

## (C.)

## Note, p. 10.—PELE.

The use and abuse of the word 'Pele' requires almost an essay to itself.

Far from being an isolated tower, built in a sort of traditionary imitation of a Norman keep, a pele, in the mediæval acceptation of the term, was rather, as Sir Walter Scott defines it, 'a place of strength, the defences of which are of earth mixed with timber, strengthened with palisades.'—*Waverley Novels*, ed. 1834, vol. 48, Glossary, p. 471.

Apparently *Pill* was the name given in Celtic to the primæval hill-fort (Richard's *Welsh and English Dictionary*), though both this and the English word may possibly be derived from some common root.

Horton-next-the-Sea, licensed to be crenellated in 1292, is called a 'pelum' by John de Trokelawe in his account of Gilbert de Middleton's rebellion in 1317 ('Walterus de Selby in pelo de Horton latuit.'—Trokelawe, *Ann.*, Rolls Ser. p. 101), and by Walsingham (Rolls Ser., I., p. 153) a 'refortiuuncula.' In 1415, it appears as a 'castrum,' though a marginal note would reduce it to the rank of a 'fortalitiun.' This 'pelum' at Horton was defended by a *double moat and rampart of earth*.—Hodgson's *Northd.*, II. ii., p. 265. Connected also with the Rebellion of 1317 were the 'pila' at Bolton and Whittingham.

The term 'pele' was not even then confined, as seems generally supposed, to the North of England. Mention occurs of the royal pele of Clipstone in Nottinghamshire in 14 Ed. II. (Abbrev. Rot. Orig., i. p. 254). This pele stood between Mansfield and Ollerton, *on an eminence* above the village, and continued down to the time of Henry V. to be a sort of royal hunting-lodge for the Forest of Sherwood. The gothic windows of *the hall* survived till 1813.—*Beaut. of Engl. and Wales*, XII., pt. I. p. 385.

In 20 Ed. II., Roger de Mauduit, constable of Prudhoe, was ordered to construct a certain pele without the gates of that castle, at the expense of twenty marks. (Abb. Rot. Orig. i., p. 299.) This appears to relate to the fortification of *the area between the outer and the inner moats*, in which stood the 'elder chapell' of 'Our Lady at the foot of the mount' (Wallis) and the 'lodgings there situate without the castle.' This pele was entered by '*a large gate-toure*' to the west of the barbican (Stockdale).

Robert de Brunne (*Chron.*, p. 157) writing (1327-1338) of Cœur-de-Lion in Palestine, says:—

'Richarde did make a *pele*

On kestelle-wise allwais wrought of tre full wele,'

thus showing the extent to which wood was employed in early defences. Indeed, as has already been remarked (*ante*, p. 50), the manner in which the Border Surveys of the 16th century specify '*piles of stone*' implies that even then the name 'pele' could be applied to defences of wood or earth.

Langland, too, in his *Vision of Piers the Ploughman* (1369) C. Pass. xxii., 364-369 (19.358-63,) Early English Text Soc. ed. Skeat III., p. 418, alludes to a

pele with a deep ditch or 'muche mot' round it:—

'He (Kynde Wit) criede, and comaundede alle crystyne people  
To delue and *dike a deop dicke* al aboute vnite,  
That holychurche stod in holynesse as hit were a *pile*.  
Conscience comaundede tho' alle crystene to delue,  
And make a *muche mot*: that myghte be a *strengthe*,  
To helpe holychurche and them that hit kepeth.'

In a note on this passage Mr. Skeat says 'Holy Church (or Unity) is here represented as being a castle. Holiness is the moat that protects it, the water being the tears of penitents,' but then proceeds to misinterpret the word 'pile' as if it were 'a heavy pier or abutment such as a bridge rests on.'—*Ibid.*, IV. p. 436.

In relating the exploits of Wallace, Thomas the Rhymer (Bk. IV. v. 213) informs us:—

'On Gargownoo was byggyt a *small peill*  
That wårnyst was with men and wittaill weil,  
*Within a dyk, bathe close, chawmer and hall*.'

The moat enclosing both hall and chamber was, we see here again, the main feature of the pele.

The situations of the best known 14th century peles in Northumberland, that at Staward on a precipitous headland above the Allen, that at Wark-in-Tyndale on a high Mote Hill, fully bear out the view here taken of the mediæval *pilum*. Edward III. in 1336 (Rymer, iv., p. 686) gives orders: 'Quod custodes omnium castrorum, *Pelorum* et fortalitiorum, in dicta terra Scotia, et alii in eis ad fidem nostram commorantes, eadem castra, *Pela* et fortalitia libere et absque perturbatione qualibet exire valeant.' In 1400, the grant by Henry IV. of the Isle of Man to the Earl of Northumberland (*Ibid.*, viii., p. 95) specifies 'the island castle, pele (*pelam*) and lordship of Man.' The castle is now Castletown; the remains of the pele (which gave the name of Peel to the town previously known as Holme Town) are situated on a small rocky island, joined by a stone wall to the mainland. The walls are flanked with towers, and the enclosed area is almost filled with the ruins of walls, buildings, and dwelling-houses; in the centre is 'a *pyramidal mound of earth, surrounded by a ditch*.' (Lewis's *Top. Dict. Engl.*, iii., p. 223.) In 1403, the same king bestowed on the earl extensive territories in the south of Scotland, with their 'castles, peles (*pelas*), fortalices, manors, &c.' (Rymer, viii., p. 289.) It will not fail to be noticed that a 'pele' at the close of the 14th century was something more than a 'fortalice' but less than a castle.

The contemporary ballad on Henry the Fifth's Expedition to France, attributed to Lydgate (Nicolas's *Battle of Agincourt*, 1827, cclii.), carries the term 'pyle' across the Channel:—

'Oure Kyng with riall aray  
To the se he past,  
And landyd in Normandye, at the water of Sayn,  
At the *pyle* of Ketecaus.'

Leland was particularly devoted to the word 'pile,' and certainly he did not restrict the use of it to the North of England nor to single towers. He seems to have applied it at random to any smaller castle. Thus he speaks of 'The Castell or preaty Pile of Caveswell' in Staffordshire, and informs his readers that 'By the Chyrch Garth of Thurne' near Doncaster 'is a praty Pile or Castelet wel diked, now usid as a Prison for offenders in the Forestes.'—*Itinerary*, vol. i., fo. 40. There is therefore nothing peculiar, when he comes to Northumberland, in his speaking of 'the little Pile at Howick,' of 'Fenwick Pile' (a stronghold in a low situation, occupying a considerable space, and possessing certainly more than one tower), or of the 'little Pile' at Cornhill.

In his spirited account of the expedition of the Duke of Somerset to Scotland in 1547 (published 'out of the parsonage of St. Mary Hill in London this xxviii of Jan', 1548,' and reprinted by Sir John Graham Dalyell in *Fragments of Scottish History*) William Patten uses the word 'pele' across the Border in precisely the same sense as Leland, thus he speaks of 'Thornton and Anderwike (Innerwick) two pyles or holdes' (Dalyell's *Fragments*, p. 35), and of 'a litel castel or pile' on Fauxsyde Braye' (p. 74) which he had previously designated 'a sory castell' (p. 46).

The most remarkable of all references to *peles* is, however, to be found in the treatise *De Origine Moribus et Rebus Gestis Scottorum*, by John Leslie, Bishop of Ross (Rome, 1578, p. 61), where in describing the manners and customs of the Scots on the Border, he says that while the greater part of their houses were cottages and huts so wretched that they did not care whether these were burnt or not, the more powerful among them constructed for themselves *pyramidal towers made of earth only*, which could not be set on fire nor be destroyed except by the labours of a considerable armed force, and that to these earth-towers they gave the name of *pailles (Potentiores sibi pyramidales turres, quas pailles vocant ex sola terra, quæ nec incendi, nec nisi magna militum vi ac sudore dejici possunt, sibi construunt.)* In an Appendix to his *Essay on Border Antiquities* Sir Walter Scott translates *pyramidales turres . . . ex sola terra*, 'towers of stone,' without any comment; the phrase seems to signify something much more like the 'pyramidal mound of earth' at Peel (see *ante* p. 58); while it will be instructive to recall the account given in the *View of the Borders* in 1541 of the 'very stronge houses' of the Hedesmen of Tyndale, with their walls of great oak trees so strongly bound together and morticed that 'yt wilbe *very harde withoute greate force and labour* to breake or *caste downe* any of the saide houses,' while on account of the great size of the timber of the walls and roofs and its being for the most part covered with turf and earth, 'they wyll not easily burne or be sett on fyere.' (See *ante*, p. 49.)

The distinction drawn between a Tower and a Pele is brought out in boldest relief in the *Acts of the Parliaments of Scotland*, vol. iii. p. 346, A.D. 1535:—

*For bigging of Strenthis on the Bordouris.*

It is Statut and ordaint for Saiffing of men thare gudis and gere upoune the bordores in tyme of Ware and all uther

Consulatur Rex.  
(*erased.*)

Deleatur.

trublous tyme That every landit man duelland in the Inlande or upone the bordouris havand thare ane hundrethe punde land of new extent sall big ane sufficient barmkyne apoune his heretage and landis In place maist convenient of stane and lyme contenanand thre score futis of the square ane Eln thick & vj Elnys heicht for the Resett and defense of him his tennents & there gudes in trublous tyme with ane toure in the samie for him self gif he thinkes it expedient And that all uther landit men of smallar Rent or Reuenuew, big pelis and gret strenthis as thai plese for saifing of thare selfis men tennentes and gudis And that all the saidis strenthis barmkynis & pelis be biggit & completit w<sup>th</sup>in twa yeres under the pane.

Here the Tower may be built by the great man for his own protection; the barmkin which he is to be compelled to build for the protection of his tenants is to be of stone and lime; nothing is said as to the materials out of which the smaller men are to construct their *peles* and great *strengths*.

It probably happened that while the more powerful Borderers lived in towers, the poorer went on inhabiting the old-fashioned *peles* of wood and earth, and when they in their turn migrated to stone buildings of a humble order the name of pele-tower or pele-house, and finally pele, was transferred to these.

The Border View of 1541 mentions *peles* only at Hethpool, the Hare Cleugh, Elyburn, and the Fawns; the Book of the State of the Frontiers in 1550 contrasts the Tower it wishes built at Mindrom with the two *little peles* or *watch-houses* it would like erected on Teversheugh and Heddon Law; but by the time of the Survey Book of Norham and Islandshire, in 1561, the word is used in a much laxer fashion, as the equivalent of a little tower like that at Tilmouth, and is even applied to the singular tower of refuge at the west end of Ancroft Church.

At the present day the word 'pele' is employed by natives of Northumberland to denote, strictly speaking, a small tower of rough masonry with a high-pitched roof. An excellent type of what is now really meant by a pele is afforded by the engraving of a 'Peel on Chirdon Burn' in Hodgson's *Northumberland*, III., ii., p. 267. There is a small woodcut of a very characteristic pele at The Raw near Elsdon in Richardson's *Borderers' Table Book*. II., p. 347. Dr. Bruce in his *Wallet-Book of the Roman Wall*, 1863, p. 106, has the following with 'Peels' in the margin:—'Whilst the Lords of the Marches reared for themselves castles like Langley, the commonalty took refuge in a class of fortified dwellings called Peel Houses. These consisted of strong buildings, having one apartment on the ground floor and another above it. The upper room was approached by a flight of (external) steps. At night the cattle belonging to the farmer were secured in the apartment below, whilst he and his family barricaded themselves in the



room above. This upper room was floored with stone flags, resting upon heavy oak-beams, which would long resist the action of fire. The grey slates of the roof were pinned down with sheep's shanks. Arrow loops were placed in various parts of the building, so as to expose an enemy to the utmost disadvantage. Of course technical precision in the use of a word is not to be expected from country-people, and old buildings are often called peles that would perhaps be more accurately described as bastles (see Note (F.) p. 65).

In the Rothbury district, for instance, the term 'pele,' Mr. D. D. Dixon, who is thoroughly acquainted with the local phraseology, obligingly writes, is only applied by natives to the small tower at Thropton (possibly the 'Turris' of 1415, probably the 'lytle toure' of 1541) and the ancient fortified dwellings at Woodhouses and the Craig. Occasionally the towers at Hepple and Tosson are called peles, but generally by natives towers; while Crawley, Whittingham, Whitton, and Elsdon are always towers.

Mr. Hartshorne seems to have originated the unfortunate practice of persistently styling every tower on the Border a pele, as though some sovereign balm lay secreted in the term. With no authority, either historical or popular, he recklessly applied it to Chipchase, Cockley (? Cocklaw or Cockle Park), Bywell Morpeth, etc.—*Proc. Arch. Instit.*, Newcastle, 1852, ii., pp. 78-79. Already in serious Archæological publications not only single towers like Belsay and Coupland, but even castles of such dimensions as Mitford and Edlingham, are called peles, because it is supposed to sound pretty and to show a wonderful knowledge of Border History. It is impossible to say where the evil will stop unless it can be checked by a vigorous protest.

The only proper course is, it is maintained, to apply the word 'pele' in its mediæval sense of a moated stronghold to such places only as are called *pila* in ancient documents, and in its modern provincial sense of a small gabled tower or strong house to such buildings only as received the name from genuine inhabitants of the locality before the advent of southern archæologists.

(D.)

Note p. 20.—ÆNEAS SYLVIUS ON THE BORDER, 1436.

Æneas Sylvius Piccolomini, secretary of Cardinal Albergata, who had been sent as Legate to France, in 1435, to mediate between Charles VII. and our Henry VI., was despatched from Arras on a special mission to Scotland. Having with difficulty reached London, he found it impossible to proceed North on account of the suspicions of the English, and was obliged to cross to Flanders, whence (before 21st Sept., 1435) a most stormy voyage of twelve days' duration landed him on the coast of Lothian. Having accomplished his mission, he determined that nothing should induce him to return by sea; and (after 22nd Dec., 1435) "disguised as a merchant travelled through Scotland to the English Border. He crossed in a boat a river which, expanding from a high mountain, separates the two countries, entered a large town about sunset, and found