

THE CASTLE AND KEEP OF DURHAM.

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In a recent volume of the publications of the Surtees Society Mr. James Raine, the worthy son of a distinguished sire, has given to the archaeological world a very curious poem, now first printed, entitled "*Dialogi Laurentii Dunelmensis Monachi ac Prioris*," a work of the time, and which records the intrusion of William Cumin into the See of Durham. This was a period of extreme interest in that important See, once including the city of Carlisle and the territory of Teviotdale, and at the date of the poem still holding the Castles of Durham and Norham, fortresses of the first rank, even in a district which contained Bamborough.

The strife between Stephen and Maud, severe all over England, was nowhere conducted with greater severity than upon the Tyne, the Tees, and the Wear. David of Scotland, Maud's uncle and active supporter, unsubdued by his defeat at Northallerton, claimed the earldom of Cumberland in his own right, and that of Northumberland in right of his wife. Durham alone stood in his path, and its Bishop, Geoffrey Rufus, strong in his impregnable castle, steadfastly adhered to Stephen. His death in 1140-1 enabled a certain William Cumin, an adherent of David, to obtain by force and fraud possession of the castle and the temporalities of the See, although he failed to secure his election to the Bishopric. The result was a severe contest between Cumin and the lawful Bishop, William de St. Barbe, in the course of which the cathedral was occupied by soldiery, and its monks were ill-treated and slain. It was not till 1144 that Cumin was put down and peace restored to the house and patrimony of St. Cuthbert.

Laurence, who was born at Waltham and brought up in its holy house, came to Durham during the episcopate of Flambard, who probably completed the castle, the masonry of which, at least, was begun during the reign of the Conqueror. As an ordinary monk he was celebrated for his facility in metrical composition. He became first precentor and then a chaplain to the Bishop. The episcopal seat and church of Durham has been described as

"Half church of God, half fortress 'gainst the Scot,"

and the Bishops themselves partook largely of this double character. In the Bishop's household Laurence saw much of secular life. He became a hunter of the wolf and boar, a fisherman, and a judge of horse flesh; and, if not actually a warrior, he certainly understood the principles of military defences. At the death of Bishop Rufus his connection with the episcopal household ended, and he took an active part against the

intrusion of Cumin and in the election of St. Barbe. He was for some time expelled the monastery; but after his return became Prior in 1149. On St. Barbe's death, in 1152, he led the election of de Puiset, Stephen's nephew, and supported him against the Archbishop of York, by whom he was excommunicated and sentenced to a penitential flagellation at the door of Beverley. Nevertheless, he stood firm to the election, and was one of those who accompanied de Puiset to Rome, and witnessed his consecration by the Pope. He did not, however, live to return to England, but died in France; and his bones only were laid at Durham.

The dialogues are but one of several of his poems. They may be referred to the first half of the twelfth century, when their author was probably resident within the castle with Bishop Rufus, and must have been very familiar with that nearly completed structure.

The castle still retains many of the features and some of the buildings described in the poem. The ditch which cut off the fortress from the cathedral is, it is true, filled up, and the pasture ward to the east is built over and obscured, but the south gate, though rebuilt, stands on the old site and is still the main entrance; and the wall on the right on entering still extends towards the keep. The keep itself is a late work; but the mound upon which it stands is a part of the original fortress, and the masonry is laid on the old lines, and in outline the tower no doubt represent pretty clearly the work of Flambard. A strong wall still connects the keep with the lodgings of the castle and forms the front towards the river. The chapel also remains but little altered, and the walls and arches of the dormitory are original. The well is still seen in the open court, and is, or was recently, in use. Notwithstanding various repairs, rebuildings and additions, there can be but little doubt that the Castle of Durham resembles in its general aspect the fortress of the Conqueror and of Flambard; nor is there in England any more perfect or more remarkable example of a Norman castle of the shell-keep type. The publication of the description of it by Laurence possesses, therefore, a peculiar charm; and this must be the excuse for the following attempt at its translation. The poem is here and there very obscure and occasionally scratches Priscian's head; and it may be that I have misapprehended one or two lines in the original:—

Descriptio Arcis Dunelmensis, Laur. Dunelm., I.L., 367.

Arx in eo regina sedens sublime minatur,
 Quodque videt totum judicat esse suum.
 Murus et a porta tumulo surgente severus
 Surgit, et exsurgens arcis amoena petit.
 Arx autem tenues condensa resurgit in auras,
 Intus sive foris fortis et apta satis.
 Intus enim cubitis tribus altius area surgit,
 Area de solida facta fidelis humo.
 Desuper hanc solidata domus sublimior arce
 Eminent insigni tota decore nitens.
 Postibus inniti bis cernitur ipsa duobus,
 Postem quippe potens angulus omnis habet.
 Cingitur et pulchra paries sibi quilibet ala,
 Omnis et in muro desinit ala fero.
 At pons emergens ad propugnacula promptos

Et scandi faciles præbet ab æde gradus.
 Cumque venit eo via lata cacumina muri
 Ambit, et arcis ita sæpe meatur apex.
 Arx vero formam prætendit amœna rotundam,
 Arte, nitore, statu, fortis, amoena, placens.
 Hinc in castellum pons despicit, atque recursus
 Huc et eo faciles pons adhibere solet :
 Largus enim gradibus spatiatur ubique minutis,
 Nec se præcipitat sed procul ima petit.
 At prope murus eum descendit ab arce reflectens
 In zephyrum faciem flumen ad usque suam.
 Cujus ab acria largo sinuamine ripa
 Se referens arvum grande recurvus obit.
 Obditus et siccis aquilonis hiatibus arcem
 Exsurgens repetit fortis ubique feram.
 Nec sterilis vacat eade locus quem circumat alti
 Ambitus hic muri ; tecta decora tenet.
 Consita porticibus duo magna palatia præfert
 In quibus artifices ars satis ipsa probat,
 Fulget et hic senis suffulta capella columnis,
 Non spatiosa nimis, sed speciosa satis.
 Hic thalami thalamis sociantur, et aedibus aedes,
 Et datur officio quaelibet apta suo.
 Hic vestes, ibi vasa nitent, hic arma coruscant,
 Hic (*sic*) æra latent, hic caro, panis ibi.
 Hic fruges, ibi vina jacent, hic potus avenæ,
 Hic et habet propriam munda farina domum.
 Cumque sic hinc domus atque domus jungantur, et aedes
 Ædibus, inde tamen pars ibi nulla vacat.
 Castelli medium vacat æde, sed exhibet altum
 Ille locus puteum sufficientis aquæ.

Queen-like the castle sits sublime, and frowns
 O'er all she sees, and deems the whole her own.
 Straight from the gate the gloomy wall ascends
 The mound, and thus the stately keep attains.
 A close-built citadel, piercing the clear air,
 Outside and inside strong, well fitted to its use.
 Its base, of heaped up earth three cubits raised,
 Solid and firm, the floor does thus support ;
 On which firm base the supereminent keep
 Rises, unrivalled in its glittering sheen.
 On twice two timbers stayed, are seen to rest
 The buildings there, for each main angle one :
 While round each half circumference are wings,
 Each ending in a formidable wall.
 Springing from these a bridge, by easy steps,
 To the high battlements an access forms.
 Where the broad wall all round gives ample path,
 And thus the summit of the keep is gained.
 Stately that keep ! a circle in its form,
 Splendid and strong by art, and by position fair.

Thence, downward to the castle, leads the bridge,
And offers easy access to and fro ;
For broad its path with many a shallow step,
The base attaining by a gradual slope.
Hard by, the wall, thrown backwards from the keep,
Faces the west towards th' encircling stream,
On whose high bank continued, it enfolds
With a bold sweep an ample pasture there ;
From parching northern blasts protected thus,
And so curves round to the stern keep again.
Nor does the space within the wall embraced
Stand without buildings: such there are, and good,
Two porches to two palaces belong,
Of which the work to th' artist brings no shame.
Here too a chapel fair six columns boasts.
Nor large, nor small, but fitted to its needs.
Here beds lie near to beds, and halls to halls,
Each for its province suitably disposed :
Robes here, bright vessels there, here glittering arms,
Here bread, there flesh, and tempting coin concealed,
And corn and wine laid down, and barley beer,
And the clear flour here finds its proper bin.
Thus on one side house joins to house, and hall
To hall. The other too is occupied.
The court alone is free, and there is seen
The well, full deep, with water well supplied.