



AN ENGLISH ARMY ON THE MARCH IN IRELAND, 1786. FROM DERRICOTT'S "IMAGE OF IRELAND," PG. 8.

THE GUN CALLED POLICY.

By VISCOUNT DILLON, Hon. M.A. Oxon., V.P.S.A.

In *An Historical Account of the Curiosities of London and Westminster*, in three parts, written by Daniel Henry and printed for J. Newbury (by whose name the book is best known) will be found a full description of the Tower of London and everything curious, in and belonging to it, also the history of Westminster Abbey, St. Paul's, the Monument, London Stone, the City Gates and other antique remains. Lowndes gives 1772 as the date of this work, and adds that it was printed several times. The earliest edition I have met with is dated 1753, but this probably is not the earliest printed. *A New and Improved History of the Tower of London*, printed in 1821, by P. and F. Hack, has the same preface as Henry's work and is practically the same, brought up-to-date. The account of the menagerie (removed in 1834 to Regent's Park) varies in the different editions owing of course to the deaths and new arrivals in that collection.

Among the curiosities of the Tower, and grouped with "The spoils of the Invincible Armada," is one of peculiar interest, and which appears in the guides as late as 1840. But on October 30th, 1841, the Grand Storehouse, begun by James II. and finished by William III., was consumed by fire, and among the objects on the ground floor, which was occupied by the "Train of Artillery," is mentioned

"One of the wooden guns named Policy, successfully employed at the Siege of Boulogne in 1544 by Charles Brandon, Duke of Suffolk, who commanded for King Henry VIII., in order to induce the Governor to believe the English were well provided with Artillery."

So says the 1840 guide. The earlier editions say that "when Henry VIII. besieged Boulogne, the roads being impassable for heavy cannon, he caused a number of these wooden ones to be made, and mounted on proper batteries before the town, as if real cannon, which so terrified the French Commandant, that when he beheld such

a formidable train, as he thought, just ready to play, he gave up the town without firing a shot."

Of course this is all nonsense, but it was current as late as 1840.

Now these cannon, or at least the last surviving one, must have been very special pieces of ordnance, and it may be worth while to endeavour to find out what they were like.

We may best examine the accounts given in the State Papers of the period concerning the siege, and seek for contemporary notices of such guns. Unfortunately the State Papers, beyond giving lists of the artillery and ammunition employed,¹ make no mention at all of such wonderful cannon. But, as will be seen, we have a very early representation of these pieces and one which justifies partly the guide book tale.

The use of dummy guns has been mentioned in the late Russo-Japanese war, and in the Civil War in America of 1862-1865 so-called Quaker guns were used at Centreville and other places.

Cannon of material other than iron have also been employed. In the Arsenal at Venice is one, formerly stated to have been used in the war with Chioggia, but Major Angelucci considered that it belonged to the seventeenth century, and, like another in the artillery museum at Turin, was the work of an Italian or Fleming. The Venetian example is a fawcon, composed of a copper barrel bound with cord and leather. It is $34\frac{1}{2}$ inches long with a calibre of 14 inches, and has a chamber 11 inches long with a bore of $4\frac{1}{2}$ inches. It threw a stone shot of 117 lbs.

In 1690 one Andrew Hamilton in a *True relation of the action of the Enniskillen men*, says that Lord Galmoy captured Croom Castle, sixteen miles from that town, and made two enormous mock weapons of tin bound round with cord and covered with buckram of the colour of a cannon. They were drawn by eight horses with much noise. Some copper cannon also bound round with cord are mentioned as being used by Gustavus Adolphus in the Thirty Years' War. They were made by a Scotchman.

Actual wooden cannon have also been used in war : in

¹ See Note, 268.

the Rotunda at Woolwich, as also in the Royal United Service Museum in London, are wooden cannon bound with iron hoops, which were used in the Canadian rebellion in 1837.

In the description of the Cowdray pictures of the Siege of Boulogne, the writer says,¹

“Two of the guns in the Royal Battery are remarkably large and short, and very much resemble those wooden pieces shown at the Tower of London and said to have been devised by Henry VIII. to appear as great ordnance, and intimidate the besieged.”

Turning to contemporary accounts of these guns in a letter which though undated has been placed in the Calendar of Foreign State Papers under date September 15th, 1544, Chapuis, the ambassador of the emperor, says :

“The cause of the surrender (of Boulogne) seems to have been inability to endure longer the battery of the artillery, which has fired more than 100,000 shots, and moreover the English had footing in the wall in divers places. Besides they (the besieged) had not been required by the King of France to sustain the siege more than six weeks and had already endured it eight.”

The chroniclers are, however, silent on the subject of the guns. Hall in 1548, Grafton in 1569, Stow in 1592, Martin in 1638, and Baker in 1653 never mention them or any story connected with them. As to the legend, Hentzner, who in 1598 visited the Tower, was shown

“two pieces of cannon, the one fires three, the other seven balls at a time. Two others made of wood, which the English had at the siege of Boulogne in France, and by this stratagem, by which they could not have succeeded, they struck a terror into the inhabitants as at the appearance of artillery ; and the town was surrendered upon articles.”

This seems to be the earliest mention of the story.

Lord Herbert of Cherbury in his *Life and Reign of King Henry VIII.*, written about 1640, and first published in 1719, says :

“and thus Boulogne was taken, without any mention in our diary (which Lord Herbert quotes as ‘extant in our records’) of cannon of wood coloured like brass which should be planted against the castle as tradition hath it.”

In 1602, Philip Julius, duke of Stettin-Pomerania, visited the Tower, and in his diary² says :

¹ *Archaeologia*, iii, 251 et sqq.

² Printed in *Trans. Royal Hist. Soc.*, 1892.

“Below this hall (a large store) there stood eighty large pieces, many of them having been taken from the Spaniards, also two wooden ones by which King Henricus Octavus, using a peculiar stratagem, gained Boulogne in France.”

John Ernest, duke of Saxe-Weimar, when he visited England in 1613, mentions “two cannon of immense size, made of wood, which Henry took with him to strike terror into the enemy before Boulogne.”

Now, in the engravings, executed in 1788 for the Society of Antiquaries, of the pictures in Cowdray House, unfortunately burnt in 1793, we notice in the batteries before Boulogne two curious pieces of artillery apparently consisting of huge bombards surmounted by much smaller barrels, much as a telescope might be fixed on a cannon or rifle barrel. None of the cannon in the picture, except these two, have this arrangement, nor are there any other pieces of this size. Some are certainly longer, some have the breech in the form of a lion's head, some with smooth, others with fluted chases, but these two are quite different from all the others. The material also appears to be different, for it will be noticed that there are longitudinal lines on them just as are seen on the powder barrels from which the gunners are drawing powder for the service of the guns. Again the piece on the right hand is being fired, and it will be noticed that the gunner applies the lintstock to the upper barrel, and no vent is seen on the lower and larger one. (Plate.)

We may therefore take the pieces in the picture to refer to the two guns mentioned in the legend and one of which, at least, was preserved up till 1840. There are so many false and absurd stories told about objects in the Tower by the warders of old times, that but for the survival till 1840 of such pieces one would be inclined to put the legend of “the gun called Policy” with the other fanciful tales, which, as a rule, date back only to 1660, when the armouries first became a show place for others than distinguished foreigners.

NOTE.

In *State Papers Domestic*, Henry VIII., vol. xix, part i, 1544. No. 1034 is a list of the distribution of the artillery at the siege of Boulogne, viz., total number of guns of each kind.

My L. Lieutenant, the first battery, cannons 3, demy cannons 3, culveryns 2, demy culveryns 2, sakers 3, pioneers 500.

The number of the ordnance, the second battery with the same number of guns, but only 400 pioneers.

My Lord Admiral, the third battery with the same numbers.

The number of the ordnance to the mount that is m . . . 6 sakers.

For the amount to the Watch Tower ward My Lord of Suffolk, demy culveryns 2, and sakers 4.

For a third mount, My Lord Admiral, demy culveryns 2, sakers 4.

Another list gives cannons 10, demy cannons 11, culverins 21, demy culverins 14, sakers 20, faukons 13, bombardes 5, cannon pery 1, besides 50 mortars, 20 privy wagons, 50 shrymps and 17 small faukons.

The amount of ammunition for the battery is given (1034-2) as :

The King for two days after 35 shot a day, cannon 140, demi cannon 140, culverin 700, demi culverin 210, powder $9\frac{1}{2}$ last.

My L. Lieutenant, cannon shot 280, demi cannon 280, culverin 280, demi culverin 560, powder $11\frac{1}{2}$ last.

My L. Admiral, cannon 280, demi cannon 350, culverin 420, demi culverin 280, powder $12\frac{1}{2}$ last.

This would make in all, cannon 700, demi cannon 770, culverin 1,400, demi culverin 1,050. In all 3,920 shot, $33\frac{1}{2}$ last of powder.

The weights are estimated for 12 days as:—

20 shot of 30 lb. for each of 3 cannon	= 1,800 lbs.	9 last of powder.
20 " " 20 " " " " 3 demi cannon	= 1,200 "	6 " " "
20 " " 16 " " " " 3 culverins	= 960 "	4 last, $4\frac{1}{2}$ barrels, 20 lbs.
20 " " 9 " " " " 2 demi culverin	= 360 "	1 " $4\frac{1}{2}$ " 20 "
80 "	11 pieces = 4,320 "	20 " 9 " 40 "

A last of powder = 2,400 lbs.

A barrel " " = 112 "