

ART. VIII.—*Kendal Castle.* By J. Whitwell, Esq., M.P.,
of Kendal.

Read at the Museum, Kendal, August 29th, 1867.

STANDING on a rounded hill, nearly in the centre of a valley, formed by three sister streams of almost equal magnitude, meeting and mingling their waters thenceforth, in first merry, then hurried, and finally placid journey to the ocean, Kendal Castle forms a conspicuous object to every traveller passing northward, or towards the Lakes. Although in a deplorable state of ruin, it is still prominent in the landscape, and naturally invites the inquiry, when and by whom was it erected? It is to be regretted that no chronicle records the period, or the name of its founder. The situation it occupies, would be selected by any strategist seeking a position of defence in the valley. Nor can anyone doubt that the skill and necessities of the Roman officer who first commanded the camp at Water Crook would induce him to take possession of the Castle Hill, and as he had done at Helme End, so would he do here, erect earthworks, and establish a camp of observation. An intelligent observer will remark on the north sides of the walls considerable embankments outlying the fortifications of the ancient castle, and which are in all probability the remains of Roman works of defence.

Let us for a moment recur to this locality at the time when Roman troops occupied the camp at Water Crook (*Concangium*). When Low Burrow Bridge, twelve miles away, the fortress of Alaunce was occupied by another portion of the legion at Water Crook, and when at the camp at Ambleside (*Dictis*) a wing of a different legion was quartered. The road had then been made along the Lune by Crosby Ravensworth to Brougham and Brough, &c. (*Verteræ* and *Brevacum*). Another road passed over Hard Knot to the west coast; and a short mountain road existed from Kendal over the High Street to Brougham and old Penrith. The north-west of England was alive in those days with the passing to and fro of Roman legions between positions on the furthermost boundary of their empire in Scotland, and the south, and their establishments and dependants whose homes were situated in the cultivated but guarded stations in the rear were continually on the move.

The

The days of the occupation of Britain ended, the rumours of wars in the south and east of Europe found their tardy way to these quiet regions, for the east was then, as in the campaigns of the crusaders, and subsequently in the days of Abercrombie, Moore, and our Crimean campaigns, the battle field of the sons of the north. Roman officers ceased to recruit among the hardy natives of our present Yorkshire and Westmorland; the Roman legions from Africa and Spain were withdrawn southward, and the perils of the boasted rulers of the world concentrated the outlying strength of the huge empire of east and west far away from these shores. Almost former rudeness of manners and of life recovered its sway, and unchecked and uncultivated nature buried under its growth the marks once so deeply impressed by Rome. How long things remained in this position, in this neighbourhood, we cannot discover; but Saxon conquest and Saxon mission work were felt in the north and west, and we know that for some time prior to the Norman conquest a church existed where, as I believe, our church now stands.

I doubt, however, whether the site of this castle was adopted by the Saxon dwellers here, on the borders of that wilderness into which the commissioners of the Norman conqueror dared not, or could not penetrate. It seems much more probable that situated on the banks of the Kent, and engaged in their industrial trades and pursuits, they protected themselves by fortifications on the east side of the town immediately behind them, with the river in their front, and that the works of defence under Castle Howe Hill, and the Castle Howe Hill itself were the castle—so to say—of the Saxon inhabitants of Kendal. How far the influence of this ancient town extended we know not, but that wonderful old book “The Domesday Survey” tells us that this valley was cultivated as far as the Stricklands and Paton, but no record goes further north. While the survey reaches Sedbergh on the east, and Bootle and Santon Kirk on the west, a line is drawn at those points, and leaving out the whole of our present lake district, and the rest of Cumberland and Westmorland, the survey indicates that this town must have been a place of defence on the extreme borders of the Saxon territory.

Of course the people and the land were granted to a great Norman chieftain, whose possessions in the east of England were far more attractive, and required more of his attention than these in the north, and it may be questioned whether Ivo de Tailebois had ever a settled residence in these parts. It is
probable

probable however that his immediate descendants became residents, as the acts of ownership which they exercised would indicate, and they soon assumed the title of Barons of Kendal. Another reason for supposing that Kendal was early made the residence of this great Norman family is, that while holding large territory in the north of Lancashire, and while obtaining permission to assume the name of de Lancaster, so early as the reign of Henry II., four successive chieftains had previously borne, and their successors maintained the title of Barons of Kendal.

If it may be allowed to conjecture, it is not unreasonable to suppose that a clever and powerful military commander like Ivo de Tailebois would, finding a Saxon town on the banks of the Kent, resolve to utilize its industry and protect the open valley, whose centre it occupied. The strong tower on the north-west of the present Castle, if not erected at that period, must have been built not many years subsequently, and would form the beginning of the Castle, afterwards enlarged by successive barons.*

It may be reasonably supposed that a baron like William de Tailebois, the fourth in succession, took a great interest in the neighbourhood, and resided here, for we find him disputing with the monks of Furness Abbey as to the boundary line of their respective forest rights, in which he evidently felt deeply interested, and was probably as keen and venturesome a sportsman as any landed gentleman of the present day. And, indeed, he managed matters so well in this respect, that in the settlement between the baron and the abbot, upon reference to thirty sworn men, William de Lancaster retained the hunting and hawking over the Church lands as well as his own, and maintained the right as protector of fisheries, specially to supply the boatmen on Thurston Water and Windermere. He surrendered to the clever churchmen the seigniority over all the lands in dispute, agreeing to hold his own portion of the lands of the abbot by the payment of twenty shillings per annum. The one got the game and the sport, the other got a gentle hold over all the estates.

It may be fairly concluded that a baron so intent on his amusements in the neighbourhood, had a residence here, and, if so, we date it back to the year 1162, for one of the jury who settled this dispute was Robert, Earl of Leycester, who was Lord Chief Justice in the eighth year of Henry II.

* A recent visit to the towers of Pevensey and elsewhere, on the Sussex coast, built soon after the Norman invasion, confirm my opinion that the north-west tower of Kendal Castle was erected very early in the Norman occupation.

The next William was steward of King Henry II, and in all probability he was more engaged near his master, for we find fewer of his acts connected with this county recorded, than of his predecessors.

But now one of those events occurred, which are so common in the early history of the great Norman families. The estates of the first Ivo passed from his family into another, through the want of male successors. The second William de Lancaster had an only daughter, Helwise. Like all other heiresses in that unsettled time, she would be made a ward of the Crown, and there was good cause why she should be so, for her father imbued with the spirit—shall we call it chivalry or ferocity?—of the times, gave thirty marks to the king for permission to fight a duel with Gospatrick, the son of Orme, and thereby raised up many enemies.

Whether with or against her own consent cannot now be known, Helwise was married to Gilbert, son of Roger Fritz Reinfred. Now, as this Roger, son of Reinfred, was a great favourite of King Richard the First, and was a judge of the King's Bench, it is not surprising that he was able to secure for his son Gilbert the hand of this great heiress, and as if to show his special sanction to the marriage, and at the same time secure to the bridegroom, by special grant, the property that he obtained by his wife, Richard gave to Gilbert the whole FOREST of Westmorland, and of Kendal, and of Furness, to hold for ever, as freely as William de Lancaster had held the same. Now, it is clear that Gilbert intended like his wife's grandfather, to be a resident sportsman in Westmorland, of the true Norman species, for he secured by the king's grant, that all that had been waste in the woods of Westmorland and Kendal, *should be waste still* except by special licence and consent of the Baron. Perhaps no deed could more thoroughly show us the full extent of baronial authority than does this deed of grant—no tax, no right of punishment, no extent of power that can be expressed in words, is withheld from this grant of the king to his baron; no wonder that in the next reign, men invested with such power used it against the king, but more wonderful that they used it in favour of the people, of others, as well as of themselves. Two or three little incidents may be mentioned in connection with Gilbert, showing that he was a man of great intelligence, was probably assisted by the wisdom of his father, the judge, and they especially show the progress of civilization in that age.

We remember that his father-in-law paid a fine to fight a duel

duel with Gospatrick, the son of Orme ; now, either as idem-
nity or apology, it is interesting to find that Gilbert gives
to Thomas, the son of Gospatrick, lands in Holme, Preston,
and Hutton, and this grant is confirmed by his son William,
the next baron. To the former grant is attached the name
of the judge of the King's Bench as a witness, so I am in-
clined to think that the grant was a prudent compensation to
the son of the slain Gospatrick, recommended by Gilbert's
father-in-law.

But my hearers may naturally conceive that our reverend
friends the monks of Furness would view with dismay the
king's grant to Gilbert of the whole of Furness, overriding
all their privileges and the arrangement about their forestry
which we have described. The grant had therefore scarcely
been issued before the Abbot and Convent of Furness appear
by their cellarar (a most important officer, indeed the second
father in the convent was entrusted with this duty,) and
by their solicitor, William de Loysdale, and pleaded for the
preservation of their ancient boundary. Gilbert and Helwise
his wife—for as the daughter of the Norman baron and the
heiress, she is associated with her husband in these pleadings
—obtained from the monks of Furness in the settlement of
this dispute, the whole of the town of Ulverstone, but they
consented to the restitution of the old boundaries of Wry nose
to the Leven water, and yielded back to the Abbey, buck,
doe, and falcon, in the church lands, for the table and sport of
the reverend monks.

Now, here comes a fact relative to this arrangement, which
must interest us all. Gilbert and his wife seem to have had
great pleasure in encouraging the prosperity of communities,
and they made arrangements with Ulverstone with the intent
of benefitting the inhabitants of that town. Kendal had been
an object of great interest to Gilbert and his wife ; they had
observed the industry of its inhabitants ; they had granted
them privileges ; they had appointed Matthew de Redman,
then the owner of Levens, to be Seneschal of Kendal. Gil-
bert had obtained from the king the grant of a weekly market
for Kendal on Saturdays. And now having obtained pos-
session of Ulverstone, he resolved to make the inhabitants free,
free to work for themselves and free to hold property. They
had been merely villains of the Abbots of Furness. He now
made them free burgesses of the ville, granted them the
right to take housesteads, to buy and sell land, only reserving
to himself a lord's rent. These liberated men, who had been
liable

liable to forfeit the tongue for speaking against their lord, had now the offence commuted to a fine of fourpence, and all other customs were to be like those of other free boroughs in the neighbourhood.

Notwithstanding all this generosity it is amusing to see the spirit of the old baron creeping out, not in the reservation of his bakehouse, his dyeing-house, his fulling-mill, and his corn-mill, all which had to be managed by the lord for the benefit of the community, as well as his own profit, and he limits the payments for their use to the usual payments made by others ; but in the little clause of authority that the newly enfranchised burghers should sell ale dearer by one penny, each sextar, than is done at Appleby, and by one penny cheaper to *me* than to their neighbours.

That Kendal, as well as Ulverstone, had great privileges under this baron cannot be doubted, for when Roger de Lancaster, then hunting at Witherslack, in the year 1285, grants new security and privileges to the burgesses of Ulverstone, he sums up that they are not to be called upon for any additional services than those which the burgesses of Kendal perform.

Our liberal baron Gilbert, as might be concluded, adhered to the party of the rebellious barons in King John's reign, and in the seventeenth year of that king had to pay a fine of 12,000 marks, by which his son William, and Ralph D'Aincourt, the then possessor of Sizergh, and nearly allied to the Stricklands, were liberated from captivity. Nevertheless, on rumours of fresh dissatisfaction among the barons, the king called on this powerful baron to give hostages for his fidelity, and we find these hostages selected from the families in the immediate neighbourhood, proving, without doubt, that the power of the baron lay around Kendal, that all his adherents were faithful, and that the castle of Kendal was then not only his residence but his strongest fortress, for in addition to the sons and daughters, *being heirs*, of Redman, Roger de Kirkby, Denzil Burton, Strickland, Yealand, Beetham and Coupland, he gave into the custody of the king, the castle of Kirkby in Kendal. Had the castle of Lancaster, or any other castle been stronger, or his residence, such would have been surrendered. It may, therefore, be concluded without doubt, that Kendal was the baronial mansion and fortress of the baron of Kendal, whose demesne, including Lancashire, extended at this time over the whole or nearly the whole of Westmorland.

The

The next successor was the third William, and he having obtained full possession of all his father's land, kept residence in his father's castle, from which he made a grant to the monks of Furness. It is dated at Kendal, November 6, 1240, and is witnessed by his wife Agnes, and amongst others, Rowland, his seneschal of Kendal, and by "my high constable of Kirkby;" but I am not sure whether the Kirkby named here is of Kendal or Ireleth.

One remark more and we have done with the Lancasters, for this William was the last of the line. Agnes his wife was the sister of Peter le Brus, who had married Helwise of Lancaster, William's eldest sister. The second sister, Alice, married William de Lyndsay. This great estate became thus divided into fees well known in Westmorland, the Marquis or Lumley fee, the property of Helwise de Brus, and the Richmond fee, the property of Alice de Lyndsay. Peter de Brus was succeeded by a daughter, who married a De Roos, and during this time for nearly a hundred years the Castle was little inhabited. A female descendant of the De Roos married William del Parr, Knight, who died in the year 1405, of whom nothing seems known.

It is a most remarkable circumstance that a fatality seems to have accompanied the Richmond division of the estate, it having reverted over and over again to the Crown from failure of a male heir, and a similar condition has too often attached to the proprietorship of the Marquis and Lumley fees. The Castle, however, remained in the respectable but not opulent family of the Perrs from the close of the fourteenth century to the year 1562, or nearly one hundred-and-eighty years.

During the most of this time no one of any ability seems to have represented the family, and the building was probably only kept up as a simple gentleman's occasional residence. At least, no one is before the public until Sir Thomas Parr married Maud the mother of Queen Catherine, whose correspondence is that of a tactician of eminent ability, when she recommends her daughter "from the good stock she has come of," as especially suited to marry Lord Scrope's son. The skill of the mamma must have descended to the daughter when she achieved a king for her consort, and a king whom she contrived to survive.

After the ascent of Katherine Parr to the throne all the funds necessary for the support of the family were needed in London, and the small property, which could only afford

Katherine

Katherine a fortune of £650, was diverted from the maintenance of the castle at Kendal for the ambitious devices of Dame Maud Parr. The family gained nothing by their elevation, the last son of the house was attainted, his property escheated to the crown, and even then the castle was become a ruin. We need not further describe its history as it remained in the crown, and was granted from time to time either to the heir to the crown, or to unknown favourites until the year 1723, when Sir James Anderton sold it to a William Higgins, and it was sold and resold till it came to the present possessor.

To those who are familiar with the castle there is not much difficulty in understanding its construction. It will be seen that the fosse on the west side has more space than that on the east side, and that a wall enclosing a building such as the round tower, with adjacent erections, would naturally stand on the most convenient site for defence, and facility of erection.

This, I presume, to have been the main building at first, as the castle was extended it will be seen that the eastern wall and ditch have been made on a very steep slope of the hill, or, as I believe, probably filled up space.

The tower to the south-west corner has been strong and ancient; that to the south-east corner less ancient but equally strong. The strength of the walls is very great, and the stones cemented in the usually rude manner of the early Norman period.

The survey of the castle in 1572 gives us but little clue to the description of the castle at that time, indeed, those surveys were often made for such special purposes that they are not always to be relied upon.

The outline of the wall has conformed to the shape of the ground, and is not rectangular as fortifications generally are, but the strength of the situation prevented the necessity of elaborate details of angle and counterscarp.

Whitaker singularly says that he observes no water. Now, it is a remarkable circumstance that on this rounded elevation, rising from all sides, there is an almost constant supply of water in the western ditch, and doubtless if the source was investigated there would be found an ample spring for the wants of a large household and garrison.

There is extensive decayed building underneath the earth inside the yard, but the decay of stone and lime and the good shelter the walls have provided for cattle has caused the soil thickly

thickly to overspread these remains, although their excavations would add some information as to the arrangement of the internal buildings.

The tower on the south-west would be specially devoted to the use of the outdoor servants and to the stables of the lord—the tower on the south-east has been probably used for the armed retainers and tenants. The tower on the north-east, loftily overlooking the other buildings and the demesnes of the baron as far as the eye can reach, down to where the sea breaks over the sandy bay, and westward away to the Wrynose Pass, where the wolf and the boar found a home in the forests of Langdale and Tilberthwaite, was dedicated to the family of the lord.

The vaulted chamber, with its large fireplace, but imperfectly lighted; the area raised above it, in which were the large hall, and the lord's room, and the upper rooms, floor upon floor to a lofty height in the tower, would be all needed to provide accommodation for the family, and visitors.

It is very probable that during the long possession of the castle by the Parrs, a considerable portion of the building once occupied by the Barons of Kendal was removed, and alterations made, which prevent our clearly seeing the remains of the old Norman arrangements.

There is enough however, to show that the castle was one of importance—its proportions are good, its arrangement excellent, when the site and the object of its erection are jointly considered,—and it presents as other buildings of the era and kind must ever present, the illustration of changing times and manners. The powerful family seated in their greatness, looked down on the busy workers below, expecting, probably, that their seat would abide for ever, and although the lord's soke mill and his dye-house, his bakery, and his fulling-mill are strangely changed, and the wool that was dyed and spun, no longer clothes the Kendal Bowman, or the seneschall of Kendal in green and gold; nor yet are the people exclusively fed from the lord's mill or of the lord's acres of wheat, yet is industry and work busy at the loom, the wheel, and the frame, and we hope not uselessly so for the world around, while the lord's halls stand empty and forsaken, and the Norman name is only remembered by the archæologist or the student.

This fact strengthens the earnest wish that the owner of this property, though but a fragment of the demesnes of old, would either himself protect the crumbling ruins, or hand them over for care to this or some other local body. The duty and

pleasure

pleasure of preserving these venerable and historical remains for the study and gratification of the future inhabitants of the town, and as an object of interest to every student of English antiquity, would be cheerfully accepted and faithfully executed by many of the inhabitants of Kendal.
