

ALNWICK CASTLE.

THE PALACE OF THE DUKE OF NORTHUMBERLAND.

THE town of Alnwick is irregular, being built on the declivities of a hill in various directions. It is the county town of Northumberland, governed by a bailiff nominated by the duke (whose authority is derived from the obsolete office of constable of the castle), and four chamberlains annually chosen out of the freemen of the town.

The freedom of this borough was a whimsical institution of King John, who with mischievous pleasantry ordained that it should be obtained by passing through a deep and miry pond on the Town moor upon St. Mark's day; which, to render still more ludicrous, the hapless candidate is to perform in white clothing. This feat is sometimes achieved with great peril; but what immunities or privileges are gained by so strange a mode of accession we are unable to learn.

In the immediate vicinity of this ancient town stands Alnwick castle, the fortress of the illustrious house of Percy. The approach to the castle retains much of the solemn grandeur of ancient times; the inscription on the gateway, still legible, "*Esperance me conforteth*," appertained to the arms of the Percys, and was placed there when the repairs were made by the family; the moat is drained, and the ceremony of letting down the draw-bridge is forgot; but the walls which enclose the area still wear the ancient countenance of strength and defence. You enter by a machicolated gate, defended by an upper tower, and after passing a covered way, approach the interior gate, which admits you to the area; this entrance is defended by all the devices used in ancient times; iron studded gates, portcullis, open galleries, and apertures in the arching for annoying assailants.

The castle is a noble structure, rebuilt on the old foundation, and in the Saxon style; the architect has strictly preserved the whole mode and ornaments of the original; the battlements are crowded with effigies according to the taste of the Normans, in whose time it underwent a principal repair. These represent men in the art of defence, wielding such arms as were commonly in use at that period; some of these figures are disposed with striking effect; the guard of one of the

gateways appears in the act of casting down a mighty stone on the heads of assailants.

The building consists of beautiful freestone in chiselled work; its form is singular, being composed of semicircular and angular bastions. This edifice stands in a spacious area, which at the time of its greatest strength, it is to be presumed, totally surrounded it, defended by a complete circumvallation and a moat; otherwise the principal part of the fortress would have lain unguarded by any outwork except a moat.

At present, the front is opened to the north-east; and the wall having towers at proper intervals, shuts it in on the other quarters. As the traveller approaches the castle, the walls with its towers form a noble flanking to the principal structure; to the southward, the garden grounds appear tastefully disposed; to the north and west the town of Alnwick is seen spreading on the back ground. He will, however, lament the want of some of those fine woodlands and lofty grey rocks which impend over the Aln, above Alnwick, to give rural and romantic graces to objects so imperial, (if we may be permitted the expression,) in distinguishing this noble edifice.

Alnwick castle contains about five acres of ground within its outer walls, which are flanked with sixteen towers and turrets that now afford a complete set of offices to the castle, and retain, many of them, their original names, as well as their ancient use and destination. There are,

1st. The Great or Outward Gate of entrance, anciently called the Utter Ward.

2nd. The Garner or Aveners Tower; behind which are the stables, coach-houses, &c., in all respects suitable to the magnitude and dignity of this great castle.

3rd. The Water Tower, containing the cistern or reservoir that supplies the castle and offices with water.

4th. The Caterer's Tower, adjoining to which are the kitchens and all conveniences of that description.

Behind the adjacent walls are concealed a complete set of offices and apartments for most of the principal officers and attendants in the castle; together with a large hall or

dining room to entertain the tenants at the audits; with an office for the auditors, and housekeeper's room; and underneath them a servants' hall, with all other suitable conveniences.

5th. The Middle Ward.

6th. The Auditor's Tower.

7th. The Guard House.

8th. The East Garret.

9th. The Records Tower, of which the lower story contains the evidence room, or great repository of the archives of the barony; over it is a circular apartment, designed and executed with great taste and beauty for a banquetting room; being twenty-nine feet in diameter, and twenty-four feet six inches high.

10th. The Ravine Tower, or Hotspur's chair. Between this and the round tower was formerly a large breach in the walls, which, from time immemorial, had been called by the town's people the bloody gap.

11th. The Constable's Tower, which remains chiefly in its ancient state, as a specimen to show how the castle itself was formerly fitted up.

12th. The Postern Tower, or Sally Port. The upper apartment now contains old armour, arms, &c. The lower story has a small furnace or laboratory for chemical experiments.

13th. The Armourer's Tower.

14th. The Falconer's Tower.

15th. The Abbot's Tower; so called either from its situation nearest the Alnwick Abbey, or, which is more probable, from its containing an apartment for the abbot of that monastery whenever he visited the castle.

16th. The West Garret.

The castle properly consists of three courts or divisions, the entrance into which was defended by three massive gates, called the utter ward, the middle ward, and the inner ward. Each of these gates was in a high embattled tower, furnished with a portcullis, and the outward gate with a drawbridge also; they had each of them a porter's lodge, and a strong prison, besides necessary apartments for the constable, bailiff, and subordinate officers. Under each of the prisons was a deep and dark dungeon, into which the more refractory prisoners were let down by cords, and from which there was no exit but through the trap-door in the floor above. That of the inner ward is still remaining in all its original horrors.

Nothing can be conceived more striking than the effect at first entrance within the walls from the tower, when, through a dark gloomy gateway of considerable length and

depth, the stranger suddenly emerges into one of the most splendid scenes that can be imagined, and is presented at once with the great body of the inner castle, surrounded by semicircular towers, expanding majestically to the eye, and gaily adorned with pinnacles, figures and battlements.

The impression is still further strengthened by the successive entrance into the second and third courts, through great massy towers, till the stranger arrives in the inner court, and in the very centre of this great citadel.

Here he approaches a most beautiful staircase, of a very singular but pleasing form, expanding like a fan: the cornice of the ceiling is enriched with a series of 120 escutcheons, displaying the principal quarterings and intermarriages of the Percy family. The space occupied by this staircase is forty-six feet long, thirty-five feet four inches wide, and forty-three feet two inches in height.

The first room that presents itself to the left is the saloon, which is a very beautiful apartment, designed in the most elegant style of Gothic architecture, and is forty-two feet eight inches long, thirty-seven feet two inches wide, and nineteen feet ten inches high. To this succeeds the drawing-room, consisting of one large oval, with a semicircular projection or bow-window. It is forty-six feet seven inches long, thirty-five feet four inches wide, and twenty-two feet high.

Hence the transition is very appropriately to the great dining-room, which was one of the first executed, and is of the purest Gothic, with niches and other ornaments, that render it a noble model of a great baron's hall. This room is fifty-three feet nine inches long, twenty feet ten inches wide (exclusive of a circular recess formed by a large bow-window at the upper end, which is nineteen feet in diameter), and twenty-six feet nine inches in height.

From the dining-room, the stranger may either descend into the court by a circular staircase, or he is ushered into a beautiful Gothic apartment over the gateway, commonly used for a breakfast or supper room; this is furnished with closets in the octagon towers, and is connected with other private apartments.

The stranger is thence conducted into the library, which is a very fine room, in the form of a parallelogram, properly fitted up with books, and ornamented with stucco work in a very rich Gothic style. It is sixty-four feet long, and sixteen feet one inch in height. This apartment leads to the Chapel, which fills all the upper space of the middle ward. Here the highest display of Gothic ornament

of the greatest beauty has been very appropriately exhibited; and the several parts of the chapel have been designed after the purest models of Gothic excellence. The great east window is imitated from one of the finest in Westminster; the ceiling is borrowed from that of King's College, Cambridge; and the walls are painted after the Cathedral at Milan. The windows, of painted glass, are perhaps equal to any thing of the kind hitherto attempted, and worthy of the present improved state of the arts in this country. Exclusive of a beautiful recess for the family, the chapel is fifty feet long, twenty-one feet four inches wide, and twenty-two feet high.

Returning from the chapel through the library, and passing by another great staircase, we enter a passage or gallery leading to two great state bed-chambers, each 30 feet long, furnished with exquisite taste; to which are attached double dressing-rooms, closets, and other conveniences, all of the greatest elegance and magnificence, but as conformable as possible to the general style of the castle. From these bed-chambers the passage opens to the grand staircase by which we first entered, and completes a *tout ensemble* not easily paralleled.

It is now time that we should turn our attention to the antiquity and history of this place.

Alnwick Castle is believed to have been founded in the time of the Romans, although no part of the original structure is now remaining. But when part of the dungeon, or castle keep, was taken down to be repaired, about seventy years ago, under the present walls were discovered the foundations of other buildings, which lay in a different direction from the present; and some of the stones appeared to have Roman mouldings.

The first proprietor of the Barony of Alnwick mentioned in history is Tyson, who fell at the battle of Hastings in defence of Harold his king. William the Conqueror gave the heiress of Tyson in marriage to Ivo de Vesey, one of his attendant adventurers; his possessions being very great, as well at Alnwick as in Yorkshire. Their daughter Beatrix was given in marriage by Henry I. to Eustace Fitz-John, from whence descended four generations, who successively possessed this Barony.

During the reign of William Rufus, Alnwick Castle was besieged by King Malcolm of Scotland, who, resenting a breach of truce committed by the former, entered the borders with a powerful army, accompanied by Ed-

ward his son, and laid waste the county of Northumberland.

Mowbray, Earl of Northumberland, had collected a few troops to oppose the invader, and with them possessed this castle. It was too strong to be taken by assault; but a circumvallation being made by the Scotch forces, the garrison was cut off from hopes of succour, and was on the point of surrendering, when a person undertook its relief by the following stratagem: he rode forth completely armed, with the keys of the castle tied to the end of his spear, and presented himself in a suppliant manner before the king's pavilion, as being come to surrender the fortress. Malcolm advancing hastily without his armour, received a mortal wound from the knight, who escaped by the fleetness of his horse, and by swimming the river, which was then flooded by rains. The Chronicle of Alnwick Abbey, now deposited in the British Museum, says that his name was Hammond, and the place of his passage was, long after, named Hammond's Ford. Prince Edward, Malcolm's eldest son, too incautiously advancing to revenge his death, fell into an ambushade, and was slain. The garrison sallied forth, the Scotch were thrown into confusion by the loss of their leaders, and a panic succeeding, victory declared for the English.

After King William of Scotland, surnamed the Lion, made his disgraceful retreat from the castle of Prudhoe, A. D. 1174, he beset the castle of Alnwick with his whole army, consisting of 80,000 men. Bernard Baliol, a youth of great fortitude, with about 400 horsemen raised at Newcastle, engaged in an enterprise to surprise the Scotch monarch: they were favoured in their march by a thick fog, which kept them concealed till they reached the environs of Alnwick, where, discovering the king attended by about sixty of his chief followers, on a reconnoitering party, they came upon them unexpectedly. A conflict ensued, in which the king's horse was killed under him, and many of his attendants were slain, the king being made prisoner. He was removed to London, and afterwards ransomed for 100,000*l.*, at the same time doing homage for his crown: as a memorial of which submission he deposited his arms at the altar of York Minster.

In the reign of King John, A. D. 1212, Eustace de Vesey being accused of a conspiracy against the king's life, fled into Scotland. His castle was ordered to be razed; but the apprehension of a southern rebellion diverted the purpose. Eustace afterwards did

homage to Alexander II. King of Scotland, his brother-in-law, and lost his life by approaching too near Bernard Castle, with a view to plan an assault upon that fortress.

In 1264, John de Vesey was summoned to Parliament in the twenty-eighth year of Henry the Third's reign. This was the glorious æra in which our mode of parliaments was first settled, and the Commons regularly admitted to a share in the legislative power. His son, William de Vesey, the last baron of that family, dying without legitimate issue, but leaving a son born out of wedlock, King Edward I. enfeoffed Antony Beck, Bishop of Durham, in the Castle and Barony of Alnwick, in trust for such natural son; but this prelate got the infant deprived of his barony, and also obtained a confirmation from the king of a sale thereof, made to Henry Lord Percy, Baron of Topcliff and Spofford, in Yorkshire, an ancestor of the present illustrious family.

And here we had designed to give a short history of this truly noble family,—but we were reminded at once of the impossibility of condensing into so small a space the splendid annals of a house which might justly demand a volume. In a happy moment, however, we hit upon a rapid but admirable sketch of the house of Percy, drawn by the hand of a master, which appeared a few years ago in the *Quarterly Review*, and we think we cannot do better than lay it entire before the reader. To abridge it were impossible, to add to it superfluous. It may be necessary, however, to state, that the design of the author has been to show that the history of the house of Percy, in common with many other illustrious families, has been a tale of melancholy and suffering.

“The great house of Percy was strikingly unfortunate during the reign of the Tudors, and, indeed, long before. Their ancestor, Josceline de Lorraine, a younger son of the ancient princes of Brabant, and brother of Adelia, second consort of our Henry I., married, in 1122, Agnes de *Percy*, the heiress of a great northern baron, seated at Topcliffe and Spofford, in Yorkshire, on condition that her male posterity should bear the name of Percy. Their son, Henry, was great-grandfather of Henry Lord Percy, summoned to parliament 1299, whose great-grandson, Henry, fourth Lord Percy, was created Earl of Northumberland, 1377, at the coronation of Richard II. He was slain at Bramham Moor, 1408. His son, Henry Lord Percy (*Hotspur*), had already fallen at Shrews-

bury, 1403. Henry, second Earl, son of Hotspur, was slain at the battle of St. Albans, 1455; and his son Henry, third Earl, was slain at the battle of Sowton, 1461. His son Henry, fourth Earl, was murdered by an insurrectionary mob, at Thirske, in Yorkshire, 1489, third Henry VII. Henry, fifth Earl, died a natural death, 1527: but his second son, Sir Thomas Percy, was executed, 1537, for his concern in Ask's rebellion. Henry, sixth Earl, the first lover of Queen Anne Boleyn, died 1537, issueless; and the honours were suspended for twenty years, by the attainder of his brother, Sir Thomas Percy, in 1537, already mentioned: during which time the family had the mortification to see the Dukedom of Northumberland conferred on John Dudley, Earl of Warwick. But this nobleman being attainted, 1553, the earldom was restored to Thomas Percy, the son of the attainted Sir Thomas, who became seventh Earl of Northumberland. Such a long succession of violent deaths, closed by attainder, and loss of such great and venerable honours, was calculated to afford a lesson of caution and love of quiet, when once the precious boon of restoration took place, which would have seemed to be irresistible. But all was lost upon him; as early as the second of Elizabeth, this restored earl grew discontented, that William, Lord Earl of Wilton, an excellent and experienced commander, was made Warden of the Middle and East Marches. Still, however, he did not lose the favour of the court; and the Garter was conferred on him. In 1568 he joined the strong faction of nobles against Secretary Cecil. In this year, he and Charles Neville, Earl of Westmorland, were at the head of the great northern insurrection, where Richard Norton, of Norton Conyers (ancestor of Lord Grantley), accompanied by his five sons, erected and bore the banner of the Cross—an incident emblazoned in one of the finest passages of Wordsworth's poetry. The insurgent's force retreated before the Queen's troops, under the Earls of Sussex and Warwick. Northumberland fled to Scotland, was betrayed, confined in Lochleven Castle, and delivered up by Morton to Lord Hunsdon, for a large bribe, in July 1572; and being conveyed to York, was beheaded there in August following. He left only two daughters, of whom Lady Lucy, wife of Sir Edward Stanley, was mother of the too celebrated Venetia, Lady Digby, wife of Sir Kenelm. His brother, Henry Percy, was allowed, in right of the new entail, to succeed as eighth

Earl of Northumberland. In 1585, this earl, still blind to his family sufferings, entered into the intrigues in favour of Mary Queen of Scots; and being imprisoned in the Tower, committed suicide on the 21st of June. His son, Henry, ninth earl, memorable for the charge of being privy to the gunpowder plot, 1605, grounded on the patronage he had afforded to Thomas Percy, one of the conspirators, a relative, whose exact connexion in blood is not known, was confined in the Tower for fifteen years and upwards, till 1620, where he showed himself a great encourager of literature and science, and kept a table for several learned men. This long imprisonment did not break his spirit; for on his release, hearing that Buckingham, the favourite, had six horses to his coach, he put *eight* to his own, and passed through the city of London to Bath in this pompous manner, to the admiration of the people. He then retired to

Petworth, kept up great hospitality there, and died at this celebrated seat of the Lovain-Percys in 1632. Of his son, Algernon, tenth earl, and the part he took in the rebellion, Lord Clarendon has spoken so fully that it is unnecessary to repeat it. He died in 1688. His son, Josceline, eleventh and last earl, survived his father not two years, dying on his travels at Turin, 21st May, 1670. Lady Elizabeth Percy, his only daughter and heir, married Charles Seymour (called the Proud) Duke of Somerset; whose son, Algernon, was the last of the male descendants of the protector-duke, by his second wife, Anne Stanhope; and whose daughter and heir married Sir Hugh Smithson, and was grandmother of the present Duke of Northumberland. Thus seven out of twelve died violent deaths—and thus came to an end the male line of this once flourishing and numerous family."

LITERATURE OF THE MONTH.

The Wonders of Chaos and the Creation Exemplified. A Poem.

Night-Watches, A Poem by William Ball, Author of "Creation." A Poem in Six Books. Naples. Printed for the Author, 1834.

OF the first of these poems, which is to consist of eight cantos, we have only the two first cantos before us as a specimen and a part. We doubt the propriety of publishing a work of this sort piecemeal, and think the reasons assigned for so doing are given with too little modesty. "This poem" says the advertisement, "is published in parts containing each two cantos, *in order that the public may have an early opportunity of judging of the merit of the work,* and with the intention of conducting to its more extended circulation."

As far as we can judge from this first part, the public might have waited very patiently for the opportunity of becoming acquainted with the author's *merit*, and we do not think that an "extended circulation" will encourage him to produce the three other parts. Whether he will go on without such encouragement is another question, and one that he and his bookseller may settle between them.

The intention is meritorious; it is to convince Infidels and Sceptics of the great truths of the Christian faith. But well-meaning is not in itself, alone, enough to produce good effects. A weak advocate may injure the cause for which he pleads with perfect honesty of heart, and the orator who sets his audience asleep while recommending some

salutary measure is always a stumbling-block in the way of its success.

In the first canto, our poet of unfledged wings, dares attempt to penetrate the awful regions which only a Dante and a Milton could explore. Heedless of the sublime Paradise Lost, which ought to have filled his mind with deference and awe, and prevented him from grappling with such a theme, he has ventured to describe the fall of Lucifer and the rebellious Angels! And what has he made of this?

"Thus fell the devils;—and how great their fall!"

In good truth nothing but a crude, common-place material picture, without the least spirituality in it; nothing but a bathos or a fall of poetry.

That all religious subjects should be approached with matured reflection, and reverential caution, that the Deity should never be personified or introduced but with an awful sense of his omnipotence and perfection, are points decided not merely by canons of literary criticism, but by the general feeling of enlightened humanity. What then shall we say of this writer, who represents the Almighty Essence, like a poor mortal, bending over a volcanic crater or bituminous spring, as having his sense of smell sorely annoyed by foul stenches? These are his words:—

And now the spirit of Jehovah sat
Midway 'twixt heaven and chaotic gloom,
Brooding o'er tumult, whilst his spotless soul
Yearn'd with disgust at the foul gulph below
Which from its fulsome breast *ejected smoke*
And poisonous vapour. Canto II.

We need say no more on the subject.