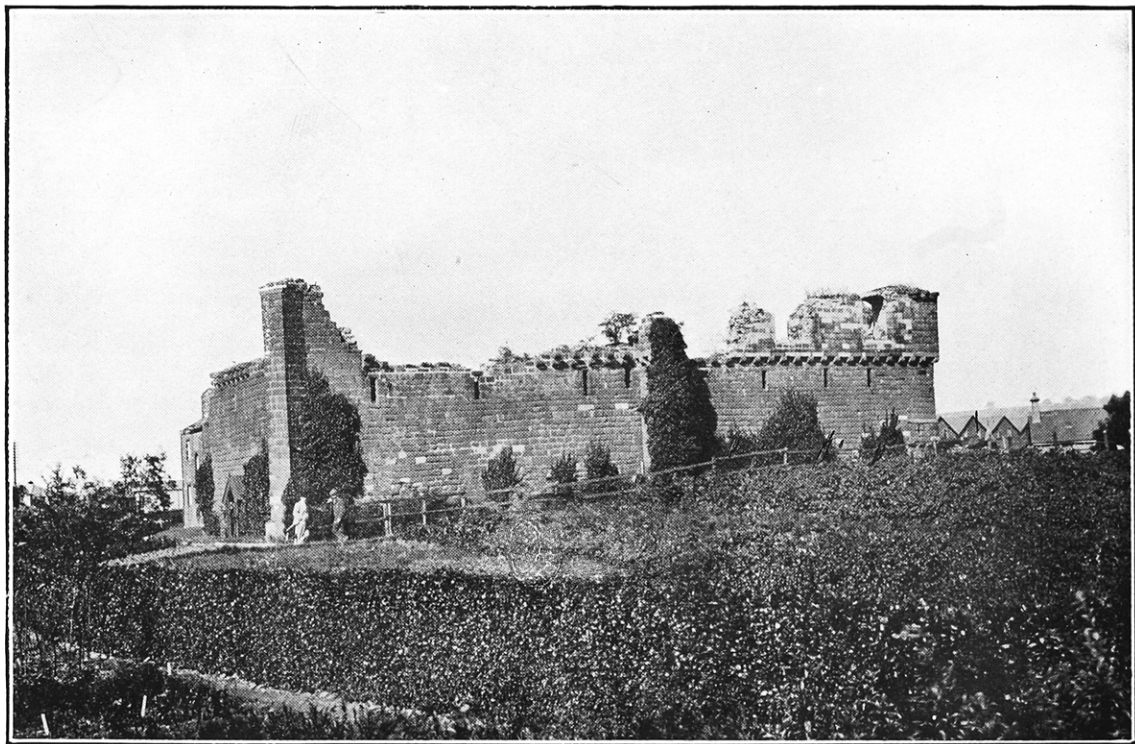


PLATE I.—PENRITH CASTLE. SOUTH-EAST FACE.

TO FACE P. 282.

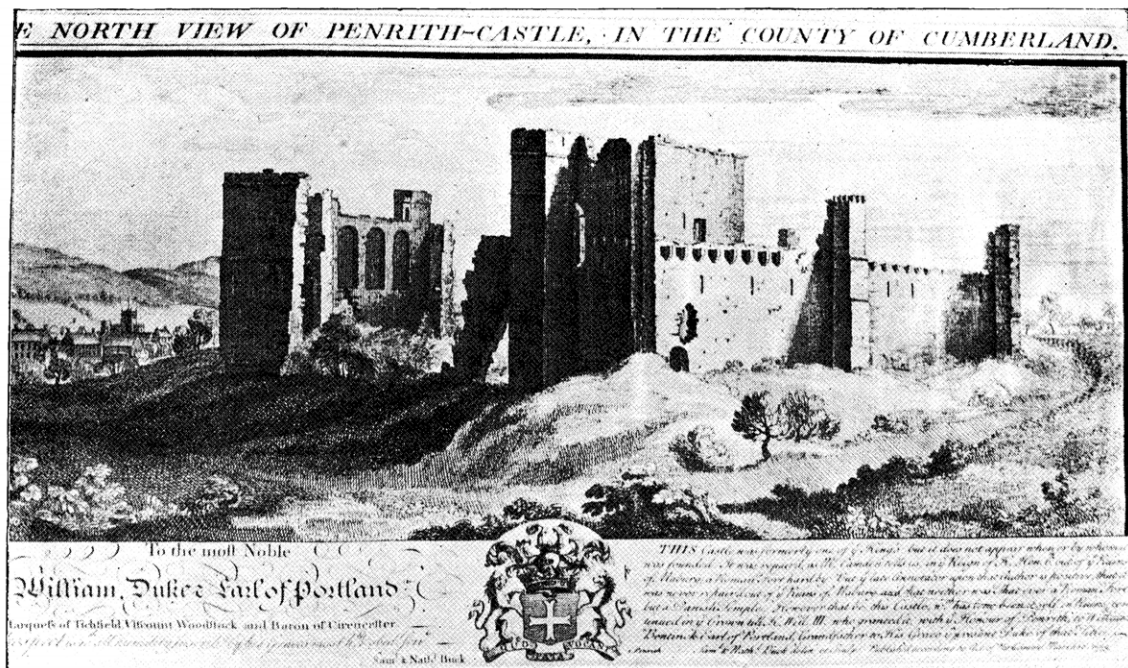


PLATE II.—PENRITH CASTLE. BUCK'S PRINT, 1739.

TO FACE P. 283.

the south-east face, where the increased thickness of the wall begins, and a chamfered plinth extends round the whole circumference at a height of three feet from the original ground level. From Buck's print and a painting made about the same time, and now in the possession of Mr. George Dixon of Morecambe, there appear to have been buildings on every side of the courtyard and notably the imposing mass, at what is now the station corner, which from situation and tradition was probably "the Bishop's or white tower." There remain now only parts of the outer walls and some vaulted cellars along the north-east and south-west sides. An ugly modern house and some warehouses disfigure the site. The entrance is on the north-east side towards the town and is 6 feet 6 inches wide; it is now buried under about four feet of rubbish, and consists of only the three lower courses of stone forming the jambs of the door with the cobble-stone pavement without, a stone cill, and a flagged courtyard within; the hinge of the gate remains on the north side, but on the south the stones at this level have been removed. The hall was on the north-east side and is marked by the three round-headed windows of Buck's print, which were apparently filled in at that date (1739). I am told that these window heads fell within living memory.

The situation of the various apartments can only be surmised from their size as referred to in the Elizabethan survey, and the corresponding foundation walls now in existence; on reference to the ground plan, it will be seen that the kitchen and some other buildings probably occupied the north-west side, and the brewhouse, bake-house and stables filled the south-west side, where the present modern house exists. The chapel was, no doubt, at the eastern angle, and one of the large windows at that corner would give it light.

The Bishop's tower has quite disappeared from view, but excavation at the western angle shows some plain barrel-vaulting of a solid character, which is no doubt the

vaulting of the lowest chamber of Bishop Strickland's tower. The roof is stated to have been eighteen feet square, and some excavations I have made on this site show foundations of a square building twenty feet across, with walls 3 feet in thickness.

All the digging has, however, been partial and conducted with difficulty on account of the buildings on the site. I have not been able to find the well, although there is a spring on the south side of the building, but outside the curtain wall.

There are no windows on the ground floor, and those which remain on the first floor are small lancet openings widely splayed inside.

The hall appears from the windows to have occupied the first floor and to have been a lofty room, but there is not sufficient of the building now existing to say if there was a floor above it.

The windows in the easterly corner of the north-east and south-east faces have been much larger than the others, and in one the arched stone head still remains *in situ*; they were probably square-headed three-light windows with stone mullions and the top of each light pierced with a trefoil head. Some fragments of these have been found, and are shown in the accompanying photograph. The remains of an octagonal turret exist at the east corner, to which access was obtained by an opening in the thickness of the wall in the upper storey, now filled in. This appears to have been in existence before the rest of the storey was built, as the stones are not bonded together with the rest of the wall.

The fireplaces which are in existence are plain in the extreme, being nothing more than square openings with the usual wide chimney.

From Buck's print there was a small postern in the north-west face, and some excavation shows the jambs of this, but the head has disappeared.

The chief feature of the castle is the fine corbelling,

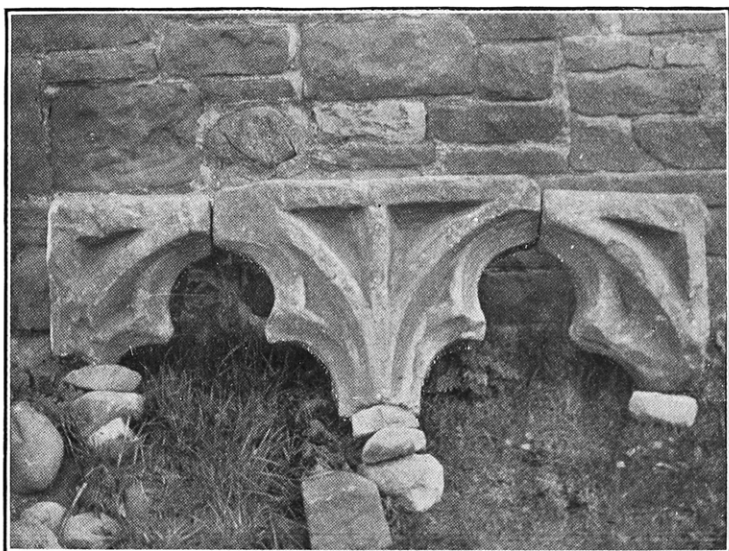


PLATE III.—PENRITH CASTLE. WINDOW HEADS.

TO FACE P. 284.



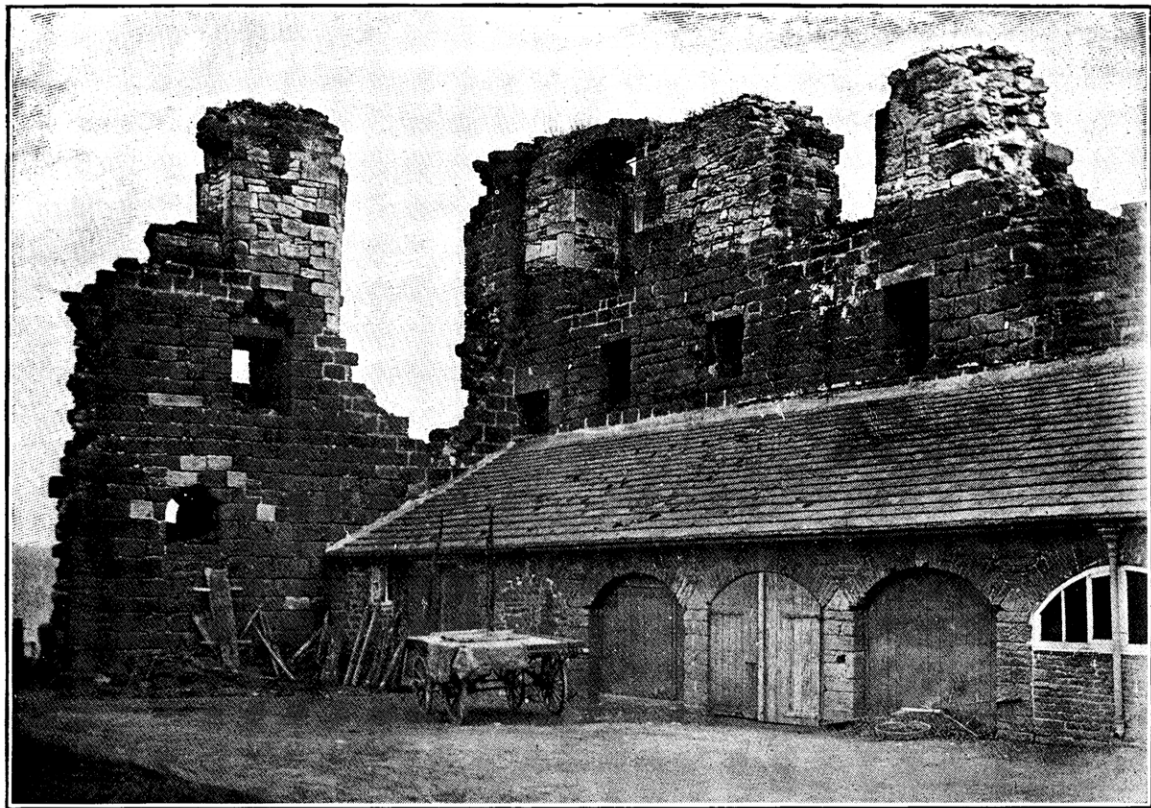


PLATE IV.—PENRITH CASTLE. EAST CORNER. INTERIOR.

TO FACE P. 285.

which existed all round the building except where the two towers broke the line of the wall ; on the south-east side the corbels are single and support the upper storey which is projected about nine inches from the face of the wall, but they do not extend further than the base of the octagonal turret on the north-east face. Around the rest of the building where they still exist they are double, and where the upper storey appears they are on the top of the existing wall. My conjecture is that originally there were compound corbels around the whole perimeter of the curtain wall and that when the additional storey was added the original corbels were placed on the top of the new wall. It is quite probable that a parapet was built on the exposed ends of these corbels to form machicolations, but the groove or hole thus obtained could only be small. It is hardly likely that wooden platforms (*bretasche*) were pushed out on them to increase the area of the top of the wall, because there are neither corbels or holes in the wall at a lower level to support the struts which would be necessary to keep the platforms in position ; moreover *bretasches* ceased to be used about the end of the thirteenth century, and this castle was not then in existence. It is more probable that ornamental rather than defensive purpose was the object, and the wall would be crowned with the usual parapet and embrasure.

There is a curious feature at the lower part of the east corner. About six feet from the ground the wall for about eight feet is carried out on four corbels for six inches, only to return after three courses to the original alignment ; there have been several alterations at this part, but I am at a loss to understand the meaning of this, and there is nothing on the internal surface to explain it.

## II.—HISTORY OF THE CASTLE.

The history of Penrith Castle is in great part the history of the manor. The date of its foundation is not

known, but obviously it was not in existence in 1237, when the agreement was made between Henry III. of England and Alexander of Scotland, by which the former ceded 200 librates of land in Northumberland and Cumberland, "if the said 200 librates of land can be found in these counties outside the towns where castles are situate." \* The manor of Penrith was part of these lands.

In 1298 Edward I. seized these manors during the wars of the Scottish succession, and hence the whole district became the especial mark of the Scottish raiders, by whom the country was repeatedly plundered, the town burned, and the inhabitants even carried into Scotland to be sold.

It was obviously necessary to do something ; so on a petition a license was granted in 1346 to the goodmen of Penrith to crenellate their town† and to provide the wherewithal, a grant of murage was made to the bailiffs and goodmen for seven years at the same time‡ ; to which was added in 1391 a further grant for six years.§ It is not likely that this was the commencement of the castle, especially in view of what follows, but it is interesting to note that in 1348, two years after the license to crenellate, a commission was given to certain persons to find out what part of the town should be fortified.|| There is now no trace of a wall round the town, nor is there any

\* Nicolson and Burn, Appendix xxx, agreement between Henry III., King of England, and Alexander, King of Scotland, concerning land afterwards called the Queen's Haimes.

† Calend. Pat. 1345-1348, p. 69, 10th April, 1346, "*Sciatis . . . . . hominibus ville de Penereth quod ipsam villam predictam muro de petra et calce firmare et kernellare,*" etc.

‡ Calend. Pat. 1345-1348, p. 66.

§ *ibid.* 1388-1392, p. 499.

|| *ibid.* 1348, August 6th, Westminster. Commission to William de Dacre, Alexander de Moubray, Hugh de Louthre, Richard de Salkelde, Ralph de Brantingham, and Roger de Salkelde, to inform themselves of the metes and bounds of the town of Penrith, for the crenellation of which the King has granted license, which new defense and in what places of the town it is expedient that a wall be made, to ride round such metes and bounds, if necessary, and to make indentures thereof with the men of the town.

reference to one in any other records, and it would appear that the grant of 1391 was for the repair of what was built in or after 1346. The pele tower of Hutton Hall, Penrith, and the enclosure round it may be referred to in this license to crenellate. But this defence of the town was evidently not sufficient, for the Scots raids continuing in 1363 the inhabitants of Penrith were granted common of pasture in the forest of Inglewood, "forasmuch as their lands and tenements, for which they are bound to pay a great farm, by our enemies of Scotland are frequently destroyed and laid waste."\* Then again in 1390 there is an exemption with the consent of the council, of tenants, and inhabitants of Penrith in Cumberland, their heirs and successors, for ten years, from all lay subsidies of fifteenths and tenths, in consideration of their assessment of £17 19s. 10d. being excessive and the town being now burned and destroyed by the Scots.†

We now come to the time when that benefactor of Penrith, William Strickland, not yet bishop, appears on the scene. He owned a considerable amount of land in the parish, and no doubt the protection of this as well as affection for the place rendered him wishful to do something for the benefit of the town; accordingly we find him obtaining a license to crenellate a building in 1397.‡ There is every probability that this was the tower which, until its fall some time between 1739 and 1778, was known as the Bishop's tower; it was at the west corner of the building, and is the prominent feature of Buck's print.

In the following year the manor and town of Penrith were granted to Ralph, Earl of Westmorland, and his

\* Tower Records, Walker's Penrith, p. 24.

† Calend. Pat. 1388-1392, 14th March, 1390.

‡ *ibid.* 20, Richard II., p. 2, memb. 27, "*Sciatis . . . . . nobis Williemmo Stirkeland clerico quod ipse quandam cameram suam in villa de Penereth in marchia Scocie muro de petra et calce firmare et kernellare,*" etc.

wife Joan and their heirs male,\* but there is no mention of a castle in connection with the manor.

The tower did not afford sufficient protection for the people and certainly not for their stock, and further license was granted in 1399 to William Strickland to build a curtain wall and join the same to the tower and hold it in aid and succour of the said town and adjacent country,† so that at this time we have a tower and courtyard surrounded by a fortified wall.

The first direct reference to the castle that I have found is in 1441 when the castle and manor are granted for three years to Richard, Earl of Salisbury, at a yearly rent of 1000 marks.‡ This accords with the tradition that the castle was built by Ralph Nevill, the original grantee of the Raby house. But that it was in existence at an earlier date a reference, kindly sent me by the Rev. J. Wilson, is a proof; it refers to a tenement abutting on the castle-croft and its date is 1413.§

The manor continued in the Nevills until the forfeiture and execution of Richard, Earl of Salisbury, after the battle of Wakefield, when Hutchinson states that the castle and manor were granted to John, Lord Clifford.|| I cannot find how the tower passed from the hands of the Stricklands and became absorbed in the manor.

\* Calend. Pat. 1399-1401, p. 331. 1400, inspeximus and confirmation to Ralph, Earl of Westmorland, etc., granting them the manors and towns of Penreth and Soureby, with the hamlets of Langwathby, Scouteby and Carleton.

† Calend. Pat. 22, Richard II., p. 3, memb. 37, "Sciatis quod cum nuper per literas nostras patentes de gratia speciali concesserimus dilecto ligeo nostro Willielmo de Stirkeland licenciam faciendam et kernellandam de petra et calce quandam cameram in villa de Penreth super marchia Scocie prout in eisdem literis plenius continetur. Nos de uberiori gratia nostra concessimus eidem Willielmo licenciam quod ipse unum mantelletum de petra et calce predicti conjungere et mantelletum predictum kernellare et illud sic kernellatum tenere possit sibi et heredibus suis imperpetuum in auxilium et succursum ville predicti et patrie adjacentis."

‡ Madox, Exemplific, Anglic, ccxvi, 8th June, 19, Henry VI.

§ Ancient Deeds, B. 2856, "Grant by John Bowes of Karlile and Christina his wife, late the wife of William Clerk of Penreth, to William Wade, clerk, and Thomas Wilughe, of a tenement with a garden in Penreth abutting on the castle-croft. Witnesses, Robert Lowther, knight, and others." 20, December 14th, Henry IV.

|| Hutchinson, *History of Cumberland*, vol. ii, p. 465.

The Cliffords did not long enjoy it, for in the following year (1461) Lord Clifford was slain at Ferrybridge and being attainted, his estates fell to the Crown, and the castle and manor of Penrith were regranted to the Nevills in the person of Richard, Earl of Warwick, who being killed at Barnet, the castle again reverted to the Crown.

It was apparently immediately given to the King's brother, Richard, Duke of Gloucester, for in 1471 he was residing at Penrith Castle, and signed a deed from that place.\* There is no record of his having lived here during his short reign, but a note in the Patent Rolls shows that the castle was still in the King's hand.† These must have been the palmy days of the building, for Richard is said to have built a tower, a porter's lodge, and other buildings.‡ Probably after this it was not kept up but decayed from want of repair; no further mention of it is found until 1565 when a "Survey of the West Borders against Scotlande with an estimat of ye charges for ye repayre of the forts there" was made, and the following account shows what considerable dilapidations had taken place.§

Castle de ffirste the kitchen is decayed bothe tymbre and leade Pearethe. for the quantitie of IX yearde longe and VII yearde wide.

Itm. the previe kitchen and ij pasteries be decayed bothe of tymbre and leade for quantitie of XIII yardde wide.

Itm. the previe chambre is likewise decaid bothe tymbre and leade for XVI yearde longe and IX yearde wide.

Itm. the hall is likewise decaid bothe tymbre and leade for XVI yearde longe and IX yearde wide.

Itm. the greate chamber is decaid bothe tymbre and leade for tenn yearde longe and IX yearde wide.

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\* In the possession of Andrew Hudleston, Esq., of Hutton John.

† Calend. Pat. 1476-1485, "Grant for life from Michaelmas last to the King's servant, John Clapham of the office of porter of the King's Castle of Penreth, co. Cumberland, with fees of 4d. daily from the issues of the lordship of Penreth and all other profits." 27th March, 1484.

‡ Walker's Penrith, p. 44.

§ State Papers Domestic Elizabeth, add. vol. xii. 22nd June, 1565.

Itm. the chappell wth chamber under it is decaied bothe tymbre and leade to the quantitie of XIIIII yearde longe and IX yearde wide.

Itm. the utter gate house is cleane for the moste p'te fallen downe to the grounde.

Md. the walls of all these aforesaid be standing only excepted the Inner walls of the kytchin and the walles of the uttergat howse.

Howses standing covered wth tymber and lead.

ffirst twoo stables covered wth tymber and lead to th' quantitie of XXV yearde longe and VII yarde wyde beinge III howse highte in good repac'ons savings y't the Dormantle ende be rotten Decayed.

Itm. one brewhous, one bakehous. one chamber be standing in good repac'ons all undre oon roof for the quantitie of XXIII yarde longe and XI yarde di brode.

Itm. the bisshop's Tower standing in good repac'ons both timbre and lead for the quantitie of VI di quadrat'.

Itm. the chamb'r betwixt the said Tower and the kechin is in good repac'ons bothe w'th timbre and leade for the quantitie of VI yarde quadrate.

Itm. the redd tower is covered wth timbre and leade in good repac'ons saving that the Dormantle be broken so that the roof is in Dangier to fall.

The quantitie of leade that both remain yet upon all the said houses by estimacon.

ffirst ov' the ij stables x <i>f</i> ov' the brewhous,	} xxxij <i>f</i>
bakehous and one chambr adjoining x <i>f</i>	
over the bisshop's tower iiij <i>f</i> and upon	
one chambr adjoining the same towr iiij <i>f</i>	
and upon the redd tower iiij <i>f</i> in all.....	

Memorand. the leade of all the said places uncovered was sent to the Citie of Carliell and Delyv'ed to Willm Garfurth by Indenture to the quantitie of vi foder.

The account is interesting as showing that no attempt was made to repair the place, but that the more ruinous

buildings were demolished and the lead roofing sold in Carlisle. The report shows no estimation of the cost of repair, which is strange considering its title, but a later report gives the amount as below :—

The Certificate of a survey made by Christopr. Dacre Esq. . . . .  
of decayed Castles and fortresses thought meet to be repayred upon  
ye west borders. . . . .

<p>Penrith Castle.</p>	<p>This house or castle doth belonge to her Maj'y. standing about 3 miles east by south from Grastock castle aforesaid about 20 miles fro' Scotl' greatly decayed and for divers and great considerac'ons thought to be one of ye most meete to be pt'y repaired, the charge of w'ch repaco'ns as before hath been is esteemed to 8ooli. or to make ye same a sufficient house for such purposes as yt is neadefull and no more wth help of ye stones of ye old decayed build-ings yt is there remaininge cccli</p>	}	<p>viiij li. as yt hath bin before or ccc li. to make a sufficient house wth helpe of ye stones of ye old buildings ccl li.</p>
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It is not probable that anything was done even then, and no repair of this date exists now ; probably it was delayed and the Union of the two kingdoms finally made it unnecessary to have fortresses on the borders.

NOTE.—There is the usual tradition of an underground passage, in this case to Dockray Hall, an old house in Great Dockray, now a Inn ; the distance is 250 yards. I have searched in many places without result and do not think the tradition is well founded.