

## PEVERELL'S CASTLE IN THE PEAK.

THE agreeable fictions of a popular author have rendered the name of Peverell of the Peak familiar to most of those readers who occupy their leisure in perusing works of imagination. A writer who only looks at facts cannot, however, offer anything so attractive to beguile an idle hour, when in turn he endeavours to describe a spot already rendered visible to the mental eye by the pencilling of genius and fancy. To the divine gift of poetry and the felicitous turns of expression which arrest in their rapid flight the glowing creations of the novelist's mind, which unite the gallantry of an heroic with the wildness of a romantic age, and transfuse the ideal images of the past into the active vitality of the present, he cannot, as in consciousness he ought not to incline, for the mere sake of embellishing a dry and simple narrative. He will be content therefore to turn away his eyes from a barren and futile insight into false existencies, awaken from a delusive vision in which only mist, and shadows, and phantoms pass before his view, and pursuing a less inviting track, endeavour to climb to the verge where truth and error, having defined their own peculiar limits, have finally separated. Slowly and thoughtfully returning down his rugged path, at times guided by a clear light, and as frequently walking in obscurity, deciphering, as he descends, the rude alphabet of antiquity, he will endeavour to trace its uncertain character on every crumbling ruin which the havoc of time, or the still more ruthless hands of man have spared. To the patient archæological enquirer, the dark labyrinth of sepulchral gloom gradually becomes divested of its darkness, and the broken urn, the rusty sword, the casual mingling of elemental fragments, or a mere block of coarsely sculptured stone, are, in his hand, keys to a forgotten language, or the enchanter's wand, as it were, which strikes concealed light out of darkness, and elicits the earliest glimpse of stern reality.

How widely separated are the thoughts, the aims, and the influence of each writer! the one can never soar too high in the unsubstantial regions of illimitable space: the other fondly clings to a piece of dull, cold earth, the actual type of the tabernacle of his flesh. Yet this low and undignified

place should we always assume, when, divesting our minds of the influence of unreal pictures, or of merely imaginative conceptions, and rejecting traditionary or popular details, we undertake to convey a brief and sober description of things as they positively exist.

At the head of one of those most beautiful mountain gorges, which Derbyshire, more than any other English county, abounds in, stands the little town of Castleton in the High Peak. It is not without some degree of interest in itself, having at an early period been encircled with a defensive ditch and thus protected in part from the attacks of wandering marauders, even before the time when the faithful attendant of Robin Hood is reputed to have sought the neighbouring seclusion of Hathersege for his grave. The surrounding forests, preserved with all the severity of their peculiar code, frequently allured these bold outlaws to their verdant retreats, as in modern times the sportsman is still invited by the rippling of the trout stream and the downy heather, to seek these favoured haunts of nature. Here, loitering by the side of the pellucid Derwent, or gazing at the grotesque rocks above Millstone edge, or cautiously traversing Langshaw Moor, strewn with its numberless mill-stones, the seeker of health and rational enjoyment can divert himself by turns with the pleasures of the field, or with speculating upon the scattered playthings of an ancient race.

When we look into the history of the early forest rights of the Peak, we find that Henry the Third<sup>a</sup> watched them with most jealous vigilance, for the abbat of Miravalle, though entitled to a share of pasturage in the green enclosures, was ultimately forced to cede the property of the convent to the Crown, and afterwards to undergo a fine for allowing his cattle to feed within the royal demesne<sup>b</sup>. Not a stem could be lopped, or a tree fallen without the protection of the king's writ; and hence Peter de Rupibus, bishop of Winchester, could not even gather sufficient fuel for the purpose of smelting lead for his church of Hales, without first memorializing the Crown for permission<sup>c</sup>.

It would now be difficult to ascertain the boundaries of the old forest, nor indeed is it necessary to do so, as the present enquiry relates to the castle in the Peak, and what

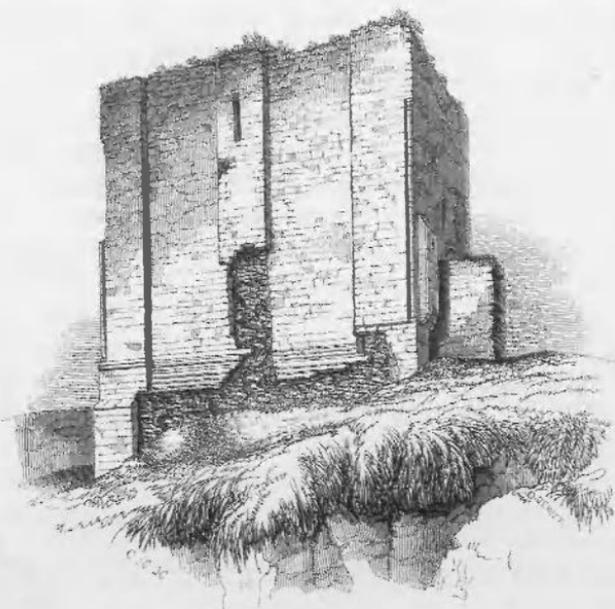
<sup>a</sup> Rot. Clause, 7 Henry III.  
<sup>b</sup> Ibid., 8 Henry III.

<sup>c</sup> Ibid., 7 Henry III.

PEAK CASTLE, CASTLETON, DERBYSHIRE.



WEST VIEW.



SOUTH VIEW.

little information we can glean respecting this is of more immediate importance.

Close at the back of the town of Castleton<sup>d</sup> rises a lofty hill, accessible only in one direction, and that with considerable difficulty, the other sides being the rough mountain rock, all equally steep, and impracticable of ascent. A thin tongue, having a bold escarpment on either side, connects like a peninsula, the hill itself with another of still loftier elevation, but few persons are found adventurous enough to pass over this narrow link for the sake of gaining its woody summit. A deep and contracted valley lies perpendicularly below on the eastern side, and presents an unusual aspect of barrenness and solitude. Even nature herself seems to have marked it with the stamp of desolation, and hatred. On the western side the Devil's cavern, below the beholder's feet, vomits forth from its dark and ample mouth, a torrent of crystal water, which rushing impetuously forth in many an eddying curl, throws up its silvery spray in mockery of the surrounding gloom, or in equal joyfulness at having burst through the secret recesses of the earth where it was imprisoned. Timid man looks down into the abyss, his nerves become enfeebled, and awe-struck and shuddering he rapidly turns aside his giddy head from the yawning chasm. It was here among the wild freaks and horrid convulsions of nature, on the brink of an isolated, rugged precipice, uplifted by the throes of a primeval world, that Peverell, like an eagle in the air, selected the site of his castle in the Peak.

Before William the Conqueror touched the English shores, two Saxons named Gernebern and Hundinc held the spot where the monarch's natural son William subsequently had his castle of Pechfers<sup>e</sup>. In the second year of his reign (1068) the king gave him the castle of Nottingham, and various lordships in different parts of England: forty-four in Northamptonshire, two in Essex, two in Oxfordshire, two in Bedfordshire, fifty-five in Nottinghamshire, six in Derbyshire, including Bolsover, which, with some smaller grants, constituted the honour of Peverell<sup>f</sup>. The whole of these vast

<sup>d</sup> Henry the Third granted it a charter for a weekly market to be held on Wednesday, in the seventh year of his reign. (Rot. Clause.)

<sup>e</sup> Domesday, 276.

<sup>f</sup> "The Castle of the High Peak (Castrum de Alto Pecco) is an escheat of the Lord

the King of the honor of Wm. Peverell, and the Earl de Ferrars has that with the whole forest. So that the labourers of the forest should be answerable to the earl himself in the same way as formerly they were to the king."—Testa de Nevil. 19.

possessions descended about the middle of the twelfth century to his son William, who, as is reported, having poisoned Ranulph earl of Chester, about the latter end of Stephen's reign, and dreading the severity of Henry II., fled to the religious house of Lenton for refuge, where he took the habit of a monk<sup>s</sup>. He was not able, however, to remain long in this seclusion, as the monarch passing by to York, he was compelled to cast aside his monkish habit, and privately escape from the punishment of his crime. The king immediately seized upon his castles of Nottingham, Bolsover, and the Peak, together with all his other estates, and henceforward they remained in the hands of the crown, even as the last does, under lease to the duke of Devonshire, to the present day.

These great possessions having once reverted to the king, we shall experience very little trouble in tracing their subsequent history or descent when necessary, as the Great Rolls of the Pipe will now throw considerable light upon their actual value, and declare who became their respective possessors.

Independant of the attraction of novelty, the charm of ancient renown, and the perpetual accession of new stores of information, which they disclose, there is a freshness and truthful character about the entries on the sheriff's accounts, which contrasts most agreeably with the often sifted narratives of monkish historians; and as the enquirer searches through the invaluable national records of the Pipe, he draws in a degree of satisfaction and pleasure strongly differing if he wishes to have nothing but the truth, from the distrust, suspicion, doubt, and uncertainty which must ever attend his enquiries, when they rest upon the mere testimony of these credulous annalists. Yet from these imperfect authorities English history has been written. As, however, the ideas of men progress, and their perceptions become more philosophical, they will grow justly dissatisfied with such defective chroniclers, and whatever concerns the past will be treated more as a science than a crude speculation and fable. Facts that are in themselves essentially incontrovertible, must form the basis, and from this knowledge so abundantly stored up in the treasury of our national records, all sound historical learning must be distilled. This vast amount of reality, though possibly susceptible of various interpretations, according to the various turn of individual

thought, is still absolute and certain, and it will therefore require newly analyzing, methodizing, and explaining for every age. The history of England, like other histories, natural and physical, has its silent and mysterious secrets. Its profound depths must be penetrated by attention to minute circumstances; patience, labour, and endurance of sarcasm will reveal some of the fulness of its extent. But to keep pace with the moral and intellectual improvement of man, it should be written afresh, from original sources, for each successive generation.

The Great Roll of the Pipe shews that the forfeited estates of William Peverell remained in the hands of the Crown for several reigns.

The castle of the Peak belonged to it in the second of Henry II.<sup>h</sup>, being included among the lands held by William Peverell in Derbyshire, the annual account of whose issues the sheriff enters on the roll. The king was here himself in the following year, as the official of the county returns on his account corrodies<sup>i</sup> for the king at Pech to the amount of £4. 1s. 5d., and corrodies of the king of Scotland at Nottingham and Pech, £38. 12s. 3d., and payments for wine (apud Pech) £3. 12s.<sup>k</sup>

In the 3rd of Henry II. (1157) we find the first mention of castle guard at the fortress, being the year's payment of £4. 10s. to two watchmen and a porter. This annual charge continues to be entered on the Pipe Rolls down to the 7th of Richard I. (1195, 1196), when it appears to have ceased<sup>l</sup>, and become transferred till the 9th of John to the Clause Roll.

It is not until the 19th of Henry II. (1173) that any specific notice is made of the castle, but an important entry arises during this year, being a charge for victualling the castle of Pech with twenty seams of corn, at a cost of £2. 10s. 6d., twenty bacons at £1. 14s., and twenty soldiers for twenty days, £20, or at the unusually high wages of 1s. per day<sup>m</sup>. There are also two separate charges of £2. and £46. 10s. for works upon the castles of the king at Bolesoura (Bolsover)

<sup>h</sup> Magn. Rot. Pipe, 2 Hen. II.

<sup>i</sup> Corrodiu signifies a sum of money or allowance of meat, drink, and clothing due to the king from an abbey or other house of religion, whereof he is founder, towards the reasonable sustentance of such of his servants or valets as he thinks fit to

bestow it on.

<sup>k</sup> Magn. Rot. Pip. 3 Hen. II.

<sup>l</sup> There are specific entries on the rolls from the 3rd of Henry II. continuously to this period.

<sup>m</sup> Magn. Rot. Pip. 19 Hen. II.

and Pech. The notices of these two castles continually run together, having belonged originally to the same great proprietor, but how widely different is their present condition, this being a mere roofless, ruined building, the other, one of Derbyshire's most imposing and princely of residences, the abode of lettered elegance and taste.

In the 21st Henry II. a chamber was constructed in the Peak castle at the expense of £4. 18s., and in the 23rd year (1177) an additional outlay incurred of £49. upon the same building.

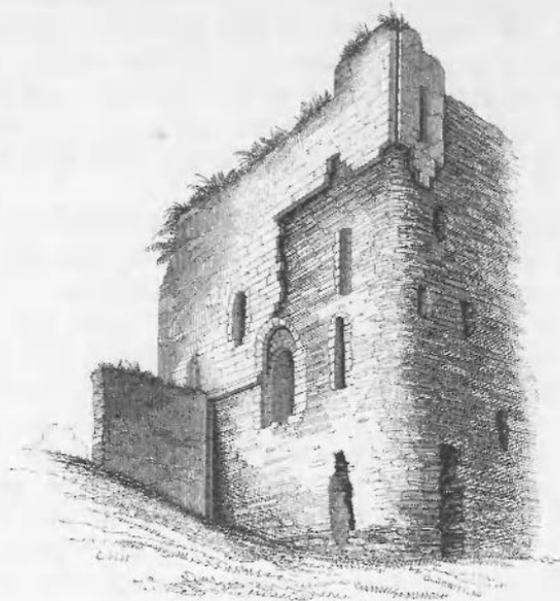
Other entries of works occur during the 1st, 2nd, 4th, 5th, 6th, 7th, 11th, 13th, and 17th of John<sup>n</sup>, but not proportionate in expense to those previously enumerated, a fact to be borne in mind when we now proceed to examine the architectural character of the building itself.

The summit of the eminence already described, is enclosed in the shape of an irregular square by walls on every side, having a quadrangular keep (A) at the south-west angle. The wall running from this point downward to B, where there is an arch four feet wide, and of later character than the keep, appears to be of various dates. Its construction is in some places so rude that it may be assigned to any period, even to the time of Gernebern and Hundinc. There are rows of herring-bone work close to the south-west angle, in themselves no criterion of remote age, but when mixed up with much rude masonry, they may not improbably belong to the earliest period of the castle. It is however necessary to remark that the stones forming the walling being of the irregular forms dug on the spot, and not any ashlar used, there is a natural unevenness in the face, which, being covered also with grey lichens, tends to impart a more ancient look to this portion of the works than is perceptible elsewhere; so that it may possibly be anterior to the Conqueror's survey. Proceeding along the western side, there is the appearance of a sally-port at (C,) which must have communicated with the ground below by means of a ladder. The chief en-

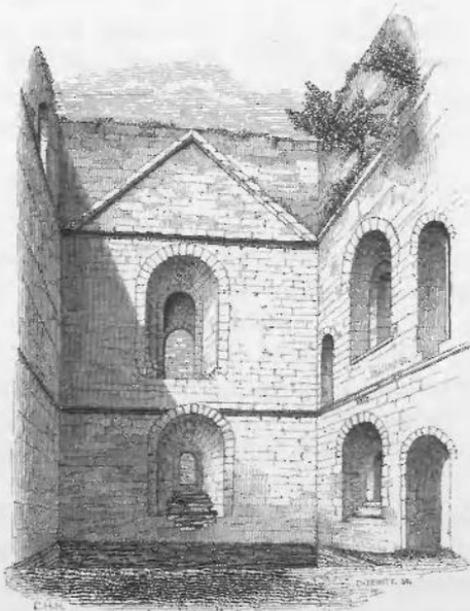
<sup>n</sup> The Great Roll of the Pipe under these respective years, sets forth the expense as follows:

10 Ric. I. Works at Pech	102s.	5 John . . . . .	£1. 15s. 6d.
1 John . . . . .	61s.	6 John. Works on the house of the Peak and the Stew . . . . .	17s.
2 John . . . . .	100s.	7 John . . . . .	£14. 5s. 7d.
4 John . . . . .	£12. 9s. 1d.	11 John . . . . .	103s.
		13 John . . . . .	£13. 5s. 4d.
		17 John . . . . .	50s.

PEAK CASTLE, CASTLETON, DERBYSHIRE.



EAST SIDE



WEST SIDE, INTERIOR.

trance into the enceinte was at (D), and here was stationed the porter, whose annual allowance we find entered for such a series of years on the Great Roll of the Pipe and the Clause Rolls. The curtain wall on the eastern side, two hundred and eighteen feet in length, seems to be in great measure a modern protection from the danger of the precipice extending all along that side, though doubtlessly built on previous foundations.

The first view of the keep shews two of its sides, the north and west, to be stripped of nearly the whole of their facing, which has been used for building or repairing the church of Castleton. The heart of the walls is formed of the limestone rock on which they are erected, though the whole of the ashlaring without and within is of a fine grained and carefully wrought sandstone grit, brought from a distance, and at vast trouble, when the height of the acclivity is considered. Enough however of the facing remains to shew that there was a broad and shallow buttress at every angle, as well as one in the central faces of the building.

The eastern side has been similarly denuded to a considerable height. A doorway here under a plain double arch indicates the former existence of a chamber, unless indeed it was the opening to a temporary flight of wooden stairs to obtain access to the first floor (B). This side is very few feet from a tremendous precipice, and it required great skill and caution to erect any thing so close to the very edge of the rock.

A dangerous descent brings us upon the narrow peninsula under the south side of the keep, and owing to the difficulty of reaching it, we may attribute the almost entire preservation of this portion of the structure, the lower part of the central buttress, and some of the talus being all that is destroyed. There is only one opening on this side, and that a thin slit from the second floor. The building seems to have lost nothing of its original height except the coping, if it ever had it, and all the courses run with the most perfect Norman regularity.

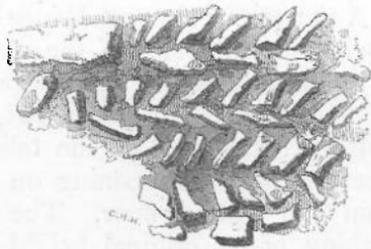
At this, one of the most favourable positions, we will endeavour to ascertain by the united aid of records and the characteristic features of the building, the probable period when it was erected. There is nothing in the masonry to favour the idea of its being an Anglo-Saxon structure, as the existence of

herring-bone work below the basement within has given grounds to some persons for supposing. The cylindrical shafts at the angles is a feature of too ornamental a character to belong to the earliest period of Norman architecture as we see it developed in military buildings. The manner in which the garderobe is corbelled out, does not display an ancient method, nor do the six varying angles of the chamfers on the talus, look remarkably early. As we examine the interior, plain though it be throughout, we shall see stones inserted on the northern side, which (though not represented in the woodcut) bear zigzag marks upon them and were evidently used in a former building.

These architectural evidences of supposed date, are in accordance with similar features observable in the work of Simon de St. Liz in the castle of Northampton, known to be of this period, and are confirmed by the entries upon the Great Roll of the Pipe, from which, as we have previously stated, it appears that in the 19th of Henry II. (1173) the castle of the Peak was victualled, and an outlay made upon the works therein: in 1175, it seems probable the chamber leading from the east side was constructed, and in 1179 the whole of the keep completed. The operation upon the enceinte being carried on in the reign of King John.

The interior, about 19 ft. by 21 ft. across, with walls 8 ft. thick, presents a very simple, but well-executed appearance. It is remarkable for its total want of convenience and unnecessary decoration. Below the basement are the remains of herring-bone work in what might have been a cellar, (see plan of basement A). The ground-floor is lighted by a window to the north and west, having a staircase three feet wide in the thickness of the wall leading to the first floor. At the north-west angle (A) is a small chamber inaccessible: B, an entrance to the part presumed to have been erected in 1175, now fallen; C, the garderobe, corbelled out over the abyss on the eastern side. The second floor has simply three windows, and a staircase of approach.

As there is no fire-place in any part of the keep, we can



only suppose it was designed for the reception of prisoners, and such hapless creatures we know, from the Hundred Rolls and other sources of information, were incarcerated at Peak castle, since John de Nedham (2 Edw. I.), a companion of Hubert the robber who was afterwards hung, was immured within its walls, and Henry the clerk took from the said John whilst he was in prison, an acre of land worth 40s., that he might assist him in his delivery. Upon his release he paid a fine of five marcs for being allowed to dwell in the district<sup>o</sup>. At a later period, 4 Hen. IV. (1402), Godfrey Rowland, a poor and simple squire of the county of Derby as he styles himself, petitioned the parliament against the injuries that had been inflicted on him by Thomas Wandesby, Chivaler, and others, who came and besieged his house at Mickel-Longesdon, and having pillaged the same, carried him off to the castle of the High Peak, where they kept him six days without meat or drink, and then cutting off his right hand sent him adrift<sup>p</sup>.

One historical fact still remains to be noticed. In the year 1216 the castle was in the hands of the rebellious barons, and there exists on the Clause Rolls a curious letter from King John to Brian de Insula, ordering him to communicate confidentially with Robert the royal chaplain, who was charged with the epistle, and to give up to William earl of Derby the custody of the fortress, and in the event of his declining compliance with the royal commands, as he ventured to do, the earl was enjoined to besiege it<sup>q</sup>.

The Patent Rolls supply the following list of constables during the reigns of King John and Henry III.

10 John. Richard de Insula and John de Kein<sup>r</sup>.

17 John. Ranulph, earl of Chester, castle of the Peak with forest and all its appurtenances during royal pleasure<sup>s</sup>.

18 John. William de Ferrers, earl of Derby<sup>t</sup>.

1 Hen. III. Earl Ferrers has custody of Peak and Bolsover castles till the 14th year of the king's age<sup>u</sup>.

1 Hen. III. Richard de Insula acquittance of Peak castle<sup>x</sup>.

7 Hen. III. John Russel and William de Rughedon, custody of Peak and Bolsover castles<sup>y</sup>.

<sup>o</sup> Rot. Hundred, 14.

<sup>p</sup> Rot. Parl. iii. 518.

<sup>q</sup> Rot. Pat. 188. 192.

<sup>r</sup> Ib., 89.

<sup>s</sup> Ib., 153.

<sup>t</sup> Ib., 192.

<sup>u</sup> Rot. Pat. 1 Hen. III. m. 6.

<sup>x</sup> Ib., m. 15.

<sup>y</sup> Ib., m. 6.

- 16 Hen. III. Brian de Insula, custody of Peak and Bolsover castles, continued in the 13th and 16th years, with appurtenances for life, rendering £100 per annum<sup>z</sup>.
- 20 Hen. III. John Gubaud, custody of castle and forest of Peak<sup>a</sup>.
- 27 Hen. III. John de Grey, custody of Peak castle<sup>b</sup>.
- 33 Hen. III. William de Horseden, the castle and manor of Peak, (de Pecco<sup>c</sup>.)
- 38 Hen. III. Castle and honour of Peak given to Edward the king's son<sup>d</sup>.
- 49 Hen. III. Castle of Peak to be delivered to Simon de Montfort<sup>e</sup>, an exchange of lands having been made between him and Prince Edward.

## CHARLES HENRY HARTSHORNE.

<sup>z</sup> Ib., m. 5. 13 Hen. III. m. 13. 16  
Hen. III. m. 9.

<sup>a</sup> Ib., 20 Hen. III. m. 10.

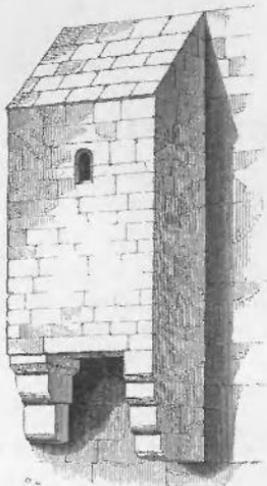
<sup>b</sup> Rot. Pat. and Rot. Chart. 27 Hen. III.  
m. 14.

<sup>c</sup> Rot. Pat. 33 Hen. III. m. 6.

<sup>d</sup> Ib., 38 Hen. III. m. 4.

<sup>e</sup> Ib., 49 Hen. III. m. 26. and Rot.  
Chart. 49 Hen. III. m. 4.

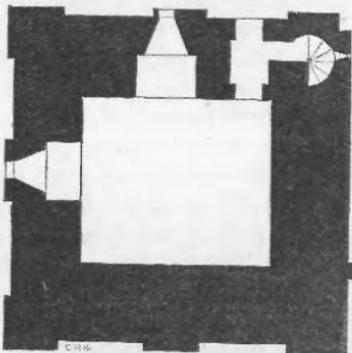
PEVERELL'S CASTLE IN THE PEAK.



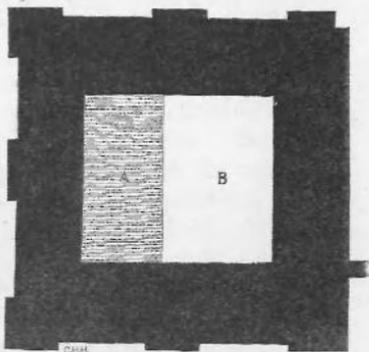
GARDEROBE, PEAK CASTLE.



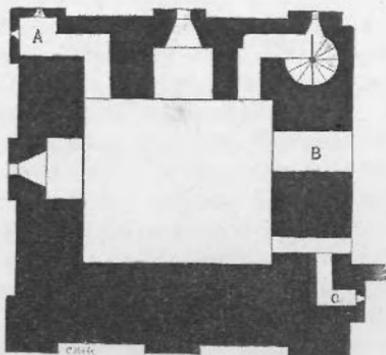
HEAD OF DOOR, E SIDE, PEAK CASTLE.



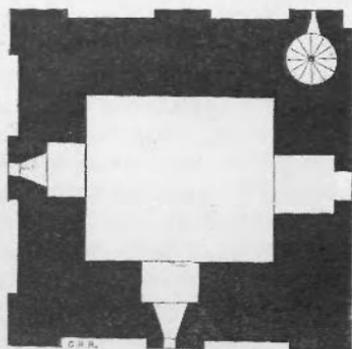
GROUND-PLAN, CASTLETON CASTLE



PLAN OF BASEMENT FLOOR

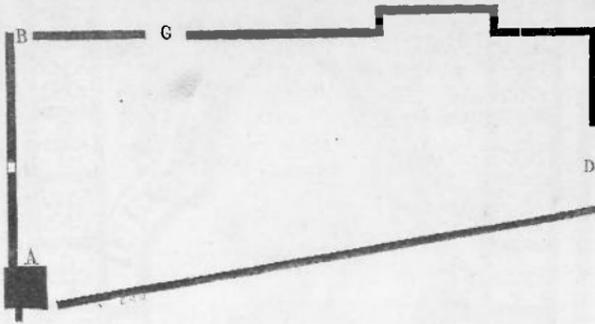


PLAN OF FIRST FLOOR

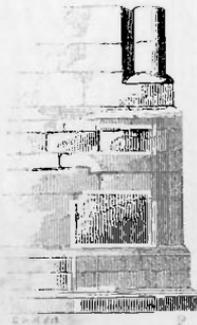
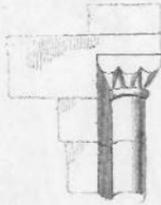


PLAN OF SECOND FLOOR

PEAK CASTLE, CASTLETON, DERBYSHIRE.



GENERAL PLAN.



SHAFT AT SOUTH-EAST ANGLE OF KEEP