Castles and Historic Homes of the Border

Their Traditions and Romance

BY

ALEXANDER EDDINGTON

WITH 35 FULL-PAGE PLATES

OLIVER AND BOYD

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HUME CASTLE

The Watch-Dog of the Merse

The watch-dogs of the eastern border were Wark Castle and Hume Castle. The situation of each was well adapted for the purpose. Wark, now in ruins, crowned a lofty eminence on the English bank of the Tweed, and nestling at the base of the hill may still be seen a few cottages, successors of the huts that in former days were grouped for safety under the shelter of the fortress. Hume Castle stands on an eminence 600 feet high in the heart of Berwickshire, from which the watchmen on its towers could see across the plains of the Merse an English force crossing the ford near Coldstream, and to-day the little village clustering on the slope of the hill tells the same story as that at Wark. The illustration shows some of the houses and the crenellated curtain wall, bearing little resemblance to a feudal castle, which was built early in the nineteenth century by Sir Hugh Purves Hume Campbell of Marchmont to enclose the ruins.
The family of Home (pronounced Hume) dates from Patrick, second son of Cospatrick, the third Earl of Dunbar and March, who had gifts from his father of lands in the Merse. His son William married a daughter of the fifth Earl of March, and through her he had the lands of Home, their successors assuming the name of Home. In the thirteenth century knighthood was conferred on John Home, whose grandson, David Home of Wedderburn, was the ancestor of the Earls of Marchmont. In 1473 Sir Alexander Home was raised to the Peerage. The third Lord Home led a wing of the army at Flodden, and Home was almost the only Scotsman of note who escaped from that fatal field where twelve earls, thirteen lords, and five eldest sons of peers were slain. Home is accused of having fled from the field before the battle was decided, an accusation which is unsupported. Indeed his section of the army led by Huntly and Home was the only section which defeated the English.

Lord Home was a great favourite with James IV. who, in 1488, appointed him Great Chamberlain of Scotland for life, and gave him the governorship of the Royal Castle of Stirling. This de facto made him the Prime Minister of Scotland, a position which he occupied during the greater part of the reign-
of James. In 1489 he was also appointed Warden of the Eastern Marches. Home died in 1505 and was succeeded by his son Alexander, who was afterwards appointed Warden of all the Marches. With their numerous kindred, extensive possessions and important State appointments, the Homes were at this time at the zenith of their power, and even afterwards played an important part in Scottish politics till the Union of the Crowns.

In 1513 Lord Home at the head of 8000 men crossed the Border and, after laying waste the country, they proceeded to return home with their booty. Neglecting discipline the new Lord Chamberlain omitted to form an advance guard, but marched forward driving the huge herds of captured cattle which so encumbered the army that he was defeated in the Pass of Broomhouse by Sir William Bulmer in a surprise attack. In this as usual the southern archers played an important part, concealing themselves in the furze with which the place abounded and striking down the Scottish troops by an unexpected shower of arrows. The English horse then fell upon the disorganised force and completed the victory. Five hundred men were slain and Home's brother and 400 followers were captured. So much was James IV. incensed by this battle
that, according to Tytler, he resolved on the war with England which ended in the disaster of Flodden.

After Flodden, Home was appointed Chief Justice south of the Forth, and in that district exercised almost regal authority. When the Queen Regent in 1514 married the Earl of Angus, Home was one of her strongest supporters. Albany returned from France, was elected Regent, and took decisive measures to assert his power. He commanded Home, who was then Provost of Edinburgh to arrest Sir George Douglas, the brother of Angus, but he indignantly refused and fled to Newark Castle. Albany insisted that Home should leave the country, whereupon he communicated with England and, assured of support, retook Hume Castle which had been seized by the Regent. He then secured the tower of Blackadder as a safe retreat for the Queen and escorted her thither with forty troopers. Albany sent a strong force to the Borders and Home, though taken prisoner, managed to escape and fled to England, whither the Queen and Angus followed him. After a time Home was allowed to return to Scotland and resume his hereditary possessions. It is alleged that after this Home resumed correspondence with the English, which is said to
have come to the knowledge of Albany. In ignorance of this Home, his brother William, and Ker of Ferniehirst went to Edinburgh and they were apprehended and found guilty of treason. The Homes were immediately executed but Ker was pardoned by the Regent. Home's office of Chamberlain was bestowed on Lord Fleming, while the French Knight, Sir Anthony D'Arcy, known as the Sieur de la Beauté, to whose keeping the fortress of Dunbar had been committed, was appointed Warden of the East Marches.

This appointment of D'Arcy was more than the Homes could brook, considering the wardenship theirs of right. D'Arcy went to Langton Castle, near Duns, on a punitive expedition, whereupon Sir David Home of Wedderburn collected a force and put D'Arcy to flight. The latter rode for Dunbar with Home in hot pursuit. In a marsh to the east of Duns, known as the Billy Mire, the pursuers came up with the fugitive and killed him, Home cutting off his head, tying it to his saddle bow with the long locks, and bearing it in triumph to Hume Castle, where it was exposed on the battlements. In 1518 Scotland was divided into two factions, that led by Angus and the other by Arran. Home supported Angus, and thus regained
Wedderburn and Hume, but on Albany's return from France in 1521 Home had to flee to England.

The next incident of note relating to Hume Castle was the raid by the Protector Somerset. At the Battle of Pinkie Lord Home was killed and his eldest son taken prisoner. On his return to England Somerset passed through the Merse and laid siege to Hume Castle, which was defended by Lady Home. Somerset had no time to waste in a prolonged siege, so, to induce Lady Home to surrender the fortress, he caused her son to be brought bound in front of the castle and threatened to hang him if the Lady did not surrender. The threat was effectual. In the following year—1548—the castle was recaptured by a sudden night assault. An old follower of the name of Home was the first to scale the walls, but he was perceived by the sentry who gave the alarm. Home withdrew, and with his companions, concealed himself at the base of the wall, whereupon the garrison, thinking there had been a mistake, retired to rest. Home remounted the wall, killed the sentry, and the castle was speedily taken. The following year the Earl of Rutland laid siege to the castle but failed to capture it.

In 1557, when Queen Mary accompanied
the army led by the Duke of Chaterherault, the intention being to invade England, the Queen made Hume her headquarters. The invasion, however, frittered out, against the wishes of the Queen, the nobles refusing to cross the Border. In 1565 Queen Elizabeth had sent a Mr Tamworth, one of the gentlemen of her bedchamber, to Mary to try to bring about a reconciliation between Queen Mary and the Earl of Moray, and the insolence of the English Ambassador Randolph so encouraged Tamworth to equal arrogance that he refused to give Darnley his Royal title and proceeded to England without a passport. A hint being given to the Borderers he was captured and imprisoned in Hume Castle. In 1570 Sussex invaded Scotland and sent Drury, Marshal of Berwick, against Hume with an army of 3000 men. This was a force the Scots were unable to resist, and after a day’s siege, the castle was surrendered, the garrison of 178 men being allowed to march out. The English secured great booty, many of the neighbours having sent their goods to Hume for safety. Alexander, Lord Home, in 1594 became a Protestant, “making repentance before the General Assembly.” When James ascended the English Throne, Lord Home was one of the retinue of 500 horsemen who
accompanied the King south, and in 1603 he was appointed Chief Justiciary and Lord Lieutenant of the three Marches of Scotland. The year following he was created an Earl.

When Cromwell marched into Scotland he sent Colonel Fenwick to capture Hume, which at that time was in charge of one of the Cockburn family. The latter defied the English troops, declaring that he knew nothing about Cromwell, and enclosing the following doggerel:

"I, Willie Wastle,
Stand firm in my castle,
And a' the dugs o' your toun
Will no' bring Willie Wastle doun."

Willie, however, did not resist to extremity and surrendered the castle. From this time Hume ceased to be a fortress.

The last event associated with Hume occurred on 2nd February 1804. The country was in dread of an invasion by Napoleon, and beacons were placed all along the coast and on inland eminences, to give warning of any landing by the enemy. The man in charge of the beacon on Hume Castle, mistaking an accidental fire in Northumberland for that of a beacon, lit his fire, and those inland, seeing the blaze at Hume, followed suit, with the result that from a
great part of the Borders there was a rapid assembling of troops to the different rendezvous. The keeper in charge of the beacon at St Abb’s, however, was a sensible man, and judged that no trustworthy news of a landing could come from inland. He did not light his beacon, and thus the false alarm was limited in area. From that date Hume disappears from history.