The
Castles and Keeps
of Scotland

Being a description of sundry fortresses, towers, peels, and
other houses of strength built by the princes and barons of
old time in the highlands, islands, inlands, and borders of
the ancient and godfearing kingdom of Scotland

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Illustrated

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CHAPTER XII

CASTLES OF EAST LOTHIAN

Dunbar Castle

The fragmentary ruins of the once magnificent Castle of Dunbar stand on a reef of trap rock projecting into the sea, which makes its way through many fissures and caverns of the crags to the base of and even under the massive walls.

The buildings were once of considerable extent. The main body of the castle was about one hundred and sixty-five by two hundred and seven feet, stretching its length from north to south. Southwest of the main building was what Grose supposes to have been the citadel or keep, an octagonal building sixty feet in diameter on a perpendicular rock accessible only on one side, and connected with the main building by a defended passage. On the other side of the ruins is a large natural cavern of black stone, called the dungeon, which, as Pennant says, "the assistance of a

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little art had rendered a secure but infernal prison.” It is perhaps more likely to be the postern gate through which Sir Alexander Ramsay and his band succoured the garrison in the famous siege of 1337-8.

The age of Dunbar goes far back of history. The name in Gaelic means “the fort on the height,” but the legend asserts that Kenneth I defeated the Picts at Scoon through the aid of one of his most valiant soldiers, whose name was Bar. On him was bestowed the stronghold as a reward; hence the name Dun-Bar, “Castle of Bar.” However this may be, in 961 two leaders named Dunbar and Graeme led the men of Lothian against the Danes at Cullen.

In 856 Kenneth II burned the castle, but it speedily rose again, for it was justly considered one of the keys of the Lowlands.

The founder of the family of Dunbar, which for four centuries maintained an almost regal authority in the east of Scotland, was Cospatrick, great-grandson of Uthred, Prince of Northumberland. After the Norman conquest in 1066, he, with other northern nobles, fled to Scotland, carrying with him Edgar Atheling, the heir of the Saxon line, together with his mother and sisters. One of the latter,
Margaret, became the queen of Malcolm Canmore, and Cospatrick was created Earl of Dunbar. For his exploit in defeating a formidable band of robbers, of whom he killed six hundred and hanged eighty, later presenting the head of their leader to the king, he was created Earl of March and granted arms of a bloody head. He was also granted Cockburnspath on the unusual tenure of keeping the March and East Lothian free of robbers. His successors prospered, and rendered their castle so strong that Henry III and a great army, after reducing the powerful fortress of Berwick in 1214, were unable to capture Dunbar, and retired to England. Patrick, earl at this time, in 1231, after assembling all of his family and neighbours to celebrate Christmas, entertained them most sumptuously for four days. At the end of this time he summoned the Abbot of Melrose, received extreme unction at his hands, and assumed the monastic habit.

He died a year later and was succeeded by his son Patrick, who became the most powerful lord in Scotland, and was the leader of the twenty-four barons who guaranteed the treaty with England in 1244. He was the head of the faction which caused the downfall of the Bissets in 1242, when the king was powerless. This was the outcome of a royal tournament held at Haddington, where the Earl of Athole bore down Walter Bisset, head of the family. In revenge, the earl’s lodgings were fired that same night, and the earl and a number of his party perished.

The sixth Earl Patrick died in 1248, while besieging Damietta in Egypt. His son Patrick was a leader of the English party during the troublous minority of Alexander III. In 1285 he was visited at Dunbar by Thomas Learmouth of Ersildown, known for his gift of prophecy as Thomas the Rhymer. Arriving at the castle in the evening, the earl jocularly asked him what strange thing would occur on the morrow. The prophet’s face immediately became grave, and he replied: “Alas for to-morrow, a day of calamity and misery! Before the twelfth hour shall be heard a blast so vehement that it shall exceed those of any former period,—a blast which shall strike the nations with amazement,—shall humble what is proud, and what is fierce shall level with the ground! The sorest wind and tempest that ever was heard of in Scotland!” Thereafter, refusing all entertainment and conversation, he retired to his apartment. The next fore-
noon, the earl and his friends watched the weather until nearly noon, but without discovering anything untoward. Summoning the Rhymer, they upbraided him as an impostor, and prepared to partake of their dinner. As they sat down at the table, and the shadow on the dial reached the noon mark, a messenger on a horse covered with foam dashed up to the door and demanded instant admittance. Brought before the earl and asked as to his message, he replied: "I do indeed bring tidings most lamentable, and to be deplored by the whole realm of Scotland. Alas, our renowned king has ended his fair life on yonder coast near Kinghorn!" The Rhymer advanced with an air of conscious triumph. His reputation was sustained by the king's fatal fall from his horse. Loudly he exclaimed, "This is the scathful wind and direful tempest which shall be such a calamity and trouble to the whole kingdom of Scotland!"

Patrick, the eighth earl, was a partisan of the English. When Edward I entered Scotland in 1296, the earl, together with the Bruces, joined him, leaving his countess, Marjory, daughter of Alexander Comyn, Earl of Buchan, in the Castle of Dunbar. She patriotically delivered it to the Scotch leaders, who garrisoned it with the flower of the nobility. Edward despatched Warrenne, Earl of Surrey, with twelve thousand men to recover the fortress. Conscious of the impossibility of withstanding such a force, the Scots agreed to surrender unless relieved in three days. The main army of Scotland, forty thousand men, commanded by the Earls of Buchan, Lennox, and Mar, advanced to its support. On the third day they took their position on Doon Hill,—in the same spot occupied in 1650 by General Leslie before his defeat by Cromwell,—and waited for an attack. Despite the disparity of the forces, the Earl of Surrey left part of his army to blockade the castle and advanced to meet the Scotch. In order to reach them, the English had to cross a valley, and, in doing so, seemed to waver. The Scotch, believing victory already won, charged from their well-chosen position with shouts and trumpetings. Warrenne faced them undismayed, and the undisciplined troops broke and fled, being pursued with great slaughter to Selkirk forest. Many of the fugitives sought shelter in the castle, but on the next day Edward appeared, and Seward, the governor, surrendered. The Earls of Athole, Ross, and Menteith, four barons, thirty-one knights, one hundred es-
quires, and many men of lesser rank were taken. Later the king gave Earl Patrick two hundred pounds to furnish the castle with military stores and provisions.

The ninth earl, also named Patrick, succeeded on the death of his father in 1309. He was also English in his sympathies, and in 1314 sheltered Edward II after the annihilation of his army at Bannockburn. The king, with a small body of horsemen, was in flight toward Berwick, but was followed so closely by Sir James Douglas and eighty picked riders, that he was very glad to find refuge in Dunbar. The earl "full gently received him," entertained him hospitably, and caused him to come by boat safely to Berwick, a very honourable proceeding, as he was well aware how advantageously he might make peace with his cousin, King Robert Bruce, by delivering to him the person of the King of England. Shortly after the earl submitted to Bruce, and later demolished his castle to prevent it from falling into the hands of the English. In 1333, however, he submitted to King Edward III and rebuilt the fortress at his own cost, to shelter an English garrison. The next year he was present at Edinburgh at the parliament at which Baliol ceded all south Scot-

land to the English king. Thereafter he changed sides again and retired to the Highlands with the friends of Bruce. His castle was left in charge of his wife, daughter of Randolph, Earl of Moray, and granddaughter of King Robert Bruce, called "Black Agnes" from her dark complexion.

On January 28, 1337, William de Montague, Earl of Salisbury, commenced the most famous siege in the history of the castle. The English placed their engines in position and hurled massive stones against the walls. Agnes stood on the battlement, and when a great bullet struck the stones just below her, she scornfully ordered one of her handmaidens to wipe off the marks of the impact with her clean handkerchief, gaily observing that it was scarcely gentlemanly on the part of Salisbury to throw dust in a lady's eyes.

The earl, with infinite pains, advanced to the foot of the walls an immense shed covering battering rams, called a sow. The lady tauntingly cried out:

"Beware, Montagow,
For farrow shall thy sow!"

and caused to be hurled an immense fragment of rock, which utterly demolished the roof, and
caused the inmates who remained alive to scatter in all directions, thus speedily fulfilling the prophecy.

Having exhausted his resources in this direction, the earl tried the power of gold, and attempted to bribe the keeper of the gate to open to him in the night. The canny guardian assented and took the purse, but then laid the whole story before the countess. At the appointed time Salisbury and his men approached and found the gate indeed open. The earl pressed forward to enter first, but John Copeland, one of his officers, rushed before him and reached the courtyard. As he did so the portcullis fell, but failed to trap the earl. Agnes was watching from a high tower, and jeeringly exclaimed: "So, Montague! We had hoped to-night to have received the noble Salisbury as our guest, and consulted with him on the best means to defend a Scottish fortress against an English army; but as my lord declined the invitation, we will e'en take counsel of ourselves. Farewell, Montague! With truth within, we fear no treason from without!"

The earl was disheartened by this failure and sat down to a close blockade of the castle, every avenue to which by sea or land was closely watched. When the garrison was at the last extremity, Alexander Ramsay of Dalhousie determined to succour it. Embarking at midnight with forty determined men, he eluded the English flotilla, and landed at the water postern. The garrison, freed from danger of famine, received him most joyfully, but Ramsay was satisfied with no half-relief. He immediately sallied forth from the main gate, surprised and cut to pieces the enemy's advanced guard, and returned in safety. Salisbury was so discouraged by this new reverse, and the length of the siege, that he broke camp on June 10th, after nineteen weeks blockade, and retired to England.

George, eleventh Earl of Dunbar and March, quarrelled with the Duke of Albany, and fled to England. While he sojourned in the English camp, his castle and titles were sequestrated, and passed nominally to the Crown, actually to Albany, who was created Earl of March. When Earl George made peace with his sovereign it was at the expense of Dunbar, which remained a fief of Albany.

The Duke of Albany, brother and chief counsellor of James III, is thus depicted by Lindsay of Pitscottie: "He was hardy and
manly, and wise so that they [the barons of Scotland] stood in more awe of him than of the king's grace, for his manhood. This Alexander was of a mid stature, broad shouldered, and well proportioned in all his members, and specially in his face; that is to say, broad-faced, red-nosed, great-eared, and of very awful countenance, when he pleased to show himself to his unfriends.” He was as ambitious as he was bold, and almost as strong in the kingdom as the king himself.

In 1475, not for the first time, he became the object of his brother’s suspicions, and was cast into Edinburgh Castle, fated to death. His friends helped him to escape, as is elsewhere more particularly related, and he fled by sea. On the way he stopped at Dunbar, and put his castle in order, then resumed his journey to France, where he married the Duchess of Bouillon, and remained until 1482. Meanwhile the castle was taken, the garrison escaping by sea. On his return at the head of an English force, in 1482, he recovered his estates, but the next year was forced to flee again from Scotland, leaving an English garrison in Dunbar, who were able to hold it against all the efforts of the Scotch.

On September 21, 1484, a truce of three years between England and Scotland was concluded at Nottingham. By a singular clause in the agreement, Dunbar was to have six months truce only, after which, by giving six weeks' notice, the Scottish king was to be at liberty to recover the castle by force, if his strength were sufficient. Although his parliament repeatedly advised James to give notice, and besiege this castle, he did not feel strong enough to do so until 1486, when he laid siege to it in the depth of winter, and soon recovered it, without causing the English to feel that the truce was broken.

In 1488 an Act of Parliament was passed, directing the Castle of Dunbar to be “casten down and utterly destroyed, in such manner as to render repairs utterly impossible,” “because it has done great skaith in time bygone, and it were great danger to the realme if it were negligently kept or reparit again.” By bitter experience the Scots had found that the English were far more skilled in sieges than themselves, and their own captured fortresses had more than once been thorns in the flesh. Nevertheless it was not until 1567 that this ordinance was actually put into execution.

During the regency of Mary of Guise, Dunbar was garrisoned by her French troops.
This was a source of much annoyance both to Scotch and English, and in the treaty of 1560, between Queen Elizabeth, and Francis and Mary, it was agreed that all the French garrisons should be dismissed, except sixty men each in Dunbar and Inchkeith, and that the new works at Dunbar should be demolished. The English army, marching to Berwick, took good care to see that this was done.

Dunbar is a name especially associated with the troublous years of Mary, Queen of Scots. In 1566, after the murder of Rizzio, Bothwell aided her escape from Holyroodhouse, and after a short sojourn at Seton, she moved to Dunbar. Here she was speedily joined by so many of her friends that she gained a temporary ascendance over the authors of her secretary's death. Again, in November of that year, she sojourned six days in Dunbar. In April, 1567, Bothwell, who had been constable of Dunbar, obtained a "ratification" of the "Queen's Castle and Strength of Dunbar" and the "Captaincie" of the fortress, in part recompense of his "great service and exorbitant expenses," and also because his friends, kinsmen, tenants and servants for the most part dwelt adjacent to the said castle and strength. Under his guardianship, Mary was twice more here. The last time was when she fled from Borthwick, disguised as a page, and barely escaped Home's troopers by refuge in its walls. Here her proclamation called together the feeble and unwilling army which dissolved in panic at Carberry Hill, leaving her a prisoner destined for Lochleven Castle.

The Laird of Whitelaw still held Dunbar for Bothwell, but the regent brought cannon from Edinburgh, and the place surrendered on favourable terms. Then came the resurrection of the act of 1488, and the margin of the record of the Council contains this incomplete note: "26th December, 1567. Ordains the Inche and Dunbar to be demolished and taken down, in respect of K. Jas—." By this politic move, the regent destroyed Bothwell's strength by virtue of an ancient statute, without incurring hostility for his own government.

It stands to-day, the ruins of that wrecking, and was until lately free to all visitors. But it is now used as a rifle range, and in consequence much closed to sightseers. Even this year of 1907, great tumult has been caused in the town by further restrictive measures, and it may soon be entirely closed to the public.
diligence to search and seek out, and by all
craft and ingine to find out the same, and,
by the grace of God, shall either find out the
same, or make it sure that no such thing has
been there.' For his reward he was to have
the exact third of what was found, and to be
safely guarded by Logan back to Edinburgh.
And in case he should find nothing, after all
trial and diligence taken, he refers the satis-
faction of his travel and pains to the discre-
tion of Logan." Logan was afterwards a par-
ticipant in the mysterious plot known as the
Gowrie conspiracy. It was proposed to ab-
duct the king in a boat from the garden of
Gowrie House and carry him by sea to Fast
Castle, which has a water gate. In this
stronghold he was to be held at the disposal
of Elizabeth or the plotters. That Logan
was implicated in this affair was not known
until he had been buried nine years, when his
correspondence with the Earl of Gowrie was
discovered in the hands of Sprott, a notary,
who had stolen it from John Bour, its cus-
todian. Sprott was executed, and the bones
of Logan were disinterred and brought into
court for trial on the charge of high treason,
of which they were duly convicted. As at-
tainer of treason implied confiscation of

property, this process was not as foolish as
it might appear.

**Home Castle**

Home or Hume Castle, one of the oldest
fortresses of the Border, stands on the summit
of a hill nine hundred feet above the level
of the sea, near Kelso, in the valley of the
Tweed. The walls which are now visible
merely serve to show the extent of the an-
cient structure, having been built on the old
foundations in the last century. The plan
proves, however, that castles of enceinte were
built in the Lowlands as well as the west, for
the castle dates from the thirteenth century.

The Homes, first barons, and later earls,
played a very prominent part in Scottish his-
tory. They were in all times powerful in the
Border, and occupied great offices in court
and council, enjoying at times almost regal
power. More than one of them was guilty
of treason, and one was executed for this
crime. The fifth Lord Home signed the or-
der for imprisoning Mary in Lochleven Cas-
tle, and when she escaped, his six hundred
troops turned the fortune of the battle of
Langside against her. He died under con-
viction of treason for this.
The Castle of Home sustained many memorable sieges. More than once taken in civil war, it first fell to a foreign foe when Somerset captured it in 1547 after a stout resistance by Lady Home. Two years later its owner regained it. Again in 1569 it was reduced by the Earl of Sussex, and its last capture was in the Civil War.

In 1650, Cromwell, after he had captured Edinburgh, sent two regiments under Colonel Fenwick to reduce Home. The colonel sent in to Cockburn, the governor of the castle, a peremptory message to surrender. He got back the following communications: “Right Honourable, I have received a trumpeter of yours, as he tells me, without a pass, to surrender Hume Castle to the Lord General Cromwell. Please you, I never saw your general. As for Home Castle, it stands upon a rock. Given at Home Castle, this day, before 7 o'clock. So resteth, without prejudice to my native country, your most humble servant, T. Cockburn.” This was accompanied by the following doggerel verse:

“I, Willie Wastel,
Stand firm in my castle;
And a’ the dogs o’ your town
Will no pull Willie Wastel down.”
Cessford Castle, a Border fort of massive construction and great strength, stands between Kelso and Jedburgh on the Kale Water. It formerly belonged to the Kers, ancestors of the Duke of Roxburgh, and was built in the fourteenth century. It was besieged by Surrey in May, 1523, and he wrote thus to Henry VIII after its surrender, "I was very glad of the same appointment (capitulation) for in maner I sawe not howe it wolde have been won if they within wold have contynued their deffending." Jeffrey gives this account of the siege:

"In the month of May, 1523, the castle was besieged by Surrey, in the absence of its owner, with a numerous army, well provided with powerful ordnance, with which he battered the donjon with little effect. While the guns were playing against the castle, the Lord Leonard, Sir Arthur Darcy, Sir William Parr, and others, by means of scaling ladders, entered the barnkin, where they suffered severely from the iron guns of the castle and stones cast down upon them. They then attempted to scale the donjon, while the archers and ordnance kept the besieged engaged; but notwithstanding all the efforts of the besiegers, they could not prevail against the castle, which was gallantly defended. At last, when Surrey was despairing of success, the warden came within a mile of the castle, and not knowing how matters stood within the castle, but fearing the worst, offered to give up the place on his men being allowed to leave with their bag and baggage, to which Surrey was but too glad to accede, as he could not have taken the castle by force of arms. On the castle being delivered up, it was thrown down by the ordnance, and, while the destruction of its walls was going on, another party went on to Whitton Fort and cast it down." In 1545 it was again taken by Hertford. It ceased to be a dwelling house in 1650, but was used as a prison for Covenanters in 1666.
stands the Border keep known as Smailholm Tower. This is on the farm of Sandyknowe, which was the property of the paternal grandfather of Sir Walter Scott, and one of the homes of the poet’s boyhood. Hence this plain keep, of no importance in itself, has thrown over it the glamour of the poet’s description in “Marmion”:

“It was a barren scene, and wild,
Where naked cliffs were rudely piled;
But ever and anon, between,
Lay velvet tufts of loveliest green.
And well the lonely infant knew
Recesses where the wall-flower grew,
And honeysuckle loved to crawl
Up the low crag and ruined wall.
I deemed such nooks the sweetest shade
The sun in all its round surveyed;
And still I thought that shattered tower
The mightiest work of human power,
And marvelled as the aged hind
With some strange tale bewitched my mind,
Of foragers who, with headlong force,
Down from that strength had spurred their horse,
Their southern rapine to renew,
Far in the distant Cheviots blue,
And home returning filled the hall
With revel, wassail-rout, and brawl.”

The tower stands on a rocky knoll which well protects all sides save the west, where is the entrance door, and remains of a barmkin or fore-court. The tower is absolutely plain externally, with a gabled roof, which has battlements on the sides and not on the ends, a late arrangement. Internally there are four stories, two of which are vaulted.

For two hundred years after the beginning of the fifteenth century, the tower belonged to the Prestons of Whytbank, from whom it passed to Scott of Harden. It now belongs to Lord Polwarth, his descendant. Sir Walter Scott, in a note prefixed to “The Eve of St. John,” says that he wrote that poem about Smailholm Tower and its vicinity.

**Darnick Tower**

The visitor to Abbotsford by coach from Melrose, a very common way, will see between the two places, at a turn in the road, a very good example of the Border peel in Darnick Tower. This is a four-story structure erected in 1569, to which has been added for more room an ell of later date. The tower is about thirty feet by twenty-two, with walls about four feet thick. On the south front is a square turret which carries a wheel stair to the battlements, and is then continued a story