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Printed by W. H. Jones.

CATHCART CASTLE.

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THIS picturesque ruin occupies a commanding situation above the river White Cart, on the eastern border of the county.

As this district formed part of the kingdom of the Strathclyde Welsh, the origin of the word Cathcart may be sought in their language. In it *Caeth-cart* signifies the strait or confined part of the Cart. As the river here runs in a confined channel, between steep rocks, this description is strictly applicable. Other derivations have been suggested, but the above appears the most probable.

The territory of Cathcart formed part of the extensive estates conferred by David I. on Walter, the founder of the house of Stewart, before the middle of the twelfth century. It is mentioned in a confirmatory charter granted by David's immediate successor, Malcolm IV., in favour of Walter, in the year 1157.* In the munificent grant made by Walter, a few years afterwards, to the monastery which he established at Paisley, the Church of Cathcart, with all its pertinents, was comprehended;† and to that establishment the church continued to belong till the Reformation.

* Appendix, No. I., to the printed copy of the Chartulary of Paisley.

† Chartulary, p. 5.

Rainald de Cathcart is the earliest individual whose name occurs in connexion with this barony. Towards the end of the twelfth century he officiated as a witness to a confirmation, executed by Alan the second Steward, of the grant which his father, Walter, had made to the monastery of Paisley, including the church of Cathcart.*

In the beginning of the thirteenth century Sir Alan de Cathcart gave effectual support to Robert Bruce in maintaining the independence of the country. By his marriage to the heiress of Sir Duncan Wallace, the barony of Sundrum, in Ayrshire, devolved on this family.

About the year 1447, Sir Alan de Cathcart, the great-grandson of the individual just mentioned, was raised to the peerage by James II., with the title of Baron Cathcart.

About 1546, Alan, third Lord Cathcart, sold this estate to his lady's uncle, Gabriel Sempill of Ladymuir, son of John, first Lord Sempill. In this branch of the Sempills the estate continued till the beginning of the eighteenth century, when it was sold to John Maxwell of Williamwood. In the end of the century it was disposed of in parcels. The castle and principal messuage were acquired by James Hill, from whose representatives they were purchased by the Earl of Cathcart in 1801. Thus, after the lapse of between two and three centuries, this portion of the barony returned to the direct male heir of its ancient owners. The Earl afterwards acquired another portion named Symshill.

The time when the Castle of Cathcart was reared is unknown. From the remains it appears to have been a place of great strength. Two of its sides are completely defended by the river, to which there is an almost perpendicular descent of tremendous height. The access on the other side, except by a narrow entry which might have been secured by a ditch and drawbridge, is pretty steep and difficult, so that, in times when the art of attack was not so well understood, it might have made a considerable defence. The original edifice consisted of a square tower, "to which," says Hamilton of Wishaw, writing about the year 1710, "several new buildings have been added."† This more modern portion was

* Chartulary, p. 12.

† Description, p. 116.

“completely removed” by the end of that century. From Wishaw we also learn that the castle “had fruitfull gardens about it.” This edifice was inhabited till about the year 1750, when it was given up for demolition by the proprietor of that day, Maxwell of Williamwood, upon his removing to another dwelling. The materials were sold to a tradesman in Glasgow, who, having taken off the roof, was proceeding to demolish the rest of the building, when he found himself obliged to stop by the resistance he met with from the strength and thickness of the walls. Since that time the edifice has remained in a dismantled state, without, however, suffering much farther injury from the influence of the weather.

Upon the bank of the river, and adjacent to the castle, stands Cart-side Cottage, the modern mansion of the family. Upwards of twenty years ago there was built into the front wall of this house a stone, on which are sculptured the arms of Cathcart, quartered with those of Stair, indicating the connexion of these families through the marriage of Alan, seventh Lord Cathcart, to a daughter of Viscount Stair, the eminent lawyer. This stone, which had been originally placed in front of the house of Sundrum, while that property formed the principal residence of the family of Cathcart, was presented by Mr Hamilton of Sundrum to the Earl of Cathcart, when he learned that his Lordship had re-acquired the ancient seat of his family.

Of the eminent services, military and diplomatic, of the present representative of this ancient house, this is not the place to speak. For these he has been raised to the peerage of the United Kingdom by the titles of Viscount Greenock and Earl of Cathcart. The former title is taken from the town of Greenock, where his Lordship inherits a part of the Shaw estate through the marriage of his grandfather, Charles, eighth Lord Cathcart, to the only daughter of Sir John Shaw. Hence, also, their successors have borne the name and arms of Shaw in addition to their own.

At Langside, a mile and a half north-west of the Castle of Cathcart, the adherents of Queen Mary were totally defeated by those of the Regent Murray, on the 13th of May 1568. Under the banner of the latter the Lord Cathcart of that day, who was a zealous promoter of the

Reformation, appeared with his vassals. By this victory the ascendancy of the Protestant party was secured, while the unfortunate Queen's ill-advised flight to England formed but the prelude

“ to a long array
Of woes and degradations hand in hand ;
Weeping captivity and shuddering fear—
Stilled by the ensanguin'd block of Fotheringay.”*

A place is yet pointed out upon an eminence, fully in view of the field of battle, and near the Castle of Cathcart, where Mary anxiously awaited the issue.† A hawthorn bush, called “ Queen Mary's Thorn,” marked out the spot till it decayed through age about the year 1790, when another was planted in its stead. The country people show another eminence near the castle, called “ The Court Knowe,” where, they say, the Queen held a council before the battle. This appears to be a popular error. If any consultation took place there, between Mary and her advisers, it must have been very hurried, and it is most improbable that the dignified title of a “ court,” or a “ council,” would have been applied to it. “ The Court Knowe,” we apprehend, is but another name for the *mote-hill*, the place where justice was administered in feudal times.

At the field of battle, on the summit of the height called Camphill, there is a circular or elliptical inclosure, about 360 feet in circumference, to which the common people have attached the name of “ Queen Mary's Camp.” This is manifestly another popular perversion of fact, for neither the Queen nor her army ever reached that hill ; and, as to the Regent, he only took possession of it at the beginning of the engagement. Indeed, the scene of the conflict was so unpremeditated, that neither party had time to form any entrenchment. That in question is probably of Roman formation. It commanded an extensive view of the surrounding country, and was within a few miles of the large encampment constructed by the same people at Paisley.

* Wordsworth's Itinerary Sonnets.

† The tradition that the Queen stood at Crookston Castle during the battle is erroneous, as will be shown in the notice of that place.

Sluggish and unadorned though the river White Cart be in the lower part of its course, it exhibits much beauty in its progress through the parish of Cathcart, the banks being frequently elevated and clothed with a rich drapery of wood. Such is the warmth and shelter in some of the sequestered spots on its banks, that an almost perpetual verdure is to be found. In the midst of this scenery "the Bard of Hope," and the amiable author of "The Sabbath," were, in their childhood, accustomed to pass the summer months and feed their young fancies, removed from the smoke and noise of their native city. The latter, in his "Birds of Scotland," says:—

"Forth from my low-roofed home I wandered blithe
Down to thy side, sweet Cart, where, cross the stream,
A range of stones, below a shallow ford,
Stood in the place of the now spanning arch."

And Campbell, in his "Lines on revisiting Cathcart," thus tenderly apostrophizes the pleasant fields which he had so often traversed "in life's morning march, when his bosom was young:—"

"Oh! scenes of my childhood, and dear to my heart,
Ye green waving woods on the margin of Cart,
How blest in the morning of life I have stray'd
By the stream of the vale and the grass-covered glade!"