CORFE CASTLE.[1]

AMONGST the many interesting examples of medieval military architecture with which Great Britain abounds, there is perhaps no one more deserving of notice than the stately ruin of Corfe Castle. Crowning a lofty isolated eminence which rises in the midst of one of Nature's gigantic cuttings, it commands the only level opening in the ridge of chalk hills which stretches from sea to sea, and isolates the remote and secluded valley of Purbeck from the rest of the county. This remarkable opening forms, as it were, a natural gateway, which the Anglo-Saxons denominated Corvensgate, or Corvesgate, a name obviously compounded of their words *ceorfan*, to cut, and *geat*, a gate. It was, in fact, the gate or entrance to the valley, cut through the hill.

Whether Corfe is regarded in association with some striking events in history, or as a specimen of medieval military architecture, or simply as a picturesque object, it is alike equally interesting. Hutchins, the industrious topographer of Dorsetshire, published a short account of it in 1774, but his notice is meagre and unsatisfactory, and his few remarks upon its architecture show that his knowledge of that branch of the subject was not greater than that of his contemporaries. A third edition of the History of Dorsetshire, now in the course of publication, contains much additional information relating to Corfe Castle, both illustrative of its construction and ancient history, and descriptive of its present state.[2]

[1] A Memoir read at the Annual Meeting of the Archæological Institute held at Dorchester, August, 1865.

[2] The enlarged account of Corfe Castle in the new edition of Hutchins was contributed by the writer of the present memoir. It contains more details than the limits of this Journal would admit. When it was determined to hold a congress of the Archæological Institute at Dorchester, in August last, it was hoped that the late Mr. Hartshorne would have favoured the meeting with a memoir on Corfe Castle; and there is reason to believe that, had his life been spared, he would have done so. His extensive acquaintance with the best examples of castellated remains, and his critical knowledge of the subject, would have rendered such a memoir highly valuable. It is remarkable, however, that Corfe is the only important castle in England which he had not visited.

The earliest notice which we have of this spot is contained in some Anglo-Saxon charters in the chartulary of Shaftesbury Abbey.[3] The first of these is a grant from King Edred, in the year 948, to a religious woman named Œlfthryth, of eight manses of land in Purbeck. This Œlfthryth has been thought to have been the second abbess of Shaftesbury;[4] and though the name of Corfe does not appear in this charter, it does in a subsequent one of the same king, which is dated in 955, and evidently relates to the same lands, though with some variation of description and some additions. The boundaries of the lands thus granted are, as usual in Anglo-Saxon charters, set out with considerable minuteness, and their identification is of importance, as will hereafter be shown, in helping us indirectly to ascertain the date at which a castle was first erected at Corfe. Pains have been taken to trace these boundaries on the spot. Some of the names made use of in describing the landmarks still survive in a modified form, and from this and other evidence which it would be tedious to explain in detail, there appear to be sufficient grounds for assuming, not only that the bounds of the lands comprised in these Anglo-Saxon charters are identical, or very nearly so, with the limits of what became the manor of Kingston, belonging to the abbey of Shaftesbury, but that they comprehend the site on which Corfe Castle is built.

Less than thirty years after the date of the last-mentioned charter, Corfe became the scene of "the foulest deed," as the Saxon Chronicle designates it, "which was ever committed by the Saxons since they landed in Britain." The murder of King Edward the Martyr, which, according to Brompton, took place in the year 981, is the most striking passage in the history of Corfe; but we know of it only from the chroniclers, who all seem to have drawn their information from the same sources, or to have borrowed from some one original authority. It is related to have occurred at Corvesgate by William of Malmesbury, Henry of Huntingdon, Simon of Durham, Hoveden, Florence of Worcester, Roger de Wendover, the Saxon Chronicle, Ralph Higden, John of Peterborough, and Knighton; but we have no con-

[3] MS. Harl., No. 61. Kemble's Codex Diplomaticus ævi Saxonici.

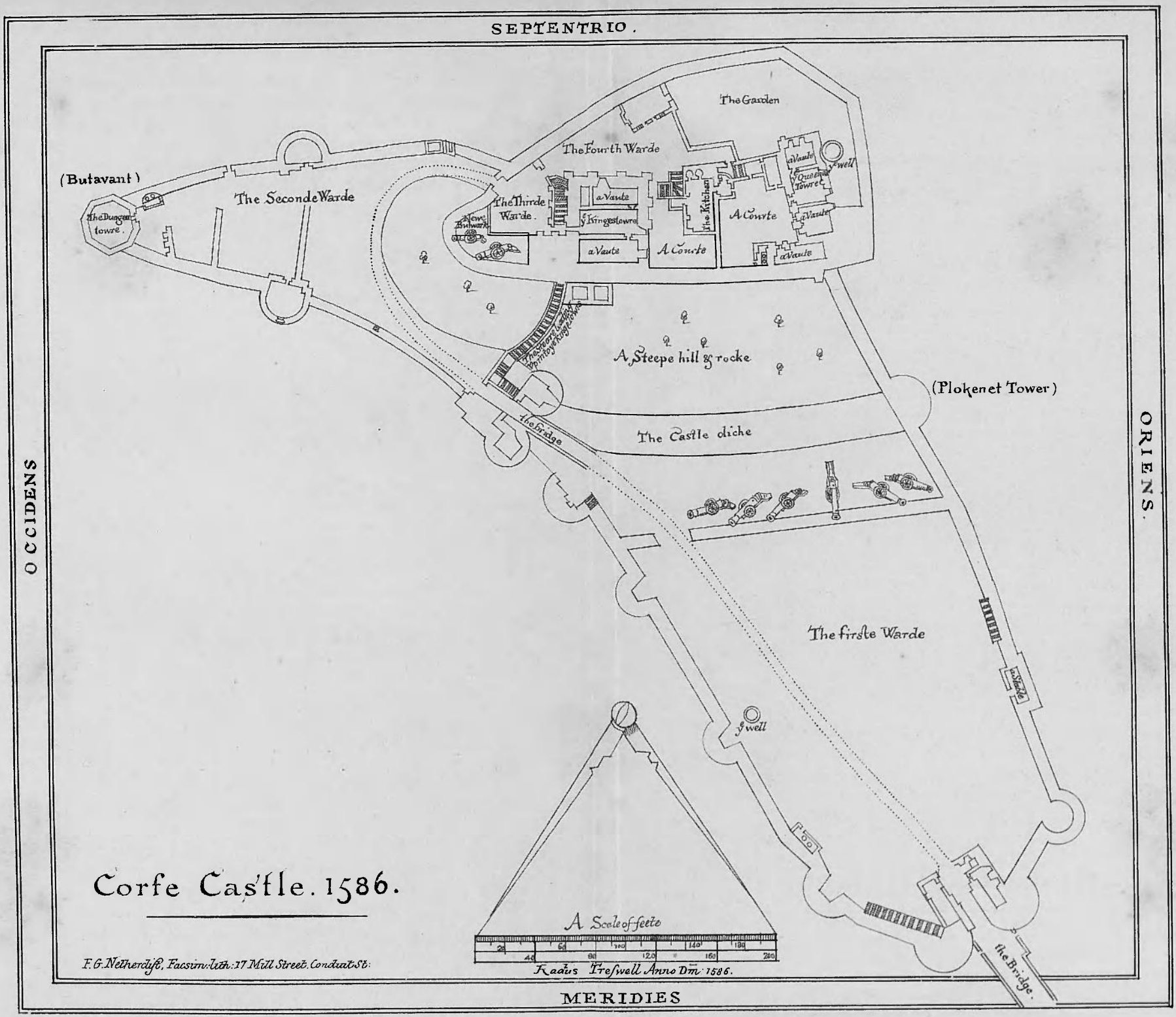
[4] Hutchins's List of the Abbesses of Shaftesbury, Hist. of Dorset, 2nd ed., vol. 2, p. 414.

temporary records, and the event is therefore not likely to receive any fresh elucidation.

Although there can be no doubt that the murder of Edward the Martyr took place at Corfe, it is with the spot, and not with the castle, that we must associate that event, for the history of the castle commences at a subsequent period. The diagram which accompanies this memoir is a photographic reproduction, on a reduced scale, of a ground plan made for Sir Christopher Hatton by Ralph Treswell, in 1586.[5] The original is far from accurate in all its details, but its general features are correct, and it is extremely useful in assisting us to make out, amongst fragments of ruined walls which still remain standing, heaps of rubbish, and subverted masses of masonry, what was once the general plan and arrangement of the building. It must be borne in mind, however, that it is, strictly speaking, a *ground* plan, and nearly all the apartments indicated are merely cellars or vaults. The habitable rooms were above them.

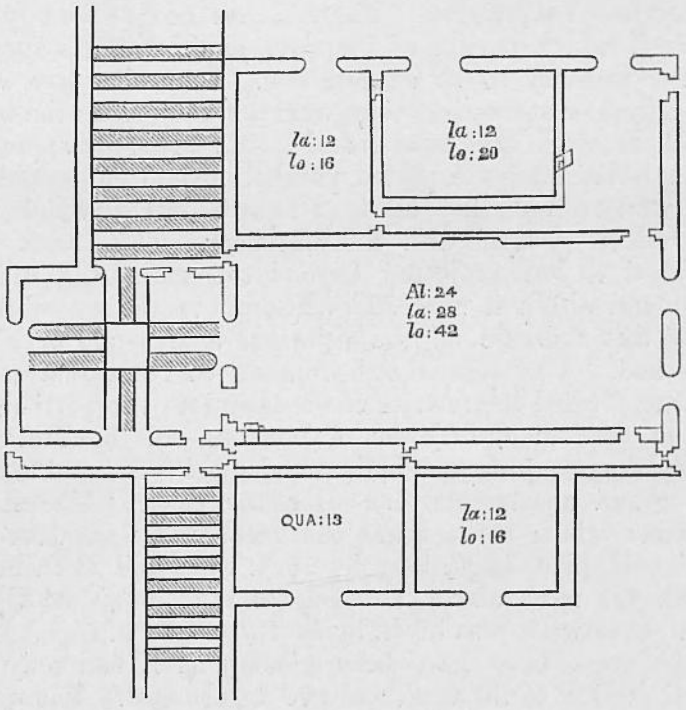
The area embraced by the external limits of the fortress assumes the shape of the remarkable hill on the summit of which it is built. It forms an irregular triangle, the apex of which was connected by a narrow isthmus with the high ground on which the town of Corfe stands. This isthmus has been cut through, and the ditch thus formed is spanned by a bridge of four arches leading to the principal entrance. The hill rises considerably towards the northern base of the triangle, and the most elevated spot was chosen for the position of the great tower or keep, which stands on the brink of a precipice separating that part of the castle from the outer bailey. It is probable that the castle was originally limited to this portion of the hill; and, if such was the case, the keep would then have formed a continuation of the outer wall of this side of the fortress. The *enceinte* of the castle, after the whole was completed, contained a base court or outer bailey, which is the first that we enter,

[5] The reduced diagram was made with great care and skill by Mr. F. C. Netherclift for the new edition of Hutchins's History of Dorset, the editors of which have obligingly permitted it to be reproduced for the illustration of this memoir. The original drawing is in the possession of the present owner of Corfe Castle, J. H. P. Bankes, Esq., of Kingston Lacey. Mr. Bankes has also a bird's-eye view of the castle, with the adjacent town, made by Treswell in 1585. It gives us something like an elevation of the castle in its original state, and is the only one of the kind known to be now extant. A photographic fac-simile of it is given in the third edition of Hutchins's History of Dorset recently published.


SEPTENTRIO.
OCCIDENS
ORIENS.
MERIDIES
(Butavant)
the Dungeon towre.
The Seconde Warde
The Fourth Warde
The Garden
The Thirde Warde.
Newe Bulwark
a Vaute
ye Kingestowre
a Vaute
A Courte
The Kitchen
A Courte
a Vaute
Queenes Towre
a Vaute
ye well
a Vaute
A Steepe hill & rocke
(Plokenet Tower)
the Bridge
The Castle diche
The firste Warde
ye well
a Vaute
the Bridge.
A Scale of feete
20 40 60 80 100 120 140 160 180 200
Radus Treswell Anno Dm 1586.
Corfe Castle. 1586.
F.G. Netherclift, Facsimile lith: 17 Mill Street. Conduit St.

and is of considerable extent ; a second, a third, and a fourth ward, in the latter of which were two or three courts. The castle had four gates.

The form of the ground plan of the great tower or keep was originally rectangular and nearly square, but there is an *annexe,* or wing, attached to its southern face, which, though corresponding with it in style, and no doubt but little posterior to it in date, nevertheless appears by the



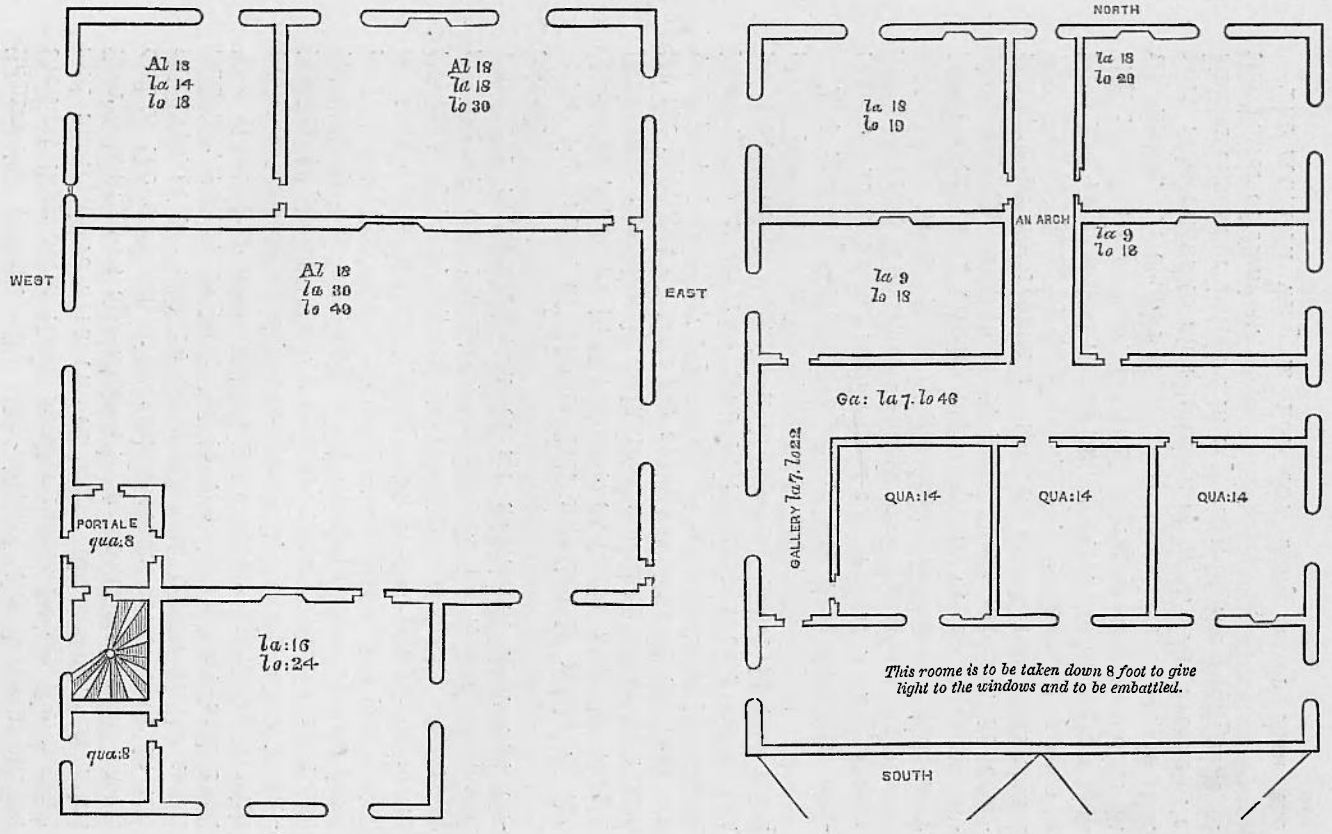
Corfe Castle. Plan A. Reduced from the original at Kingston Lacey.

masonry to have been a subsequent construction. Only the south side, and part of the east and west sides of the keep, are standing ; the rest is wholly overthrown, and large masses of prostrate walls lie in confusion around. A few years ago some old drawings were discovered amongst the late Mr. Bankes's papers, at Kingston Lacey, three of which on examination proved to be plans of three floors of the keep ; a fourth plan accompanied them, which no doubt represented some other portion of the castle now wholly

destroyed. These plans seem to have been made for Sir Christopher Hatton when he owned the castle, in the time of Queen Elizabeth; and they are highly interesting and useful, for those which relate to the keep enable us pretty clearly to make out the arrangement of that part of the building. Copies on a reduced scale are here given.[6]

The lower or basement floor seems to have been partially sunk below the level of the surrounding ground. It was entered on the west side, but it is probable that this entrance was not original. The wall has been evidently cut through, and a portion of the door jamb still left appears by the masonry to be an insertion. Here, therefore, were the cellars or stores, but they were not vaulted, as the holes which received the beams and joists are still apparent. An external staircase, placed parallel to and supported by the western wall, led up to a square turret, which was entered on a level with the first floor. This turret was attached to but projected beyond the main wall of the keep, and within it were stairs leading to the second floor. From this staircase all the principal apartments were approached. A substantial wall, running east and west, seems to have divided the interior of the keep into two portions, as is the case in the Tower of London. In the first and second floors, represented in the woodcuts, Plans A and B, were two grand apartments, one over the other. The lower chamber, which perhaps was the great hall, was, according to the old plan, 42 ft. long by 28 ft. wide, and 24 ft. high; whilst the room above it, owing to the diminished thickness of the walls, was 49 ft. by 30 ft., and 18 ft. high. The former room must have been gloomy, as it had only one small window to the west, and two to the east. The upper apartment was more cheerful, as it had an additional window to the south, which was no doubt enlarged to its present size at a comparatively recent period. The dimensions marked on the old plans fairly correspond with the measurements of the existing remains, so far as they can be made out. The basement internally is 43 ft. 6 in. from east to west, and seems to have measured about 50 ft. from north to south, though it is difficult, in that direction, to ascertain

[6] The engravings of the plans marked A, B, and C were executed for the new edition of Hutchins's History of Dorset, and have been very obligingly lent by the editors of that work for the illustration of the present memoir.



Plan B.

Plan C.

1d Ground Plans of the Great Tower of Corfe Castle. Reduced from the originals at Kingston Lacey, Dorset.

its precise extent. By the side of the large room on the first floor, were three smaller rooms facing the north; and above, there were two of larger dimensions. A third floor (plan c) was approached by a newel stair, at the west end of the southern wing, and another newel stair in the thickness of the wall, at the south-east corner of the main building, seems to have led to the battlement and roof. The third floor was divided into seven apartments, with their connecting corridors or passages. On a close examination of the building, it appears most probable that the third floor was an addition of comparatively recent date, and that it took the place of a ridge-and-valley roof which originally occupied the space within the upper portion of the ancient walls. When the addition was made, the former steep roof was no doubt superseded by a lead flat, and thus the accommodation of an additional floor was obtained.

In the reign of Henry III. mention is made of the chapel of St. Mary in the Tower of Corfe, and the sheriff frequently accounts, both in that and the succeeding reign, for the payment of 50*s.*, the annual stipend of the chaplain who served therein.[7] This chapel may perhaps have been in an upper floor, like that in the Tower of London, but no traces of it have been discovered either in the ruins above-mentioned or in the ground plans.

The masonry of the keep is of the usual Norman character. It is ashlar both within and without. The stones are large, and often nearly square, and the joints are mostly wide and coarse. Some of the jambs and arches with their imposts are still visible, but they are of the plainest description. Indeed, there is little or no attempt at ornament, unless we reckon as such an arcade that runs round the external faces of the upper story. This arcade seems to have had no practical use in that part of the building which still remains standing, for there is no appearance of it in the inside. It could not therefore have been made, in that part, subservient to an admission of light. An arcade of a similar character is found in a portion of the south side of the Tower of London.

The southern wing is now one story lower than the

[7] Mag. rot. pipæ.

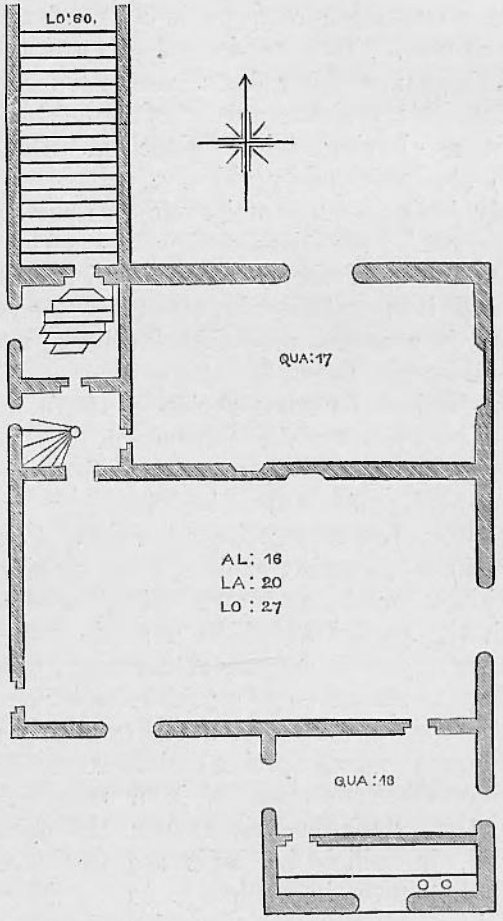
building on which it leans, but it was originally higher. It was reduced to about its present height by Sir Christopher Hatton, in order to admit light to the upper floor of the keep, as appears by a contemporary note written on the original ground plan. The ground floor consists of two small apartments, and a corridor vaulted with stone separating them from the rest of the keep. These apartments measure respectively 9 ft. 1 in. by 7 ft. 2 in., and 9 ft. 3 in. by 7 ft. 3 in. The eastern one is entirely open to the corridor, the opening being spanned by a semicircular arch. It has a window looking towards the east, the only original Norman window remaining in the castle. This window is square-headed on the outside, has no mouldings, and is very small. The opening within is widely splayed, and has a semicircular head. A similar window in the south wall has been blocked up, and is not apparent on the outside. The western of these two apartments is entered by a square-headed stone doorway, and has no remains of original windows. A modern window on the south side may possibly have replaced an original one of the Norman period ; but if so, the latter did not range with that in the adjacent room. The last-mentioned apartment, and the room above it, were probably the "gardrobes in the high tower" mentioned in a survey of the castle in the 19th year of Edw. II.[8] Popular tradition has supposed that underneath these two small apartments were dungeons or prisons—a notion which seems at first sight to be countenanced by the fact that the masonry below them is carried far down the face of the precipice on the brink of which the keep is built, as if it enclosed some dark chamber once approached from above, but now filled up with rubbish. There are likewise joist holes nearly on a level with the ground line of the corridor, which once must have carried floors, as if covering some chambers underneath. It is manifest, however, that some of these joist holes were made at a period subsequent to the original construction, and there can be little doubt that at least the western of the two apartments just described, and probably also the one above it, were in reality used as gardrobes. It is not very probable, therefore, that dungeons would be placed underneath them.

[8] Inquis. ad quod damnum, 19 Ed. II. r. 185.

It is not impossible that the plan D, which is also here given, may represent the "king's chamber near the kitchen in the Gloriette, with the gardrobe adjoining," mentioned in the fabric rolls hereafter referred to, but no trace of these apartments can now be found amongst the ruins, and their situation must be left to conjecture.

We may pass unnoticed the supposition of Hutchins, that Corfe Castle was built by King Edgar; but documentary evidence exists, which, though contradictory, may, on the whole, be considered conclusive, that a castle was first built here by William the Conqueror; and, if there is nothing in the construction, masonry, or general features of such portions of the keep as still remain, which it can be shown could not have been the Conqueror's work, there seems no reason why we should refuse to him the credit of being the founder of this magnificent structure. It is no doubt hazardous to advance such a theory at the present day, when a disposition prevails to assign to ancient buildings more recent dates than those which would formerly have been attributed to them. Attention, however, is invited to such documentary facts as have been discovered, which point to the Conqueror as the builder of a castle here, and it may then be considered whether there are any features in the building, as we now see it, which could not be his work. Of course negative testimony to this extent can only be derived from a close examination and study of other buildings ascertained to be of this period; but, though William is known to have built very many castles in England, few of them remain to the present day, too few, in fact, to afford conclusive evidence of a negative character, especially when we consider that masonry is not always an infallible criterion of date, because it may be greatly modified by local circumstances.

It has been suggested that even if the Conqueror built a castle at Corfe, it was of timber and not of stone; but there is no evidence in support of such a theory. William may have built wooden castles, but it is admitted that he also built some of stone, the Tower of London being one. If therefore he did build some fortresses of the more durable material, on what grounds can it be contended that Corfe was not one of them? The supply of stone in the Isle of Purbeck was unlimited in quantity and easy of access, and it



Plan D.
Possibly the "King's Chamber." From the original preserved at Kingston Lacey.

was probably obtained at moderate cost; while it is evident from Domesday Book that timber could not be abundant. So scarce indeed was the latter material there in the thirteenth century, that nearly all which was used at that period in repairing or enlarging the castle was brought from the neighbouring county of Hants.

We have no mention of a castle at Corfe till after the Norman conquest. The murder of Edward the Martyr is said by Knighton to have been committed at the "hospicium" of Elfrida, and the author of Brompton's Chronicle describes it as having taken place at Elfrida's house ("domus") at Corfe, adding that a celebrated castle was subsequently built there—"ubi nunc castrum satis celebre constructum est." He thus makes a marked distinction between the house of the one period and the castle of the other; though it is probable the country house of an Anglo-Saxon queen, in a remote place like Purbeck, would not be left wholly defenceless.

We naturally look for some notice of Corfe in the Great Survey of King William the Conqueror, but here we are disappointed, for it is not mentioned by name in that important record. A transaction, however, is related in Domesday Book, respecting the advowson of the church of Gillingham, in Dorsetshire, which, when considered in conjunction with other documentary evidence, seems sufficient to establish the period at which a castle was first built at Corfe. In surveying the manor of Kingston, then belonging to the abbey of Shaftesbury, a manor, be it remembered, of which the boundaries have been pretty clearly ascertained, and which boundaries comprehend the site of the castle, the Domesday commissioners report, in a note at the foot of the page, that "within this manor the king has one hide of land, in which he built the castle of Wareham, and for it he gave in exchange to St. Mary (that is, to the abbey of Shaftesbury) the church of Gillingham, with its appurtenances." The original record is as follows:—"De manerio Chingeston habet Rex unam hidam in qua fecit castellum Wareham, et pro ea dedit Sanctæ Mariæ ecclesiam de Gillingham cum appendiciis suis." The same transaction is mentioned in the Testa de Nevill, but with the important difference, that the castle of Corfe, and not that of Wareham, is there said to have been built on the

land thus given by the abbey of Shaftesbury in exchange for the advowson. "Advocatio ecclesie de Gillingeham" (says the last-mentioned document), "data fuit Abbati de Sancto Edwardo in escambium pro terra ubi castellum de Corf positum est." The abbey of Shaftesbury had by this time acquired the denomination of the abbey of St. Edward, and the substitution of the word "abbati" for abbatisse is obviously a mere clerical error, for certain it is that the abbey of Shaftesbury was intended, as that abbey held the patronage of the church of Gillingham till the time of the dissolution. But how are we to reconcile these contradictory statements, one or other of which must be wrong? Domesday Book tells us that the spot in question was within the manor of Kingston, and it has already been shown that the site of Corfe Castle was within the limits of that manor. Wareham, on the other hand, is four miles distant, and all evidence of a negative character, as well as all probability, is opposed to the supposition that the manor of Kingston embraced any portion of the town of Wareham, especially that part of it which includes the site of the castle. The castle was built on the most elevated spot within the circuit of the town, just such a spot, indeed, as would have been selected for the purpose when the place was originally fortified, at a period long anterior to the foundation of Shaftesbury abbey. A hide of land, moreover, would comprehend a much larger area than the site of the castle of Wareham and its precincts, whilst the territory which became what was called the liberty of Corfe, namely, the site of the castle and some surrounding lands, would amount to a hide and more. The presumption, then, appears to be in favour of the evidence of the Testa de Nevill, and the compilers may have ascertained either that the commissioners who made the returns from which Domesday was formed, or the Norman clerks who were employed to transcribe them, had inadvertently written Wareham for Corfe, or may have considered Corfe as a kind of outpost of Wareham, and dependent in some manner upon it.

But we have other evidence, though of an indirect character, bearing on this point. The site of the castle of Corfe was ancient demesne of the Crown, as appears by a record of the time of Richard II.;[9] and it is well known that only

[9] Rot. Pat. 2 Ric. II. 2 a pars m. 13 a tergo.

lands which belonged to the Crown at the compilation of Domesday were considered as legally held by that peculiar tenure. This, then, shows that the site of the castle was at that time in the King's hands, though it is not reckoned amongst the "terræ regis," unless under the obscure description now under consideration.

Furthermore, the Manor of Mowleham in the neighbouring parish of Swanage, was held, at the Domesday Survey, by Durandus, the king's carpenter, one of the "servientes regis;" and in after times it belonged to a family which assumed its name, and was said to be descended from Durandus,[1] by the service of finding a carpenter to work about the great tower of Corfe Castle whenever it required repair, and the king put in his claim.[2] That this service was attached to the land by the Conqueror himself, when granting Mowleham to his master carpenter, is in the highest degree probable; and it is most likely that the grant itself was made in commemoration of the services which this artificer had rendered in the construction of the castle. The duty to be performed was confined to the great tower, and this is the part, if any, which might, with any probability, be conjectured to be the Conqueror's work. Nearly all the rest is of later date.

The keep of Corfe Castle has many features in common with those of the White Tower of London, which has generally been supposed, on the authority of the Textus Roffensis, to have been erected in the Conqueror's reign; and though the masonry of the latter is mostly of rubble stone, yet where ashlar occurs, as it does to a limited extent in some parts of the building, besides the quoins, it is very similar to that at Corfe. It is quite natural that in Purbeck, where stone is so abundant, ashlar should have been more freely used than in London, which is situated so far from any quarries.

We have notice of a castle existing here in the time of Henry II., in the eighth year of whose reign the sheriff accounts for two shillings laid out in its repairs,[3] and it is mentioned in the Black Book of the Exchequer in the twelfth year of the same king. In the following reign we

[1] Coker's Survey of Dorset.

[2] Ministers' accounts, 19 Ed. I., miscellaneous, in the Exchequer.

[3] Mag. rot. pipæ, Dorset, 8 H. II.

have only two notices of small sums expended about the king's houses in the castle of Corfe, and these houses, as they are called,[4] are distinguishable from the great tower or keep.

Considerable sums were laid out during the reign of John, both on the houses of the castle and on the castle itself. In the fourth of King John, 275*l.* 0*s.* 1*d.* was spent about the houses of the castle, and 20*s.* in repairs of the castle itself.[5] In the following year, 246*l.* 10*s.* 4*d.* was spent in the work of the castle; and the next year 137*l.* 6*s.* 4*d.* was laid out in the same way.[6] The works were going on in the 8,[7] 11,[8] 15,[9] and 16[1] of John, and in the latter year the king sent his own miners and stonemasons (*minatores nostros et petrarios*), ordering that to two of them should be paid 6*d.* per diem, and to others 3*d.*, so long as they should be employed about the bank of the fosse (*in dova fossati*).[2] This fosse may be supposed to be the one which separates the outer bailey from the inner part of the castle, and it is evident that the hill has been scarped with considerable care and labour. The names of many of these workmen appear to be French, and it may therefore be inferred that the king selected persons of approved skill in this kind of work.

The masonry of the inner face of the south-west wall of the second ward bears evidence of great antiquity, and may possibly have been erected before the Norman Conquest. It is composed of herring-bone work, very similar to what is found in the castle of Colchester and elsewhere. This wall was originally half its present thickness, and it was pierced with several small round-headed windows. Its thickness has been doubled by an outer facing, which blocks up the windows before mentioned, and was probably erected in the latter part of the reign of Henry III. or in the commencement of that of Edward I.

Corfe Castle was frequently visited by King John, especially in the last year of his life. He was there about two months before his death.[3] Its strength as a fortress

[4] Mag. rot. pipæ.
[5] Ibid.
[6] Ibid.
[7] Rot. Claus. 8 Joh.
[8] Rot. Misæ, 11 Joh.
[9] Rot. Claus. 15 Joh.
[1] Ibid. 16 Joh.
[2] Ibid.
[3] Hardy's Itinerary of King John. Introduction to the Patent Rolls.

induced him at one time to keep his treasure[4] there, and he also used it as a state prison.[5] The regalia was likewise kept there.[6] On the suppression of the insurrection of his nephew Arthur, Duke of Brittany, by the capture of the town of Mirabel in Poictou, 200 of the leading nobility and knights of that province were sent prisoners to England; and on 4th February, 1202, the king issued his commands to the constables of the several castles in which they were confined, to send twenty-four of them immediately to Corfe,[7] where it is said that twenty-two of the most noble and valorous were starved to death.[8] The names of those unfortunate victims of civil strife have been handed down to us,[9] but from the annalist alone we have the notice of this wholesale murder. Certain it is, however, that while sending the prisoners to Corfe, the king at the same time transmitted verbal instructions to the constable of the castle by confidential messengers, as to what should be done respecting them.[1] Had there been no sinister intention, such secrecy would not have been required.

A more notorious, and at the same time a more interesting victim of the rebellion of Prince Arthur, was his sister, the beautiful Princess Eleanor, who, on his death, if hereditary succession to the throne, according to a rule of primogeniture, had then been an established law, would have had rights superior to those of her uncle King John. The rule, however, though not positively denied, was not considered as settled, and the king determined to prevent its application in his own case. He caused Prince Arthur to be murdered at Rouen, and sent his sister prisoner to Corfe, where she remained for several years. In the succeeding reign she was removed to Bristol, where she died after a wearisome captivity of forty years. This unfortunate princess had as fellow prisoners at Corfe two daughters of William, King of Scotland, who had been delivered as hostages to John.

Besides the Great Tower, or Keep, the castle had four other towers, called respectively La Gloriette, Butavant, Plenty, and Cocaigne, the three last of which are mentioned as existing in the 8 Edward I., at which time the Gloriette

[4] Pat. 18 John, m. 18; Rot. Claus. 15 Joh.
[5] Rot. Pat. 4 Joh. m. 3.
[6] Rot. Claus. 4 H. III.
[7] Rot. Pat. 4 Joh.
[8] Margam Annals.
[9] Rot. Pat. 4 Joh. m. 3.
[1] Ibid.

is spoken of as a chamber, "*Camera que vocatur Gloriette*"[2] It is probable that the first of these towers was situated at the south-east angle of the upper enceinte of the castle, overlooking the fosse on the south, and the deep valley on the east. Scarcely any vestiges now remain, but the thickness and solidity of what is left of the walls give rise to a conjecture that they were so formed for the support of a more lofty superstructure. The tower called "Butavant" was situated at the north-western angle of the castle hill. It was the *but-avant*, the foremost point or abutment in this direction, or it may have been thus named after the castle of Butavant, near Gournay, in France. It was octangular in form, and in the sixteenth century it was styled the dungeon. It contained a prison in the 31 Edward III., at which time it gave name to the whole of the middle ward. In the thirty-sixth year of Edward III., John de Elmerugg, the constable, and Thomas Elliot, mayor of the town of Corfe, render an account of the expenses incurred in various repairs and alterations in the castle, including the making a gardrobe near the "Botefant," the remains of which still exist.[3] The localities of the other towers have not been ascertained with certainty, but it appears from the ancient fabric rolls hereafter mentioned, that the one called Plenty adjoined the king's hall, which was in the keep. No trace of this can now be discovered.

There are some fragments of a rather lofty building rising above the external wall, and situated near the most extreme northern point of the castle hill, which must have formed part of a tower. It commands a very extensive view over the adjacent country, and may perhaps have been the one called "Cocaygne." This name seems to have reference to the pleasant situation of the tower, a "pays de Cocagne," meaning a pleasant country to live in.

Eastward of the Great Tower are the remains of the Great Hall. It stands in the direction of north and south, in what is called the Queen's Tower in the plan of 1586. It was placed in an upper floor, with vaulted chambers underneath it, and was approached by a flight of steps leading to a kind of lobby or vestibule, which seems to be what was called the "porchea ante cameram reginæ."

[2] Ancient Miscellanea of the Queen's Remembrancer of the Exchequer, Corfe Castle, Ed. I. to Ric. III. parcel 85.

[3] Ibid.

Adjoining the hall, at its north end, there seems to have been an apartment, which possibly may have been a small oratory, for a chapel, called the chapel of the Gloriette, certainly existed somewhere in this vicinity. Such chapels are not unfrequently met with attached to the great hall. Close to the end of the chapel was a well, which appears to have been sunk before the chapel was built, for it was partially within the line of the eastern wall, which was so constructed as to accommodate it. The well was probably dug at this spot with a view to reach the water which issues from a spring, called St. Edward's Fountain, at the base of the hill almost immediately below it. The name of the Gloriette seems to have occasionally been given to the whole of the buildings in this portion of the castle.

Extensive works were carried on towards the middle and close of the reign of Henry III., as appears by accounts rendered at the exchequer by succeeding sheriffs of the county. In the 20 Henry III. the sheriff accounts for 291*l.* 10*s.* 2¼*d.* for laying down joists and floors and for leading in the tower, and 64*l.* for making two good walls in the place of pallisades between the old and middle baileys towards the west, and between the Great Tower and the outer bailey towards the south.[4] The latter wall is manifestly that now standing, which connects the second gate with the Great Tower, and thus we are able to fix the date of this wall to the year 1236.

In the forty-fifth year of Henry III. the king commanded the sheriff of Dorset to cause to be built in a suitable situation, within the castle of Corfe, a stable large enough for twenty horses; and the gates and bridges of the said castle were also to be repaired.[5]

Near the east end of the fosse of King John stands a semi-cylindrical tower, which in its masonry corresponds with those in the upper portion of the castle, though differing materially from that of the rest of the towers of the outer bailey. It has on its exterior face a coat of arms sculptured in bold relief, on a heater-shaped shield held up by two human hands. This is the only object about the castle which can be considered as at all in the nature of a date. The arms are five fusils in bend, and it is most likely they

[4] Mag. Rot. Pipæ, Dorset, 20 H. III.

[5] Rot. Lib. 45 H. III. m. 11.

represent the coat of Alan de Plunkenet, who was constable of the castle in the fifty-fourth year of King Henry III., in which year he passed his account for 62*l.*, expended by him as constable in work done at the castle.[6] It must be admitted that the arms of Plunkenet or Plucknet had an ermine field,[7] which is not represented on this shield, but furs may possibly, at that early period, have been regarded as tinctures, in which case they would not be indicated in sculpture. If the above conjecture is right, and the tower was built by the person whose arms it is here supposed to exhibit, its date will be fixed to the year 1296.

In the rebellion of Simon de Montfort, Earl of Leicester, against Henry III., this castle, amongst others, was delivered up to the Barons, who retained possession of it for five years.[8]

The external towers and curtain walls on the higher portion of the castle hill seem to have been mostly erected before the close of this reign; but perhaps they were either not quite finished, or else repairs were speedily required, for carpenters, plumbers, and tilers continued to be employed about the towers, as well as about the *Great* Tower, in the early part of the reign of Edward I. In the eighth year of the last-mentioned king a coverer (*coopertor*) was employed for a week over the king's chamber, the chapel, the queen's chamber, the chamber called the Gloriette, the gate before the great tower, and the other houses of the castle, where requisite.[9]

With the exception of the tower which bears the shield before mentioned, and the curtain wall which unites it to the Gloriette, as well as the wall connecting the second gate with the Great Tower, nearly the whole of the outer bailey or base court seems to have been erected by King Edward I. The masonry of the curtain wall just mentioned differs widely from that of the other external walls of the castle, and much resembles some portions of the Great Tower. It seems to be anterior in date to the fosse of King John, for it stops short at a point about six feet from the north-eastern

[6] Mag. Rot. Pipæ, Dorset, 54 H. III.

[7] Nicolas's Rolls of Arms, temp. Edw. II. and Edw. III. The arms of Plokenot and Pluknett in these rolls are blazoned ermine a bend *engrailed*, but this term is very commonly used in ancient heraldic language to signify lozengy or fusilly.

[8] Hutchins's Dorset.

[9] Ancient Miscellanea of the Queen's Remembrancer of the Exchequer, Corfe Castle, Ed. I. to Ric. II. parcel 85.

tower of the outer ward, and turning at right angles towards the west, seems to have been originally carried onwards on the site now occupied by the fosse, at the foot of what is the present escarpment. A straight joint is visible at its junction with the wall which unites it to the adjacent tower, and a section of it is apparent in the inner face of the present curtain wall. The fosse has been excavated up to its base, so that it stands on a ridge of the natural chalk formed by the excavation of the fosse on the one side, and the steep outer escarpment of the hill on the other.

We have some interesting fabric rolls[1] which enable us to fix with precision the date of the entrance gateway. In the 8 Edward I., 32*s.* were paid for freestone bought for the gate and bridge; and in the following week payments were made for ninety-six cartloads of a kind of stone denominated "velluta petra," a term hitherto unexplained, at $2\frac{1}{4}d.$ per load. At the same time, Adam Buries was paid 5*s.* for making two great hinges and hooks for the outer gate, and nails for the same; and Master Ralph Totewys was paid 2*s.* for a week's wages while preparing the places where the hinges should be put, and for cutting the stone. Further evidence that this gateway was in course of construction at this time, is traced in the fact that John Catel (a name still found amongst the peasantry of Corfe) was paid 3*d.* for a week's wages for assisting Master Ralph to put up and take down the gates at night.[2] They were therefore probably made, but not finally hung. The date of this gateway may thus be safely fixed at the year 1280, and the rest of this outer bailey, with the exception of the north-eastern tower and the wall connecting it with the Gloriette, was probably erected at about the same period.

A bridge was being constructed at the same time as the entrance gateway, and a charge is made for digging the foundations. It was still unfinished in 14 Edward I.; this, however, was not either of the bridges which we now see. Both the bridges of that date were drawbridges; and a new bridge, chiefly of timber, for the middle ward, was in course of construction in 30 Edward III. Another new bridge, probably the outer one, was built in 51 Edward III., the

[1] Ibid. [2] Ibid.

piers of which were of stone, and the superstructure of timber. Five labourers were each paid 3*d.* a day for clearing out the foundation of the bridge; eight quarriers had 5*d.* a day, and five masons 4*d.* a day each for new building with stone the foundations of the said bridge for the support of the timbers to be placed thereon.[3]

In the nineteenth year of King Edward II., it was ascertained by a Royal Commission that the castle was much out of repair.[4] It does not appear whether any measures were then taken for its restoration, but less than two years afterwards it became the prison of this unfortunate monarch, before he was conveyed to Berkeley Castle, where he met his cruel fate. This must have been between 14th November, 1326, when he was taken prisoner, and the 21st September following, when he was murdered. It is probable that Edward did not remain long at Corfe, for the sympathy of the people having been awakened by his misfortunes, he was hurried from one fortress to another, in order to conceal his place of residence. There can be little doubt, however, that Corfe Castle was the scene of some of the cruelties and indignities which were inflicted upon him, with a view to deprive him of his reason or his life. His ruthless keeper, Sir John Matravers, was a Dorsetshire knight, and had property in the Isle of Purbeck.

Extensive repairs were made in the castle in the 30 Edward III., in contemplation of an expected visit from the king, which took place in September in that year. The kitchen was rebuilt in 36 Edward III.[5] Richard II. newly built the tower, called the Gloriette, between the first and third years of his reign, at a cost of 269*l.* 6*s.* 2*d.*

The castle continued long in the immediate possession of the Crown, but about the time of King Edward III. its custody and the office of constable began to be granted out for limited terms. John de Beaufort, first Earl of Somerset, had a grant of the castle in tail, and was seised of it in 11 Henry IV.[6] It continued in that family till the attainder of his grandson, Henry Beaufort, Duke of Somerset, in the first year of King Edward IV. In the year following, the last-mentioned king gave the office of Constable of Corfe

[3] Ibid.
[4] Inquis. ad quod damnum, 19 Ed. II. r. 185.
[5] Fabric rolls, *ut supra.*
[6] Esch., 11 H. IV. No. 44.

Castle, to his brother Richard, Duke of Gloucester, afterwards King Richard III., in tail;[7] and he gave the manor of Corfe Castle to the unfortunate George, Duke of Clarence, in tail male. On the latter Duke's attainder, it reverted to the Crown, and Henry VII. gave it to his mother Margaret, Countess of Richmond, for her life. He caused it to be put in repair for her use, and 2000*l.* is said to have been granted by Parliament for the purpose.

In 27 Henry VIII. the castle and manor were granted to Henry, Duke of Richmond and Somerset, natural son of Henry VIII., who died without issue, when they again reverted to the Crown. Edward VI. gave them to his uncle Edward Seymour, Duke of Somerset, the Protector,[8] on whose attainder they for the last time fell again to the Crown. Finally, Queen Elizabeth sold them to Christopher Hatton (who afterwards became Sir Christopher Hatton) in the fourteenth year of her reign.[9] Sir Christopher seems to have made considerable alteration and repairs in the building, and much of his work can still be easily distinguished. To Ralph Treswell, his steward, we are indebted for a ground plan, as before stated, and also, it is presumed, for the plans of the keep, which have been already described. Sir Christopher Hatton died without issue, and he was succeeded by his nephew, Sir William Hatton, alias Newport, son of his sister Dorothy by her husband Sir John Newport. The manor and castle of Corfe, with most of his lands in the Isle of Purbeck, seem to have been given by Sir William Hatton, alias Newport, to his wife the Lady Elizabeth Cecil, daughter of Thomas, Earl of Exeter, who afterward became the second wife of the Lord Chief Justice Coke. He sold them in 1635 to Sir John Bankes, Lord Chief Justice of England, ancestor of Henry John Perceval Bankes, Esq., of Kingston Lacey, the present owner.

On the breaking out of the civil war between Charles I. and his Parliament, Lady Bankes, the wife of Chief Justice Bankes, then owner of Corfe Castle, retired thither with her family, whilst her husband was in attendance on the king. In 1643 the castle was besieged by the Parliamentary general, Sir Walter Erle, and was gallantly defended by

[7] Pat. 2 Ed. IV. pars 1, m. 5.
[8] Pat. 1 Ed. VI. pars 4, m. 11.
[9] Pat. 14 Eliz. pars 12.

Lady Bankes, assisted only by her daughters, her women, and five soldiers. By throwing down stones and hot embers, they succeeded in repelling the assailants, and the same night an alarm being given that the king's forces were approaching, the siege was raised by Sir Walter Erle, who hastily withdrew to Poole.[1]

This castle was one of the last places in England that held out for the king. In 1645 it was a second time besieged by the Parliament's forces, who were on this occasion commanded by Colonel Bingham. A gallant resistance was again made, but treachery at length accomplished what force and strategy were unable to effect. Lieutenant-Colonel Pitman, of Somersetshire, an officer of the garrison, having concerted his plans with the besiegers, admitted a number of the enemy's soldiers in disguise. They possessed themselves of the King's and Queen's Towers, with other important points, and the governor, finding himself betrayed and in the power of the enemy, was compelled to surrender at discretion on the 26th or 27th February, 1645.

Having thus become masters of this important stronghold, the Parliament gave orders for its demolition. Some parts were pulled down, all the towers were undermined, and gunpowder was used to complete the work of destruction. Thus this magnificent pile, which had been raised at so vast a cost of money and labour, and had withstood the vicissitudes of so many ages, was at length reduced to the picturesque ruin which now excites our interest and admiration.

From the ancient fabric rolls before mentioned, we obtain some other facts which are not unworthy of notice. The greatest part of the timber used about the castle came from the New Forest, but some in 30 Edward III. was brought from Wimborne Holt, in Dorsetshire. Studland was the only place in Purbeck which supplied any, and that but once; possibly it may have been landed there from the New Forest. Lime was brought from Poole and Bindon in the 8 Edward I., but in 14 Edward I. they had begun to burn it on the spot, and a charge is made for wood for that purpose. Soon after this, however, there is again a charge for lime from Poole. Between 30 and 38 Edward III. lime was still brought from Wareham, and in 36 Edward III. from Lul-

[1] Mercurius Rusticus.

worth; in 41 Edward III. from Sturminster. In the 51 Edward III. a charge is made for constructing a limekiln —"puteum pro crematione calcis;" and forty quarters of sea coal, price 100*s.*, as well as brushwood from Kingswood, were used in burning the lime. The singular hardness and durability of the mortar with which the Castle is built, some parts of which have remained where the face of the stone has perished, gives a special interest to these facts. The sand used is sharp and coarse, and the walls were all grouted with mortar in a liquid state.

The price of sea coal for burning lime in 30 Edward III. was 2*s.* 8*d.* per quarter.

In the time of Edward I. the following was the general rate of wages paid for work done about the Castle:—Carpenters usually had $2\frac{1}{2}d.$ or 3*d.* a day, according to their skill, or from 15*d.* to 20*d.* per week; masons' wages were $3\frac{1}{4}d.$ per day; labourers received 2*d.* per day; women 4*d.* a week; and surveyors of the work had 1*s.* each per week. Iron cost $\frac{1}{2}d.$ per lb.; stone cost $2\frac{1}{2}d.$ a load; the hire of a cart and team was 6*d.* a day, but the hire of a riding-horse was only $1\frac{1}{4}d.$ a day. Much of the work was done as task-work. There is no mention of glass in any of these accounts, except for the chapel, and that is not found till so late as the fifty-first year of the reign of Edward III. The shutters of the windows are continually mentioned, and the absence of any mention of glass leads to the conclusion that none was used in the rest of the building.

THOMAS BOND.

TYNEHAM,
August, 1865.