

XXV.—TYNEMOUTH CASTLE : THE EVE OF THE
COMMONWEALTH.

BY HORATIO A. ADAMSON.

[Read on the 29th July, 1891.]

IN laying before the members of the society, a letter from Sir Arthur Hesilrige, governor of Tynemouth Castle, to the Honorable Committee of Lords and Commons at Derby House, concerning the revolt of Col. Henry Lilburn, the deputy governor of Tynemouth Castle, and the re-capture of the Castle, I think it is desirable that I should advert to some of the principal events connected with the history of the Castle during the disturbed period which preceded the Commonwealth. It is not my wish to entrench in any way on the able work, the *Border Holds of Northumberland*, on which Mr. Cadwallader J. Bates is engaged, and in which the account of Tynemouth Castle will appear.

Tynemouth Castle, from its lofty position at the mouth of the Tyne, commanded the entrance to the river, and it was therefore important to the parties, who were unhappily engaged in the great internecine strife, to hold possession of it.

In 1642 the Castle was put in a posture of defence by the earl of Newcastle, then governor of the town of Newcastle. He furnished three hundred soldiers with arms from that place and sent them down, also six great guns. Trenches were cast up and a fort was made at the mouth of the Haven (see Brand, vol. 2, p. 115). He also constructed forts at North and South Shields.

On the 16th July in the same year the Lords and Commons petitioned King Charles the first to remove all preparations and action of 'Warr particularly the forces from about Hull, from Newcastle, *Tynmouth*, and all other places,' to which the king made answer that 'when he salbe assured that the same necessities and pretens of public good which took Hull from him may not put a garrison into Newcastle

to keep the same against him he will remove his from thence, and from *Tynmouth*, till when the example of Hull will not be out of his memory' (*Vide Memorials of the Troubles in Scotland and England, 1624-45*, by John Spalding, pp. 162 and 165, vol. 2).

On the 15th April, 1643, Mrs. Barbara Delaval of Seaton Delaval, widow, paid Sir Thomas Riddell, junr., governor of Tynemouth Castle, £100 for His Majesties present service for the maintenance of the garrisons of Tinmouth and Sheeles, for which she is to be protected in her person, goods and estate (the receipt is among the Delaval papers in the possession of Mr. John Robinson).

On the 15th of March, 1644, when the Scots besieged the fort at South Shields, Tinmouth Castle and the fort played hotly upon them and it was thought they lost two hundred men that day. On the following Wednesday the fort was taken (Wm. Tunstall to his father-in-law Sir Edward Radclyffe of Dilston, *Archaeologia Aeliana*, N. S., vol. 1, p. 213).

On the 23rd Oct., 1644, letters were received stating that, 'the plague was very hot in Tinmouth Castle, the garrison of the enemy which commands the Tyne, that stops the river to Newcastle, and that eight of them have died in one week and that one who came out of the Castle reporteth that about sixty were sick in the Castle of the plague when he left them. So that though we cannot reach them in that high hill, yet God can you see, and indeed it is very wonderful to observe how wonderfully God hath wrought for us in these troubles, without and beyond the help of man' (*Perf. Occurrences*, No. 11).

The officers of the Parliamentary army were wonderfully quick in discerning the hand of God in every misfortune which befell the Royalist party.

In a letter sent from Sir Thomas Riddle, junior, to Thomas Glenham, Governor of Carlisle, which was intercepted, it is also mentioned that 'the plague had broken out within the Castle, eight men were dead and sixty more infected, who were put into Lodges in the Fields and the Chief Chirurgeon there dangerously sicke, who I hear is since dead, so it is conceived most of the rest that are in the Castle will run away because of the infection.'

On the 27th October, 1644, the Castle, after having been besieged for sometime, was surrendered to the Scotch army under General Lesley, earl of Leven; and on the 4th November a letter was received stating the Castle had been surrendered upon accord, and in it were thirty-eight pieces of ordnance, fifty barrels of powder, five hundred muskets, a great number of pikes, store of shot and other provisions.

The governor and soldiers had liberty to march away with such bag and baggage as properly belonged to them and liberty to go to their own dwellings and receive protection, submitting to the ordinances of parliament (*Perf. Diur.* No. 67). The 5th November following was a day of public thanksgiving for the quadruple objects of Gunpowder Plot, the victory of Newbury, the taking of Newcastle, its Castle, and that of Tynemouth, and for the yielding up of Liverpool. It was very solemnly kept throughout London and Westminster, sermons were preached forenoon and afternoon in most of the churches, there was ringing of bells, and shooting of ordnance at all the forts round London, and at night bonfires were lighted (*Perf. Diur.*). In the early part of 1646 there was a garrison of the Scotch army in the Castle, and about 6 o'clock at night on 30th January, 1647, the Scots 'fairly and quietly' delivered up the Castle to the deputy of Major General Skippon the newly appointed governor. The pay as governor was fixed at 7s., and 8s. as captain (*Journals of the House of Commons*, vol. 5).

In 1648 Sir Arthur Hesilrige was governor of the Castle, and Col. Henry Lilburn was his deputy. On the 25th April in that year there was an order of the Commons for the sum of £5,000 to be forthwith raised, to be employed for repairing and fortifying the towers of Newcastle and Tynemouth Castle (Brand).

In August of that year Lilburn revolted, and the circumstances attending the revolt and subsequent taking of the Castle by Sir Arthur Hesilrige, are fully detailed in the following letter printed in the month of the revolt.

The letter is in the form of a rare quarto tract, printed in 1648, and consists of eight pages, first the title, then a blank page, next five pages of text, concluding with a blank page. The title page is here reproduced:—

76.

Sir Arthur Heslriges

LETTER

To the Honorable Committee of
Lords & Commons

AT

DERBY-HOUSE,

Concerning the Revolt and Recovery of

Tinmouth-Castle.

In which Action,

Lieutenant Col: LILBURN (Governor
of the Castle) was slain, with divers
Seamen and others.

14 Augusti, 1648.

Ordered by the Commons assembled in Parliament, That
this Letter be forthwith printed and published.

H: Ellynge, Cler. Parl. D. Com.

London, Printed for Edward Husband, Printer to the
Honorable House of Commons, August 15. 1648.

For the Right Honorable,
The Committee of Lords and Com-
mons at *Derby House*.

My Lords and Gentlemen



Have sent this Express to your Lordships, not being willing that you should sooner hear of the Revolt of Tynmouth-Castle, then of the recovery. Yesterday between two and three of the clock in the Afternoon Lieut: Col: *Lilburn* being Deputy-Governor of that Castle, commanded most of the Officers upon several Services out of the Castle, and then armed and set at liberty the prisoners, and plucked up the Drawbridge, and told the Soldiers, That he would pistol every Soldier that would not be for himself and King *Charls*; whereupon many ran over the Works, and a very honest and faithful Corporal refusing to deliver up his Arms to him upon those terms, he thrust him through the body, and killed him; and immediately he shot off several pieces of Ordnance, declaring that he kept the Castle for King *Charls*, and sent to the Sheels and other adjacent Towns, and made proclamation for all that loved him and King *Charls*, to come to the Castle for his assistance, and many Seamen and others came in to him immediately: So soon as I heard the sad news of his trayterous Revolt, I commanded a very considerable body of Foot to be drawn out of the Regiments in this Garrison, under the command of Lieutenant Colonel *Ashfield*, and sent also one hundred Dragoons with them; I sent also many ladders down by water, and gave Orders to storm the Castle that night whatsoever hapned. Between one and two of the Clock this morning they drew near to the Castle, Lieutenant Colonel *Lilburn* fired four pieces of Ordnance upon them as they came up, Major *Cobbet* led on the Forlornhope, they took no notice at all of the Canon, but when they came within twenty yards of the Works, bringing their ladders with them, they gave a great shout and fell on; the works are exceeding high, and though their ladders were long, they could not easily get up, the Enemy still as they mounted, with pikes and Gunners ladders pushed them down, some storming at the Gun holes, the Enemy were forced to come so high upon the works, that our Soldiers underneath shot them into the bellies, and killed divers of them, but at last ours mounted the works, recovered the castle, and killed many Sea-men and others, and amongst the number that was slain, they found Lieut: Col: *Lilburn*. I shall give your Lordships this account for my self, He was Governor of that Castle before I had command of it;

He hath been in the Parliaments service since the beginning of the wars, and under my command near seven years since; He was ever very active and faithful for the Parliament, and known to be a valiant man; He did not give the least suspicion of being a traitor to the Parliament, till the day of his Revolt: It was not for me to have put out such a man from his place, unless there had appeared some just grounds for it, and I hope your Lordships will so apprehend it: I bless God it is now in the Parliaments power, and by Gods assistance I hope I shall so keep it; the goodness of God was such to us, we lost not one man, we have onely three wounded. I am .

My Lords and Gentlemen,

Your faithful Servant,

Arthur Hesilrige.

FINIS.

The Castle was taken on the 11th of August. The letter detailing the capture was laid before the Honorable Committee of the Lords and Commons at Derby House on the 14th August, and it was ordered that it should be forthwith printed and published, and it was accordingly printed for Edward Husband, printer to the House of Commons, the following day. The letter was printed and published separately, and does not appear to have formed part of the series of papers published at the time.

When Gibson wrote his *History of the Monastery of Tynemouth* he had not seen the letter which I have read, as at page 123 of vol. 2 he says:—‘The deputy governor was decapitated, and his head was barbarously set up on a pole, but it does not appear whether he was slain in combat or was the victim of a rebel’s lawless vengeance.’ The letter clearly shows that Lilburn was slain during the engagement, and not after it. That he was afterwards decapitated and his head placed over the Castle is established, as in the *Calendar of State Papers* for August, 1660, there is a petition of Ann Talbot, late widow of Lieut. Colonel Henry Lilburn, for the mediation with the Queen (Mother) on her behalf for a lease of 166 acres of Holdenby Park, which she was admitted by her enemies to purchase, being

ruined by the seizure of £2,500 from her husband, who, as governor of Tynemouth Castle, was killed, and his head set upon the Castle. The Queen's Commissioners refused her petition.

The letter from Sir Arthur Hesilrige is not in the publications issued by the Newcastle-upon-Tyne Typographical Society, nor is it among Richardson's *Reprints of Rare Tracts*, nor with the Civil War tracts in the Castle library. A summary of it is contained in the second volume of Brand's *History of Newcastle*, at page 117, and it is mentioned in Rushworth's *Historical Collections* (1618 to 1648).

To give some idea of the disturbed state of the parish of Tynemouth, I may mention that the ancient burial ground is within the Castle walls. The register of burials stops on the 30th November, 1643, and there are no entries of any burials until May, 1646, which are continued until October, 1647, when they again cease, and are not resumed until June, 1649. It is probable burials took place at the 'Spittle,' where in olden times the hospital of St. Leonard stood. It was annexed to the priory of Tynemouth. In the parish records, under date 1645, is the following entry:—'It is ordered that the burials shall be in the place appointed for burying, paying the Minister his dues, and if any other ground be broken at Spittle to pay to John Cramlington for every Buriall out of y^e ordinary place 6^d viz: the Church Yard.' In the register of marriages we find the same disturbed state of things. The registers cease in August, 1644, and are not resumed until May, 1646, and are continued until November, 1648. Shortly before the entries cease an important marriage is recorded. It is that of Ralph Gardner of Chirton, the author of *England's Grievance Discovered*. On the 9th September, 1648, he was married to Catherine Reed of Chirton. Her family was interested in the salt trade.

The Castle remained in the hands of the Parliamentary party and the Commonwealth until the restoration of Charles the second, when Sir Arthur Hesilrige delivered it up to General Monk on condition of having his life and estate preserved. In 1661 the office of captain and commander-in-chief of the castle was conferred on the "Earl of Northumberland and the Lord Percie his sonne."