



ART. XXX. — *Notes on the Initial Letter of a Charter of Edward II. to the City Carlisle.* BY R. S. FERGUSON, F.S.A.

*Read at Keswick, October 5th, 1882.*

IN looking over the Royal Charters in possession of the Corporation of Carlisle, I fell in with a charming little vignette representing the siege of a walled town. It is mainly framed in the initial letter, a capital chancery E, of a charter of 9 Edward II, but two groups of figures are outside the frame. My pleasure in this trifling discovery was much enhanced on noticing that the chief of the defenders, a knightly figure in complete armour, bears on his shield the well-known arms of Sir Andrew de Harcla, thus proving that the scene depicted is his gallant defence of Carlisle in 1315 against Robert Bruce and the Scottish army.

As the vignette itself, and not De Harcla, is the subject of this paper, I shall only give a very brief account of that gallant and ill-fated soldier. He was Sheriff of Cumberland from 1 to 16 Edward II; Warden of the Marches 8 Edward II; created Earl of Carlisle in 1321, and executed on a charge of high treason in 1323. The story of his arrest in Carlisle Castle by Sir Anthony de Lucy, and of his subsequent execution on Harriby Hill near Carlisle, is told in the Chronicle of Lanercost, and from that authority I quote the following account of the siege just alluded to; I also give a translation taken from Jefferson's History of Carlisle:—

“Cito etiam postea eodem anno, in festo Sanctæ Mariæ Magdalenæ (Jul. 22, 1315), venit rex Scotiæ, congregata tota fortitudine sua, usque Karliolum; et circumdans civitatem diebus decem eam obsedit, segites omnes conculcando, et suburbia et omnia in circuitu devastando, et totam patriam concremando, et de Allerdalia, et Couplandia, et Westmerlandia,

merlandia, maximam praedam pecorum exercitui adducendo. Omni autem die obsidionis fecerunt insultum ad aliquam trium portarum civitatis, et aliquando ad tres portas simul, sed nunquam impune, quia mittebantur eis de muro spicula sagittæ et lapides similiter tunc et alias, in tanta multitudine et numero quod dixerunt inter se, 'nunquid multiplicantur et crescunt lapides intra muros?' Quinto autem die obsidionis erexerunt machinam unam ad lapides jaciendos juxta Ecclesiam Sanctæ Trinitatis, ubi rex eorum se collocaverat, et projecierunt continue lapides magnos versus portam de Caldeu et ad murum, sed nihil vel parum nocuerunt intus existentibus, excepto hoc, quod unum hominem occiderunt. Intra civitatem vero erant consimiles machinæ septem vel octo, exceptis instrumentis aliis bellicis, quæ vocantur Springaldes, ad longa spicula emittenda, et fundis in baculis pro lapidibus jaciendis, quæ multum terruerunt et gravaverunt exterius existentes. Interim autem erexerunt Scotti quodam magnum berefrai ad modum turris cujusdam, cujus altitudo muros villæ notabiliter excedebat; quo viso, carpentarii civitatis supra unam turrin muri, ad quam oportuit illud instrumentum venisse, si ad murum accessisset, turrin ligneam erexerunt, quæ altitudinem alterius excedebat; sed illud instrumentum (vel) aliud nunquam ad murum accessit, quia cum traheretur super rotas per terram madidam et lutosam propter ejus gravitatem ibi stetit, nec ulterius duci potuit nec gravare. Fecerant autem Scotti scalas multas et longas, quo secum adduxerunt ad simul ascendendum murum in diversis locis, et suam unam ad suffodiendum murum villæ, si possent; sed sus nec scalæ eis valebant. Fecerunt etiam de segete et de herba fasciculos in magno numero ad implendam fossam aquæ extro murum ex parta orientali, ut sic eam sicco pede transirent. Fecerunt etiam pontes longos de lignis super rotas currentes, ut fortiter et velociter tracti cum cordis possent fossæ latitudinem pertransire. Sed nec fasciculi per totam moram Scotorum ibidem potuerunt fossam implere, nec pontes illi lignei foveam pertransire, sed ceciderunt præ pondere in profundum. Nono autem die obsidionis, cum essent omnia instrumenta parata, dederunt insultum, generalem in omnibus portis villæ et in toto muro per circuitum, et invaserunt viriliter, et cives se æque defenderunt viriliter; et die sequenti similiter. Scotti autem ibi consimili cautela, qua castrum de Edinburgh acceperant, utebantur, fecerunt enim majorem partem exercitus sui dare insultum ex parte orientali civitatis contra locum Fratrum Minorum, ut illuc traherent populum interus existentem. Dominus vero Jacobus de Douglas, miles baldus et cautelosus, cum quibusdam aliis de exercitu qui erant audaciores et agiliores, posuerunt se ad partem occidentalem contra locum Canonicorum et Fratrum Prædicatorum, ubi, propter altitudinem et difficultatem invadendi

non

non sperabatur insultus, et ibi scalas longas erexerunt et ascenderunt eas, et sagittarios in magno numero habuerunt qui sagittas spisse jecerunt, ne aliquis ibi caput porrigeret extra murum. Sed, benedictus sit Deus! talem resistentiam invenerunt ibidem quod usque ad terram cum scalis suis sunt projecti, et ibi et alibi circa murum sunt alii interfecti, et alii capti, et alii vulnerati; nullus autem Anglicus in tota obsidione interfectus est praeter unum hominem percussus sagitta, excepto homine supradicto, pauci etiam fuerunt vulnerati.

Die igitur undecima, scilicet in festo sancti Petri ad Vincula (Aug. 1). vel quia audierunt de adventu Anglicorum ad amovendam obsidionem, vel quia ulterius proficere desperabant, redierunt mane Scotti in terram suam cum confusione, dimittentes retro se omnia instrumenta sua bellica supradicta. Quidam autem Anglici insequentes eos ceperunt Johannem de Moravia, qui in praedicto bello apud Strivelyn habuerat pro parte sua tres et viginti milites Angliæ, exceptis armigeris et aliis simplicioribus, et redemptionem maximam receperat pro eisdem. Ceperunt etiam cum praedicto Johanne dominum Robertum Bardolf, virum utique erga Anglicos pessimae voluntatis, et ambos ad castrum Karlioli adduxerunt, sed postea pecunia non modica sunt redempti."

"Very shortly afterwards in the same year, on the feast of S. Mary Magdalene (July 22, 1315), the King of Scotland, having gathered together all his force, came as far as Carlisle, and surrounding the city, besieged it for ten days, treading down the cornfields and laying waste the suburbs and everything around, and burning the whole country; and collected for his army all the cattle they could steal from Allerdale, Coupland, and Westmoreland.

"On every day they made an attack on some one of the three gates of the city, and sometimes on all three together; but not with impunity, for darts, arrows, and stones, as well then as at other times, were cast down upon them from the walls in so great abundance, that they questioned among themselves, whether the stones did not increase and multiply within the walls. But on the fifth day of the siege they erected an engine for casting stones near the church of the Holy Trinity (the Cathedral), where their king had placed himself, and continually threw great stones towards the Caldew gate, and at the wall, but did no injury, or but little

to

to those within, except that they killed one man. There were, indeed, within the city, seven or eight similar engines, with other warlike instruments, called springalds, for throwing long darts; and slings in sticks, for casting stones, which greatly terrified and annoyed those who were without the city. In the meanwhile the Scots erected a great berefrey, in the manner of a tower, the height of which considerably exceeded that of the walls, which being observed, the carpenters of the city erected a wooden tower, which exceeded the height of the other, upon one of the towers of the wall, towards which the engine must have approached the wall; but it never drew near to the wall, for when it was drawn upon wheels over moist and clayey ground, there it stuck by reason of its weight, nor could it be drawn any further or occasion any inconvenience.

“But the Scots applied many long ladders which they had brought with them for the purpose of ascending the wall in the same manner in different places, and a sow for undermining the wall of the city, if they found it practicable, but neither the sow nor the ladders availed them anything. They also made bundles of straw and grass in great abundance to fill up the moat without the wall, on the east side, in order to pass over it dry; they also made long wooden bridges running on wheels, that being drawn forcibly and rapidly with cords, they might be carried across the ditch; but neither would the bundles, during the whole stay of the Scots there, fill up the moat, nor those bridges pass the ditch, but fell by their weight to the bottom.

“On the ninth day of the siege, when all the engines were ready, they made a general assault on all the gates of the town, and attacked valiantly throughout the whole circuit of the walls, and the citizens defended themselves as valiantly; and in the like manner on the following days. Moreover the Scots employed a stratagem similar to that by which they took the Castle of Edinburgh—they caused the greater part of their army to make an assault on the  
eastern

eastern part of the city, against the place of the Friars Minors (the Grey Friars), that they might draw thither the party within, but the Lord James Douglas a valiant and wary soldier, with certain of the more bold and alert of the army, posted themselves on the western side, over against the place of the Canons and Preaching Friars (the Black Friars), where, on account of the height (of the walls) and difficulty, an attack was not apprehended, and there erected long ladders which they ascended, and they had archers in great numbers, who discharged their arrows thickly lest any one should raise his head above the wall; but, blessed be the Lord, they found such a resistance there, that they were thrown to the ground with their ladders and there and elsewhere about the walls, some were taken, some slain, and others wounded.

“Yet no Englishman was killed during the whole siege; except one man struck with an arrow, and the one above mentioned, but a few were wounded. Thereupon on the eleventh day, that is to say, on the feast of St. Peter ad Vincula, the Scots either because they heard of the approach of the English to raise the siege or because they despaired of making any further progress, early in the morning returned into their own lands in confusion, leaving behind them all their warlike engines above mentioned. Certain English pursuing them took John de Moray, who in the before-mentioned battle at Strivellan had for his share twenty-three English knights besides esquires, and others of lower rank, and received a great sum for their ransom; they took also with the aforesaid John, the Lord Robert Bardolf, a man certainly of the very worst disposition towards the English, and brought them both to the Castle of Carlisle.”

Turning now to the vignette, the artist has presented within the frame of the initial letter, a walled town, Carlisle, and over the wall can be seen the roof and east window of the cathedral. Various turrets or towers rise from the wall,

wall, and one lofty one rises above the frame of the initial letter; this probably is intended to represent the castle. In the left-hand corner, outside the letter, is a "machina ad lapides jaciendos." This must be the one the Scots erected on the fifth day of the siege, "juxta Ecclesiam sanctæ Trinitatis,"\* that is, the cathedral. It is clear to one having local knowledge that the scene depicted is the assault on the ninth day, "contra locum Canonicorum et Fratrum prædicatorum," that is the vicinity of the Sallyport steps, where the wall would be at least thirty feet high.

The details of the drawing will bear very close examination, and I propose to draw attention to some of them.

The principal figure on the loftiest tower is Andrew de Harcla himself; he has already sent one spear through a Scot below, and is depicted in the act of hurling another. Both the spears have loops at about one-third of their length from the butt end, and Harcla, in the act of throwing the spear, grasps it with his hand, having his forefinger inserted in the loop. De Harcla wears a huge visored conical topped helm much resembling No. 75 in the Archæological Institute's Catalogue of Helmets. It is surmounted by a panache or plume of upright feathers. Mr. Planché, in his "Cyclopædia of Costumes" (*sub voce* panache) says, that prior to the reign of Henry V. panaches only appear as heraldic crests. This is an earlier instance of a panache than those given in works on heraldry, and it may either be a crest or a mere decoration. De Harcla also wears a sleeveless surcoat over a hauberk of banded mail. His sword, which has plain straight quillons hangs at his left side, the surcoat hanging over the waist belt in

---

\* This expression puzzles me very much. The Cathedral of Carlisle is now the "Cathedral Church of the Holy Trinity," but prior to the Reformation it was dedicated to the Blessed Virgin Mary. The writer of the chronicle must have meant the cathedral; first of all there was no other church he could mean; secondly, near the cathedral would be the most eligible, in fact the only, place for throwing great stones against the Caldew (or Irish) gate.

most

most natural folds. On his left arm De Harcla carries his shield, which is suspended from his neck by the gigue and displays a plain cross cantoning in the dexter chief point a martlet. That these are the arms of De Harcla we know from Nicholas's Roll, which gives—

“Sire Michel de Herteclae de argent a une crois de goules. Sire Andrew de Herteclae meisme les armes e un merelot de sable.”

The martlet in this drawing is peculiar; it is not footless like those on the enamelled shield of William de Valence in Westminster Abbey (1296), but is sitting on a small twig.

Next to De Harcla is a figure in surcoat and hauberk of banded mail. His hauberk has hood, which covers his head, and above that he wears an iron hat, or *eisenhut*, of which Demmin gives several instances. In this case the hat is of an umbrella shape with spike on the top, and knobs round. The wearer is winding up one of the “Springaldes”\* mentioned in the chronicles, which seems to have been a large arblaster or cross-bow, worked as usual with a *moulinet* or windlass.

Three other defenders are on towers or turrets of less altitude than that occupied by De Harcla and the “Springalde” man. One of these is lifting up a stone of, to judge by his face and attitude, great weight. A second with a coolness and imperturbability that makes me think him the town clerk, thrusts a long spear through a Scot who has climbed up a ladder, while a third with his left hand clutches the Scot by the throat, and with his right, in which is an enormous falchion, endeavours to decapitate him. All these three are clad alike in hauberks of mail and surcoats, but their head-gear is varied; the third, whose hauberk is of banded mail, wears a plain steel or iron skull-cap; the

---

\* A tower on the west curtain wall of Carlisle long retained the name of the “Springold” tower.

second a coif of mail ; while the first wears some sort of hood.

The besiegers are represented by six individuals ; one of them, the "forlorn hope," we may suppose, has already been mentioned, as on the top of a ladder. He meets with a warm reception from the defenders, and is falling from the ladder and apparently about to give up the ghost, but still brandishes in his right hand a huge battle-axe ; his left arm hangs relaxed, but the shield has not yet fallen to the ground, but is suspended from the arm by the enarmes at the back of the shield. The shield has a bordure round it, but this has, I think, no heraldic significance ; no Scottish leader was killed or wounded, and the costume is not that of one entitled to bear arms. Three more of the besiegers are at the foot of the walls ; one is an archer, and is discharging an arrow at the men on the battlements ; another, with a spear and uplifted shield, watches the man falling from the ladder ; while a third, in the act of vigorously plying his pick, is felled to the ground by a stone, which takes him about the nape of his neck. Two besiegers and the "machina ad lapides jaciendos" form a separate group. The machine is a *trebuchet* ; one of the men has laid aside his battle axe, and with a mallet is wedging a stone into the loop of the sling. The other man is transfixed by a spear hurled by De Harcla and falls off the frame of the machine, on which he has been standing ; he has an arrow in his right hand and a bow in his left. The besiegers are all dressed alike, in most wretched habiliments ; they wear cloaks with hoods, some sort of cloths, covering the *pudenda*, and apparently nothing else, save that their feet are encased in brogues. Lindsay of Pitscothie, whose chronicle of Scotland from 1427 to 1542 (cited by Planché) is in the vulgar tongue, says, "The other parts northorne are full of mountains and very rude and homelie kynd of people doth inhabite, which is called the Reid Shankys, or wyld Scotcs. They be clothed with  
ane

ane mantle, with ane schirt, fashioned after the Irisch manner, going bare legged to the knee."

We have thus eleven figures in the vignette, and, putting aside De Harcla, who is concealed by his vizored helm, there is a wonderful individuality of expression in the countenances. The whole drawing is full of life, truth, and vigour; and its fidelity to the account of the siege given in the Chronicle of Lanercost is most remarkable. Another point to be noted is, that there are no traces of pencil lines to be seen, so that the artist must have worked direct upon the parchment. He was probably on the staff of the Chancery Office, for the purpose of doing such work as we have now before us.

The charter (9 Edward II.) has no direct reference to the siege of 1315, but its preamble recites (I translate): "Know ye that for the improvement of our City of Carlisle and that the citizens of our same city may hereafter pursue their avocations in the same city under greater tranquility and peace, and may be so much the more animated to fortify and defend that city if that city were specially committed to their care, we have granted to them and by this our charter confirmed for us and our heirs the said city."

---