

THE ATTEMPT TO ANNEX GATESHEAD TO NEWCASTLE
IN 1575.

THERE were at least three attempts made to annex Gateshead to Newcastle. One was carried out in 1552, during the disturbing reign of Edward VI., and while the see was vacant by the deprivation of Tunstal. The reasons assigned for the act were the flight of offenders from Newcastle into the jurisdiction of Gateshead, the deposit or rubbish in the Tyne by Gatesiders, and the ruinous state of the Gateshead portion of the bridge. The act was repealed by Mary when she restored Bishop Tunstal to his see of Durham, the annexing statute having been compassed by the "sinister labour, great malice, and corrupt means" of ambitious persons then in power.

Concerning the second attempt, during Elizabeth's reign, we have highly interesting evidences among the State Papers, and these are now submitted to the Society. It must be premised that the see was again vacant by the death of Bishop Pilkington. The first document is written in ignorance of some considerations submitted to Lord Burghley by Newcastle.

TO THE RIGHT HONORABLE THE LORD BURGHLEY, LORD HIGHE TREASUROR OF ENGLANDE.

In most humble wise shewe to your honorable Lordshipp the Burgeses and Comunaltye of the borroughe of Gatashed, in the countye of Durham, in whiche borrowghe there are to the number of fower hundred householders and dyvers artificers usinge freelye their artes and misteries and other lawdable customes of theyr said towne; and the said Burgeses and Comynaltie doe holde the said bourrough of the Bisshoppe of Derham, and have had a corporacion of Baylies, Burgeses, and Comynaltie, and have had cognizaunce of plea and execution of justice in the said borroughe. So yt is and yt please your good lordshippe that your lordshippes said oratours are given to understande that the Maiour and Aldermen of Newcastell nowe beinge (there nowe beinge no Bisshoppe to open his righte, tytle, and liberties of his said towne), have made sute to your lordshippe to have the said borrough annexed and incorporated to the towne of Newcastell, in prejudice of the said bisshopp-

ricke, surmysinge dyvers consideracions (as your lordshippes said oratours have harde) the rather to induce your lordshippe to yeilde to their demaunde. Whereunto your lordshippes said oratours can make no aunswere, for that they have not as yet understandinge of the verye maner and certentye of their said surmyses and consideracions, whiche, when they shall understande of, they doubt not but to aunswere to the same fullie and sufficientlie, and make prouffe that the requeste and suyte of the said towne of Newcastle ys to the prejudice and againste the former priviledges of the said borrough of Gateshed and inheritaunce of the bisshoppricke of Durham, and that all the causes, mischeiffes, and consideracions alledged by the said towne of Newcastle, to induce your lordshippe to yeilde to their suyte therein, are eyther untrewre or deservinge small remedye, or els suche as maye easelie receyve remedie without eyther prejudice to the said bisshoppricke or alteringe the state and corporacion of your lordshippe's said oratours, and other greate myscheiffes which therbye will growe to your lordshippes said oratours, to their utter undoinge, yf they maye not be receyved to objecte againste suche their suyte and demaunde. Maye yt therefore please your honorable lordship, of your accustomed goodnes, to receyve and admytte your lordshippe's said oratours to make their aunswere and defence to the said suyte and demaunde, as to here the matters and causes that your lordshippes said oratours shall open to your good lordshippe in the premisses, for the preservacion of their liberties, rightes, and freedome, before your lordshippe offer eyther your lordshippe's favour, aide, or helpe to the said suyte of the said towne of Newcastle. For yf their said suyte shoulde take effecte as larglie and amplye as they pretende, the same will tourne to the utter owerthrowe of the whole borrough of Gateshed, and but to the pryvate proffitte of a fewe of the said towne of Newcastle. For which your lordshippe's honorable favour herein, your lordshippe's said oratours shall moste hartelye praye for your good lordshippe in all honour and felicitye longe to lyve.

On parchment, endorsed—"3 Martij.—The Maiour,¹ Burgesses, and Cominalty of Gatesyde, against the sute of the Maiour and Comminaltie of Newcastle, for the annexing of that borrough to theirs."

On the 7th, we have a rough document scarcely better than a draft (upon paper), to the following effect:—

CERTEN INCONVEYNIANCES THAT MAY ARISE BY THE UNYTING OF THE BROUGH OF GATESHED UNTO THE TOWNE OF NEWCASTELL.

Itm. That where as the brough of Gateshed, having Bailife, Burgesies, and a greate nombre of Comynaltie, to the nombre at the least of iij. m. parsons or their aboutes, have heretofore, for the space of iiij. c. yeres and above, occupied freely their artes and mysteryes, which was only the stay of their lyving: It may by this unyting come to passe

¹ For this designation the orators are not responsible. It proceeds from some one in the Lord Treasurer's chambers.

that the Maiour of Newcastle and his brethren shall shutt upp their shoppes of the said artificers, and stopp thyer trades and occupieing, which heretofore they have frely used, the which, if it so shall fall out, wilbe an utter undoing and a beggering of the whole towne.

Itm. That where as certen poore men of Gateshed have by the consent of the Bushopp, nowe decessed, and the Justices of the Shire, buylded certen shoppes and howses upon that part of the bridge which doth apperteyne unto countie of Busshoprick, the which shoppes and houses were seassed [cessed] and rented by the said Busshopp and Justices for the repaying of the said bridge: It may come to passe that the Maiour of Newcastle and his brethren, shall, by vertue of the said unyting, take the said howses and shoppes to them selves, and sease the same at thier owne pleasures, which shalbe an utter undoing to certen poore men and thier children, who at thier great costes and chardges buylded the same.

Thirdly. That where as their doth apperteyne unto the Bailife, Burgeses, and Comminaltie of Gateshed, by vertue of a certen aunycant grant, certen commens and pastures, which the said towne of Gateshed have of a longe tyme enjoyed without any lett or disturbance: It may come to passe by the said unyting that the towne of Newcastle shall clayme an enterest or title unto thies commodities, the which will bring the poore brough of Gateshed to extreme myserye.

Last of alle, we are the rather induced to thinke that thies thinges will come to passe by the said unyting of the townes, for that heretofore, contrary, as it may seme, to all justice, they have had a great disdayne at the said towne of Gateshed, in so moche that they have, by thier auctoritie, heretofore prohibited the said townsmen of Gateshed, as taners and others, to buy and selle in the Quenes high markt, so that those which have come to buy wares or sell any in the said markt, they have troubled them by way of arrest and ymprisonment; and this wee dare be bold to prove, or else to suffer punyshment accordingly.

Many more inconveniaunces myght ensue by this unytinge of the townes, which we are not able to declare, because we have not [conferred with the burgesses of the said towne—*erased*] time to consyder of the premises, and therefor are ignoraunte of such inconveniaunces.

Endorsed—"7 Mar. 1575 [6]."

Accompanying this is a fair paper writing, with the same title as the last. It is printed by Mr. Surtees,² as in opposition to the passing of th Act of Edward VI.; but the mention of the Queen and the late rebellion of the Rising of the North sufficiently identify it with the present proceeding, independently of its address to Master Bell, the Speaker of Parliament, and its existence as a State Paper of the reign of Elizabeth. It states the situation of Gateshead and its charge to the assessments of Durham, which ought to be continued if the act passed. The town was ruled by the Bailiff and Burgesses, and was as well governed, as to justice

² Vol. ii., p. 111.

and keeping clean the river, as Newcastle, the South side of the stream being deeper than the North side. The act proposed to be revived annexed Gateshead to Newcastle, to be parcel thereof and not of the County Palatine; and yet had a proviso leaving the inhabitants for punishment in Durham, so that they would be under the rule and correction of the Corporation of Newcastle, the Justices of Durham, and the Wardens and Stewards of the Trades in Gateshead. The act provided that it should not extend to take away any common; and there were 1,000 acres and more belonging to Gateshead and adjoining towns. But if these towns [*sic*] were annexed, they might put all their cattle to eat with Gateshead, or enclōse, and have the coal of Gateshead Moor, which, if won, were a disinherison to the see of 10,000*l*. The county would want the help of Gateshead in bearing the assessed charges of the county. Finally, if the union took place, Gateshead would be replenished with evil persons and thieves, being outside the walls, as was the north part of Newcastle; whereas, now, there were a great number of substantial and true subjects, as the late rebellion testified, merchants, drapers, and other artificers, envied by Newcastle because they dwelt so nigh to it.

This was addressed to Master Bell,³ the Speaker of Parliament. Another paper was sent to Lord Burghley:—

TO THE RIGHT HONORABLE SIR WILLIAM CECILL, KNIGHT, BARON OF BURGHLEY, AND LORD HIGHE TREASURER OF ENGLAND.

Humblye shewen and besechen your honour your poore oratours the inhabytauntes of the brough of Gateside, in the countye of Durisme. That where as there is exhibited into the Highe Courte of Parlyament one bill for the unitinge of the townes of New Castell and Gateside aforesaid together, thies inconvenyences ensuinge by the unitinge of the same townes will ensue unto the said boroughe of Gateside, to the utter undoinge of the poore inhabytauntes therof, if the same bill shall take effecte.

1. *First*, Whereas it is said, in the said bill, that the nowe inhabytauntes of Gatesyde shall not be hyndred to occupie suche trades as they have used; nevertheles by equitye of the said bill, when the nowe inhabytauntes are dedd or gon, theire prentices and children, and suche as shall succede them, shalbe utterly barred of all occupyinge.

2. *Item*, It is likewise said, in the said bill, that the said inhabyt-

³ Robert Bell, Esq., afterwards Sir Robert Bell, was presented by the Commons for their Speaker, and, with the usual ceremonies, approved on the 10th May, 1572. John Popham, Esq., Solicitor-General, was chosen by the Commons, on the 20th January, 1580, in the place of "Sir Robert Bell, Knight, Lord Chief Baron of the Exchequer, their mouth and speaker, lately dead."

auntes shall not be charged with the repayre of the bridge above iijd. the pounde of their goodes and landes, and the towne of Newe Castell to be their cessoours, whereby it is ment that the inhabytauntes of Gatesyde shall be charged and cessed by their goodes, which exaccion was never before laid upon the [poore—*erased*] inhabytauntes of Gateside.

3. *Item*, Whereas it is said, in the said bill, that every inhabitant of Gateside, sérvinge with a free man in Newe Castell in any arte or mistery, shalbe afterward demed as a free man, whiche is no benefite to the towne of Gateside, for they will never take any of the towne of Gateside to be their préntices, nether suffer, by vertué of their private orders which they have amonge them selves; any of Gateside to take a prentyce. Wherof it will ensue, that the poore men of Gatesyde, becomyng aged and cannot take apprentices, shall be dryven to begge when they be past labour, so that of free burgesses they shall be brought into extreme bondage.

4. *Item*, By reason of the said statute, if it procede, the sonnes and préntices of the inhabytauntes of Gateside shall never be made free, so as in contynuance of tyme the towne shall be dispeopled, and so of an auntyent buroughe shalbe made a desolate place.

5. *Item*, Whereas every straunger comyng into the towne did first agree with the Bishshop and the Company of his occupacion before he was suffered to occupie, this benefyte by this bill is ment to be taken bothe from the Bishshop and the artifycers of the towne.

6. *Item*, Wheras the Bishshop's Steward kepte a courte every fortnight, or as often as nedé did require, if this statute procede that benefyte shalbe taken from hym.

7. *Item*, Wheras there is a suggestyon made that they seké to unite the townes for preservacion of the river; there are such holsome constytutions, ordennances, and lawes, made in the courtes of Gateside, by the Baylifes and Burgesses, and the same so well kepte, that the ryver is déper on that side that belongeth to Gatesyde then the other syde is.

8. *Item*, Wheras the Bailif hathe his office by patent from the Bishshop, a parte wherof is to ponnyshe the offenders, yf this statute may procede, that parte of his office shalbe taken awaye.

9. *Item*, Wheras the p'son hathe a certen pryvedge in a strete in one parte of the towne, by vertue wherof he dothe yerely kepe a courte, havinge his officer to se faltes corrected, which are founde by twelve men at the same courte, this benefyte shall by this bill be taken awaie.

Wherfore and forasmuche, right honorable, as not only thies inconveniences, but a greate number moe, are like to ensue to the poore towne and inhabytauntes of Gateside, to the overthrowe of nere mⁱ mⁱ mⁱ [3,000] people, if this bill maye take effecte; bysides a number also of

inconveniencies whiche maye ensue to the Bishop therby, it maye please your honour for charitie's sake to be a meane that the said bill do not procede, or els that your oratours maye be free of Newe Castell. And your poore oratours shall dailye prairie for your honour in helth, with increase of happy felycytie, longe to lyve.

Endorsed—(date hidden, but apparently 12 Mar.)—
 “The Inhabetauntz of Gatesyde. Articles against the Bill exhibited by those of Newcastle.”

Yet probably all this would have gone for little, had not private influence been used. Sir William Fleetwood, Recorder of London, was also Escheator of Durham under Bishop Pilkington, and during the vacancy of the see after his death. And here is his warm representation :—

TO THE RIGHT HONORABLE AND MY SYNGULER GOOD LORD, MY LORD TREASURER OF ENGLAND.

My very good Lord,—As I have great cause to thanke your honour for my selff, even so I doo most humbly render the lyke to your good lordshipp for the bisshopryke of Duresme. I have always found your lordshipp the patron of that countrey. Your lordshipp haith those that in that countrey dowe pray for your lordshipp and love yow. I do most humbly beseeche yowr honour to continue your favorable countenance towards the same countrye. How derely I love that countie, and all the partes thereof, God, that knoweth the secrettes of all mens hartes, can witnes. There is no bishopp in the parliament to speake for theym. They have neyther knyghtes for the shire nor burges of any towne in that countrey. Surely, my Lord, God will blesse theym that shall speake for the countrey. The towne of Gatessyde is a corporate towne, an auncient borowgh, the keye of the countie pallantyne, the people religeus, godly, and good Protestannes, and, besides, men of good welthe, and very civill of behaveier. The towne of Newcastle are all Papistes, save Anderson, and yet is he so knitt in suche sort with the Papistes that *Aiunt, auit; negant, negat*. I understand that the towne of Newcastle, enflamed with ambicion and malice, sycke in a sorte to joyne Gatessyde to the Newcastle. My Lorde, I beseeche your lordshipp, lett us not be troubled with it in the Common Howse, but stay it above, and the poore towne, and all wee of the bisshoprick, shall pray for your lordshipp.

Your lordshipp's most humble

W. FLETEWODE.

Endorsed—“12 Mart. 1575.—The Recorder of London to my L., that the Bill concerninge Gateshede may not passe.”

The bill did not pass. Another attempt was made to the same effect in 1646, the troubles of the times being taken advantage of, as were the

vacancies on previous occasions. That there was some reason for the assertion concerning the state of religion in Newcastle cannot be doubted. We have in it an explanation of the opposition to Knox, and of the permission to bury Mrs. Dorothy Lawson after the manner of her own church. I was about to add, that here was one reason that the fires of Smithfield never blazed here; but Tunstall's diocese contained Gateshead also. I find a more genuine explanation in his own heart, and perhaps the remembrance that he had served other masters.

W. HYLTON DYER LONGSTAFFE, F.S.A.