ROBERT BORLAND

BORDER RAIDS AND REIVERS

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http://www.litres.ru/pages/biblio_book/?art=24171732
Border Raids and Reivers:
ISBN http://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/32005

Содержание

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PREFACE

The object we have had in view in the following pages has been (1) to indicate briefly the causes which produced Border reiving; (2) to show the extent to which the system was ultimately developed; (3) to describe the means adopted by both Governments for its suppression; (4) to illustrate the way in which the *rugging and riving*– to use a well-known phrase – was carried on; (5) to explain how these abnormal conditions were in the end effectually removed; and (6) to set forth in brief outline some of the more prominent traits in the lives and characters of the men who were most closely identified with this extraordinary phase of Border life.

We have to acknowledge our indebtedness for much of the information conveyed in the following pages to Scott's "Border Antiquities" and "Border Minstrelsy," Nicolson's "Leges Marchiarum," Pitcairn's "Criminal Trials," "Calendar of Border Papers" (recently published), "Cary's Memoirs" – Froissart, Godscroft, Pitscottie, Pinkerton – and host of other writers on Border themes.

It is in no spirit of mock-modesty we acknowledge how

inadequately the object we have had in view has been realised. The subject is so large and many-sided that we have found it difficult to compress within the compass of a single volume anything like an adequate outline of a theme which is at once so varied and interesting.

In coming to the consideration of this subject, there is one fact which it is well the reader should carefully bear in mind, and that is, that from the peculiar circumstances in which Borderers were placed in early times, the only alternative they had was either to *starve or steal*. The recognition of this fact will at least awaken our sympathy, if it does not always command our approval, when we come to consider the lives and characters of the Border Reivers.

I.
THE AULD ENEMY

"Near a Border frontier, in the time of war,
There's ne'er a man, but he's a freebooter." – Satchells.

There are few more remarkable phenomena in the political or social life of Scotland than what is familiarly known as "Border Reiving." In olden times it prevailed along the whole line of the Borders from Berwick to the Solway, embracing the counties of Berwick, Roxburgh, Selkirk, Peebles, and Dumfries. During a period of some three or four hundred years these districts were chiefly inhabited by hordes of moss-troopers, who made it the chief business of their lives to harry and despoil their English neighbours. On every convenient opportunity the Scottish reivers crossed the Border, and carried off whatever came readiest to hand – horses, cows, sheep, "insight and outsight," nothing coming amiss to them unless it was either too heavy or too hot. Those on the English side who were thus despoiled were not slow to retaliate, and generally succeeded, to some extent, in making good the losses they sustained. This system of plunder and reprisal ultimately attained an extraordinary development. All classes, from the Chief of the clan to the meanest serf

over whom he ruled, were engaged in it. Indeed it must be frankly admitted that the most notorious thieves were often those who had least excuse for indulging in such nefarious practices – gentlemen in high position like the Scotts, Kers, Johnstones, and Maxwells, and who in many cases had been chosen by the Government to repress the reiving propensities of their clans and followers.

Some who have made a superficial acquaintance with this remarkable phase of Border life have rushed to the conclusion that the great Border Chiefs, and those over whom they exercised a kind of patriarchal authority, must have been dowered with a "double dose of original sin." In proof of this it is pointed out that a widely different state of affairs prevailed in other parts of the country, for example in Fife, and the Lothians, and generally speaking, throughout the whole of the west of Scotland, and consequently the only way in which they can account for the singular condition of the Borders is by predicating an essentially lower moral type. We do not believe that this theory, plausible though it may appear, will bear a moment's serious consideration. No doubt among the "broken men" of the Debateable land, and in some parts of Liddesdale, you will find a considerable number of disreputable characters whose only law was the length of their own swords. But it is a mistake to suppose that such individuals represent the general type of the inhabitants of the Borderland. The very fact that these men had no Chief to represent them shows that they had, so to speak, fallen out of the ranks.

The solution of this problem must be sought in another direction. It will be found by a careful study of the history of the country that Border reiving was, to a considerable extent, the result of a concatenation of circumstances over which the inhabitants of these districts had little or no control. They were the victims of an evil fate. It was not merely their proximity to the English Border which occasioned their misdeeds. It is an interesting and significant fact that, till near the close of the 13th century, the Border Counties were as law-abiding as any other part of the realm. Petty skirmishes were, no doubt, of frequent occurrence, as might be expected; but the deep rooted aversion to the English which characterises the subsequent period of Scottish history had hardly at that time any real existence. How the change was brought about will become apparent as we bring under review some salient facts in Scottish history which have a direct and immediate bearing on the question before us.

It must be borne in mind that for a period of more than three hundred years Scotland was kept in a condition of political distraction by the insane desire on the part of the English Government to reduce it to a state of vassalage. When this policy was first determined on everything seemed favourable to its speedy realisation. When Alexander III., a wise and gracious King, under whose reign the country had greatly prospered, was accidentally killed when hunting in the neighbourhood of Kinghorn, the Crown reverted to his grand-daughter, the Maid of Norway, who was then a child of tender years. At this unfortunate

juncture Edward I. of England resolved that the two countries should be united under one Sovereign; at least this was the object of his ambition. He was fully convinced that so long as Scotland maintained her political independence, England would have to reckon with a powerful adversary. If he could only succeed, by fair means or foul, in gaining Scotland over as a fief of England, then the country as a whole would enjoy the immunities and benefits naturally accruing to its position as an island. England would thus be in an immensely more advantageous position to resist foreign invasion, and its influence and power as an aggressive force would be indefinitely increased. The object aimed at was an exceedingly desirable one. Unfortunately it was a sane policy insanely pursued. Had the English King only been gifted with more self-restraint, had he but been prepared to wait patiently the natural development of events, and not to have struck the iron *before* it was hot, he might have succeeded in gaining his end, a result which would have changed the whole complexion and current of Scottish history. Whether this would have been better or worse, more to our own advantage and the advantage of Great Britain, as a whole, is one of those points about which there may be considerable difference of opinion. Many have regretted that the Union of the Crowns was not effected in the 14th century rather than in the 17th, as such a consummation would have saved the country much, both of bloodshed and treasure. It may be so. It cannot be denied that from a purely material point of view it might have been better

had Scotland gracefully complied with the wishes of Edward. But man cannot live by bread alone. There are higher and better things in the life of a people than mere material well-being, and in view of these it was well that Scotland maintained her independence. The record of her achievements, when contending against the most overwhelming odds, and the example of those heroic personalities, which mark the progress of her history, have been a perennial fountain of inspiration to the Scottish people, have made them what they are. While, therefore, there may be some cause for regret, on the ground of political expediency, that the union of the two countries was so late in being effected, yet on other and higher grounds there is just reason for thankfulness that things took the course they did. What would Scotland have been without its Wallace or Bruce? or what would it have been apart from the long and arduous struggle through which it was destined to pass ere it gained an assured and thoroughly independent political position? The long years of struggle and desolating warfare constitute an important factor in the social and intellectual evolution of the nation. The best qualities of the Scottish character and intellect were developed in the seething maelstrom of political strife and internecine war. It may be that "the course of Providence is also the orbit of wisdom."

Edward in trying to bring Scotland under his sway pursued a two-fold policy. He endeavoured to prevent as far as possible all union among the most powerful Scottish barons. He arrayed their private and selfish ambition against the love of their country.

He sowed dissension in their councils, and richly rewarded their treachery. Those who dared to oppose his well-laid schemes were treated with unmitigated severity. His success in this respect was complete. He had the satisfaction of seeing the country torn to pieces by contending factions. His way was now open for applying more drastic measures. He raised a powerful army and invaded Scotland. The town of Berwick was then an important centre of commerce, and he was determined at all hazards to make himself master of the city. "He despatched a large division, with orders to assault the town, choosing a line of march which concealed them from the citizens; and he commanded his fleet to enter the river at the same moment that the great body of the army, led by himself, were ready to storm. The Scottish army fiercely assaulted the ships, burnt three of them, and compelled the rest to retire; but they in their turn were driven back by the fury of the land attack. Edward himself, mounted on horseback, was the first who leaped the dyke; and the soldiers, animated by the example and presence of their King, carried everything before them. All the horrors of a rich and populous city, sacked by an inflamed soldiery, and a commander thirsting for vengeance, now succeeded. *Seventeen thousand persons*, without distinction of age or sex, were put to the sword; and for two days the city ran with blood like a river. The churches, to which the miserable inhabitants fled for sanctuary, were violated and defiled with blood, spoiled of their sacred ornaments, and turned

into stables for the English cavalry."[1]

This ruthless massacre produced a profound sensation all over the country, but more especially on the Borders, and had much to do in creating that bitter feeling of hostility with which the English were ever afterwards regarded. To harass and despoil them was looked upon almost as a sacred duty. This miserable butchery of the inoffensive lieges instantly led to reprisals. Under the Earls of Ross, Menteith, and Athole, the Scottish army crossed the English Border, and ravaged with merciless severity the districts of Redesdale and Tynedale. The monasteries of Lanercost and Hexham were given to the flames, towns and villages destroyed, and the surrounding country laid waste. The Scots returned laden with booty. But the success which had crowned their arms was of doubtful utility. It only served to fan the flame of vengeful ire in the breast of the English King, who now resolved on the complete subjugation of the country. He marched against Dunbar with an army of ten thousand foot, and a thousand heavy armed horse. The Scots opposed his progress with an army much superior in point of numbers, and occupying a position of great strategic importance on the heights above Spot. As the English army had necessarily to deploy in passing along the valley it was supposed that the ranks had somehow fallen into confusion. The Scots precipitately rushed upon the enemy, only to find, to their dismay, that the English army was under the most perfect discipline, and ready for the attack.

[1] Tytler's History, vol. I., page 43.

After a short resistance the Scottish columns were thrown into inextricable confusion, and were routed with great slaughter, leaving ten thousand brave soldiers dead in the field. History has a strange knack of repeating itself. Three hundred and fifty years after, the Scottish covenanters committed a similar blunder at the same place when opposing the progress of Oliver Cromwell, and with an equally disastrous result. The progress of Edward now partook of the nature of a triumphal march. He threw his army upon Edinburgh, and in the course of eight days made himself master of the Castle. He then proceeded to Perth, where he received the submission of Baliol, who seemed anxious to rid himself of an office the duties of which he was constitutionally unfit to discharge. The King continued his march to Aberdeen, and from thence to Elgin, without resistance. The nobles hurried into his presence to tender their submission. With indecent haste they renounced the alliance with Bruce, and took the oath of fealty to the destroyer of their country's liberties. It was a dark and tragic hour in Scottish history.

As Edward returned on his way to Berwick, where he proposed holding a Parliament, he visited Scone, and took with him the "famous and fatal stone" upon which for many ages the Scottish Kings had been crowned and anointed. "This, considered by the Scots as the national Palladium, along with the Scottish Sceptre and Crown, the English monarch placed in the Cathedral of Westminster as an offering to Edward the Confessor, and as a memorial of what he deemed his absolute

conquest of Scotland, a conquest which, before a single year elapsed, was entirely wrested from him."[2]

We must now pass rapidly over one of the most eventful and stirring periods of Scottish history, during which Wallace and Bruce, by almost superhuman efforts, succeeded in delivering the country from the domination and control of England. The battle of Bannockburn gave the final blow to the lofty pretensions of the English monarch. He began to realise that the conquest of Scotland was not to be effected so easily as he had at one time vainly thought. But unfortunately this splendid victory did not result in inaugurating a reign of peace and goodwill between the two countries. After all that the Scottish people had suffered at the hands of their enemies, it was impossible for them to remain quiescent. They were determined on revenge. Hence we find that in the early autumn of 1314 Douglas and Edward Bruce were despatched across the eastern march, and ravaged with fire and sword the counties of Northumberland and Durham. They even penetrated into Yorkshire, plundered the town of Richmond, and drove away a large booty of cattle, and made many prisoners. The inhabitants of the north of England were paralysed with fear. Walsingham declares that a hundred Englishmen would not hesitate to fly from two or three Scottish soldiers, so grievously had their wonted courage deserted them.

Another army of Scottish soldiers marched through Redesdale and Tynedale, "marking their progress by the black

[2] Tytler's History, vol. I., page 46.

ashes of the towns and villages."

In the spring of the following year this predatory mode of warfare was again resumed, and Northumberland and the principality of Durham ravaged. A great quantity of plunder was collected, and the inhabitants compelled to redeem their property by paying a high tribute. The army of Bruce seemed invincible, and the northern counties of England were made to pay dearly for the temerity of the king in venturing to challenge the patriotism and prowess of the Scottish people.

These events produced a profound impression on the people as a whole, especially on the dwellers on the Scottish Border. The sacking of Berwick, and the indiscriminate slaughter of its inhabitants, whose only offence was that they refused to open their gates to the usurper, were not soon forgotten, and engendered in the Border mind an undying hatred of England. It is not to be wondered at that the inhabitants of the Scottish Border should seldom either think or speak of the English except as their "auld enemies." To despoil them became, if not a religious, at least a patriotic duty. These circumstances to which reference has been made, and others of a kindred nature, may account, in some degree at least, for the extraordinary fact that the Border mosstrooper never seems to have been ashamed of his calling. On the contrary he gloried in it. In his eyes it was honourable and worthy. The undaunted bearing of the Bold Buccleuch, for example, and his cavalier manner in dealing with the English wardens, showed how thoroughly he enjoyed the

work in which he was engaged. Eure tells how, on one occasion, he sent his cousin, Henry Bowes, to confer with this famous freebooter on some question in dispute, but Buccleuch "scorned to speak with him, and gathered his forces; and if my said cousin had not wisely foreseen and taken time to have come away he had been stayed himself. Two several messages were sent from Buccleuch from out his company that were in the field, part to have stayed with him and those that were with him. Not long since some of his men having stolen in my March, my men following their trade were stayed of his officer of Hermitage, their horses taken and themselves escaped on foot."[3]

The English warden had evidently considerable difficulty in accounting for Buccleuch's attitude, for we find in a letter written to Burghley a few days after this happened that he is disposed to attribute his enmity to England to his zeal for Romanism. "His secret friends," he says, "say he is a papist; his surest friends in court are papists about the Queen, and labour his grace with the King. He strengthened himself much of late, and secretly says he will not stir till some certainty of the Spaniards arrive. To England he is a secret enemy, mighty proud, publishing his descent to be from Angus, and laboureth to be created Earl, and claimeth his blood to be partly royal. His poverty is great, all which concurring with his pride and Spanish religion, I leave to your honourable wisdom to censure."

This picture is certainly painted in strong colours. The one

[3] Border Papers, vol. II., page 130.

point in it which is really significant, however, is that Buccleuch was "a secret enemy to England." This may be said of nine-tenths of the Border reivers. It was not the mere love of plunder or mischief which impelled them to prosecute their calling. They were animated by a spirit of revenge. Times almost without number the armies of England had crossed the Border, burning villages and homesteads, destroying the crops, carrying off goods and cattle, leaving those whom they had thus ruthlessly despoiled to the tender mercies of an uncertain climate and an impoverished soil, from which even at the best they had difficulty in extracting a bare subsistence.

The English were, comparatively speaking, rich and powerful. They could command great forces, against which it was in vain, in most cases, for the Scottish Borderers to contend. Hence when they were assailed they drove their cattle into the recesses of mountain or forest, burned or otherwise destroyed what they could not remove – so that the enemy might be enriched as little as possible – and betook themselves to some distant shelter, where they awaited the course of events. As soon as the enemy had withdrawn, they returned to their places of abode, which, though destroyed, were easily reconstructed – the work of rebuilding being done in a day or two – and then they set about recouping themselves for the losses they had sustained by making incursions on the English Border, and carrying off every thing they could lay their hands on. This system of plunder and reprisal went on merrily along the whole line of the Borders for

many generations. All the great Border families were involved in it, and devoted themselves to the work with a zeal and enthusiasm which left nothing to be desired. They doubtless felt that in plundering the English they were not only enriching themselves, but promoting the interests of their country, and paying back a long standing and heavily accumulating debt.

II.
PERCY'S PENNON

"It fell about the Lammas time
When Yeomen wonne their hay,
The doughty Douglas 'gan to ride
In England to take a prey."

Battle of Otterburn.

The Battle of Otterburn, which took place in the autumn of 1388, is without question one of the most interesting episodes in Border history, and is especially significant as an illustration of the prowess and chivalry of the Border Chiefs. The chief combatants on the Scottish side were the Earls of Douglas, Moray, March, and Crawford, the Lord Montgomery, and Patrick Hepburn of Hales, and his son. On the English side were Sir Henry (Hotspur) and Sir Ralph Percy, sons of the Earl of Northumberland; the Seneschal of York, Sir Ralph Langley, Sir Matthew Redman, governor of Berwick, Sir Robert Ogle, Sir Thomas Grey, Sir Thomas Hatton, Sir John Felton, Sir John Lillburne, Sir William Walsingham, and many others, all good men and true. The circumstances which brought about this famous encounter are worth recalling, as they shed an interesting light on the history of the period, as well as on the manners and

customs of the age. The Scots, with the aid of their French allies, under the command of Sir John de Vienne, had made frequent successful incursions upon the English Borders, ravaging with fire and sword considerable districts of the country, both to the east and west of the frontier. This naturally led to retaliating expeditions. At last the state of affairs became so desperate that the young King, Richard II., determined to invade Scotland, and mete out summary punishment on the depredators. An army of extraordinary power and splendour was assembled; and the King, attended by his uncles and all the principal nobles of the kingdom, set out for the Scottish Border. If he expected to reap a rich harvest of booty by this invasion of the Scottish kingdom he was doomed to bitter disappointment. As he passed through Liddesdale and Teviotdale at the head of his army he found that the country had been cleared of everything that could be conveniently carried off. The cattle had been driven into the forest and mountain fastnesses; all the goods and chattels had been secured in places of safety; nothing was left but the green crops, and these being trampled upon were rendered practically worthless. But most wonderful of all – he never could come within sight of the enemy! The whole region through which he passed was lonely and desolate as a wilderness. The reason of this was that the French and Scots forces had fallen back upon Berwick, the commander of the Scots army being unwilling to hazard the fate of the country by an encounter with such an overwhelmingly superior force. The French commander, De

Vienne, was impatient, and bitterly disappointed at not being permitted to attack the invaders. The Earl of Douglas, in order to demonstrate the hopelessness of an encounter, conveyed him to a lofty eminence, commanding a mountain pass through which the English army was at that moment defiling, and where unseen themselves, they could see its imposing array. The Scottish leader pointed out the number and discipline of the men-at-arms, and the superiority of the equipments of the archers, and then asked the French Knight whether he could recommend the Scots to encounter such a numerous and completely accoutred army with a few ill-trained Highland bowmen, and their light-armed prickers mounted on little hackneys. He could not but admit the risk was too great. "But yet," said he, "if you do not give the English battle they will destroy your country." "Let them do their worst," replied Douglas, "they will find but little to destroy. Our people have all retired into the mountains and forests, and have carried off their flocks and herds and household stuff along with them. We will surround them with a desert, and while they never see an enemy they shall never stir a bow-shot from their standards without being overpowered with an ambush. Let them come on at their pleasure, and when it comes to burning and spoiling you shall see which has the worst of it." "But what will you do with your army if you do not fight," said De Vienne; "and how will your people endure the distress and famine and plunder which must be the consequences of the invasion?" "You shall see that our army shall not be idle," was the reply; "and as for our Scottish

people, they will endure pillage, and they will endure famine, and every other extremity of war, but they will not endure English masters."

The wisdom of this course was proved by subsequent results. The English army by the time it reached Edinburgh had got into the most desperate straits owing to the scarcity of provisions. Multitudes perished from want, and to escape total destruction a retreat was ordered through those very districts "which their own merciless and short-sighted policy had rendered a blackened desert."

There is one important fact brought before us in this connection which demands a passing notice. The Reformers have often been severely censured for the wholesale destruction of the ancient Abbeys so intimately associated with the "fair humanities" of the ritual and worship of the Church of Rome. The saying attributed to Knox, about pulling down the rookeries to prevent the crows building, has served as a convenient text for many a philippic on the iconoclastic spirit and tendency of Protestantism. But the truth is that Knox had as little sympathy with what he calls the "rascal multitude," which sometimes engaged in this kind of work, as any of those opposed to him. Our Abbeys for the most part owe their destruction not to Reforming zeal, but to Catholic England's cupidity and revenge. The beautiful Abbeys of Melrose, Dryburgh, and Newbattle were given to the flames by the English soldiers at this time, and the wanton destruction of these noble edifices created in the Scottish

mind a feeling of deep and bitter hostility. Jedburgh, too, owes its destruction not to Scottish iconoclasm, but to English invasion. It was pillaged and partly burned by the Earl of Surrey in the year 1523, and its destruction was practically completed by the Earl of Hereford twenty-two years afterwards; so that, so far at least as the Border Abbeys are concerned, the charge so often preferred against the Reformers is a base and stupid calumny.

It was this invasion of the English army which led the Scottish nobles to organise the expedition which may be said to have terminated so gloriously at Otterburn. "The Scots," says Godscroft, "irritated herewith boyled with desire and revenge, being at that time very flourishing with strong youth, and never better furnished with commanders." The barons did not think it politic, for various reasons, to take the King into their confidence. He was of an essentially pacific disposition, and moreover was well stricken in years, and it is almost certain, had the matter been laid before him, he would have opposed the movement to the utmost of his power. His sons, however, were prepared to give every encouragement and assistance, and the barons in order to allay suspicion, and especially to prevent the English getting to know their purposes and plans, assembled at a great feast in Aberdeen and took counsel together. But, as Froissart says, "Everything is known to them who are diligent in their inquiries." The English nobles sent spies to Aberdeen, who, appearing in the guise of heralds and minstrels, became familiar with the plans of the Scottish barons, and speedily carried the

information back to their own country. When the Scottish army ultimately assembled at Yetholm, close to the English Border, the English lords were well informed on nearly every point on which information could be desired. Such a muster had not been seen, so it was said, for sixty years. "There were twelve hundred spears, and forty thousand other men and archers. These lords were well pleased on meeting with each other, and declared they would never return to their homes without making an inroad on England, and to such an effect as would be remembered for twenty years."[4]

The English had arranged that, if the Scots entered the country through Cumberland and Carlisle, they would ride into Scotland by Berwick and Dunbar, for they said, theirs is an open country that can be entered anywhere, but ours is a country with strong and well fortified towns and castles. It was therefore important they should know what route the Scots had determined upon. To ascertain this they sent a spy to the Scots' camp that he might report to them not only their intentions, but their speeches and actions. The English squire who came on this errand had a singular and exciting experience. He tied his horse to a tree in the neighbourhood of the church, where the barons were assembled, and entered into the church, as a servant following his master. When he came out he went to get his horse, but to his consternation the animal had disappeared, "for a Scotsman

[4] Froissart, vol. II., p. 362.

(for they are all thieves) had stolen him."[5] He went away, saying nothing about his loss, a circumstance which at once excited suspicion. One who saw him remarked, "I have witnessed many wonderful things, but what I now see is equal to any; that man yonder has, I believe, lost his horse, and yet he makes no inquiries after it. On my troth, I doubt much if he belongs to us; let us go after him, and see whether I am right or not." He was immediately apprehended, brought back, and examined. He was told that if he tried to deceive them he would lose his head, but if he told the truth he would be kindly treated. Being in dread of his life, he divulged all he knew, and especially explained with minuteness of detail the plans which had been concocted by his compatriots for the invasion of Scotland. "When the Scottish lords heard what was said they were silent; but looked at each other."

It was now resolved to divide the army into two sections; one section, and that much the larger of the two, to go into England through Cumberland, the other to proceed along the valley of the Tyne to Durham. The latter company, under the command of the Earl of Douglas, made a rapid march through Northumberland, keeping a "calm sough" all the way, but as soon as they got into the neighbourhood of Durham the fiends of war were let loose. The first intimation the garrison in Newcastle had that the enemy was within their gates, was the dense volumes of smoke which ascended from burning towns and homesteads. Having gathered

[5] Ib.

together an immense quantity of booty, the Scots set out on their return journey, and crossing the Tyne assaulted Newcastle, filling the ditches with hay and faggots, hoping thereby to have drawn out the enemy to the open fields. But the English, being in doubt as to the real strength of the Scots' army, were afraid to challenge an encounter. But Sir Henry Percy, better known as *Hotspur*, being desirous to try his valour, offered to fight the Douglas in single combat. "They mounted on two faire steeds, and ran together with sharp ground spears at outrance; in which encounter the Earl Douglas bore Percie out of his saddle. But the English that were by did rescue him so that he could not come at himself, but he snatched away his spear with his guidon or wither; and waving it aloft, and shaking it, he cried aloud that he would carry it into Scotland as his spoil."[6] The account which Froissart gives of this notable encounter differs in some particulars from the foregoing. He says: – "The sons of the Earl of Northumberland, from their great courage, were always the first barriers, when many valiant deeds were done with lances hand to hand. The Earl of Douglas had a long conflict with Sir Henry Percy, and in it, by gallantry of arms, won his pennon, to the great vexation of Sir Henry and the other English." The Earl of Douglas said, "I will carry this token of your prowess with me to Scotland, and place it on the tower of my castle at Dalkeith that it may be seen from far." "By God, Earl of Douglas," replied Sir Henry, "you shall not even carry it out of Northumberland; be

[6] Godscroft, p. 98.

assured you shall never have the pennon to brag of." "You must come then," answered Earl Douglas, "this night and seek for it. I will fix your pennon before my tent, and shall see if you venture to take it away." As the balladist has vigorously put it —

He took a long spear in his hand,
Shod with the metal free,
And for to meet the Douglas there,
He rode right furiouslie.

But O how pale his lady look'd,
Frae aff the castle wa',
When down before the Scottish spear
She saw proud Percy fa'.

"Had we twa been upon the green,
And never an eye to see,
I wad hae had you, flesh and fell;[7]
But your sword sall gie wi' me."

"But gae ye up to Otterbourne,
And wait there dayis three;
And, if I come not ere three dayis end,
A fause knight ca' ye me."

"The Otterbourne's a bonnie burn;
'Tis pleasant there to be;

[7] Hide.

But there is nought at Otterbourne,
To feed my men and me.

"The deer rins wild on hill and dale,
The birds fly wild from tree to tree;
But there is neither bread nor kail,
To fend[8] my men and me.

"Yet I will stay at Otterbourne,
Where you shall welcome be;
And, if ye come not at three dayis end,
A fause lord I'll ca' thee."

"Thither will I come," proud Percy said,
"By the might of our Ladye!"
"There will I bide thee," said the Douglass,
"My troth I plight to thee."

They lighted high on Otterbourne,
Upon the bent sae brown;
They lighted high on Otterbourne,
And threw their pallions down.

And he that had a bonnie boy,
Sent out his horse to grass;
And he that had not a bonnie boy,
His ain servant he was.

[8] Fend – Support.

The Earl of Douglas having withdrawn his gallant troops to Otterburn, in the parish of Elsdon, some thirty-two miles from Newcastle, and within easy reach of the Scottish Border, was strongly urged to proceed towards Carlisle, in order to join the main body of the army; but he thought it best to stay there some three or four days at least, to "repell the Percy's bragging." To keep his soldiers from wearying, he set them to take some gentlemen's castles and houses that lay near, a work which was carried out with the greatest alacrity and goodwill. They also strengthened and fortified the camp where it was weak, and built huts of trees and branches. Their baggage and servants they placed at the entrance of a marsh, which lay near the Newcastle road; and driving their cattle into the marsh land, where they were comparatively safe, they waited the development of events.

Nor were they long kept in suspense. The English having discovered that the Scottish army was comparatively small, resolved at once to risk an encounter. Sir Henry Percy, when he heard that the Scottish army did not consist of more than three thousand men, including all sorts, became frantically excited, and cried out – "To horse! to horse! for by the faith I owe to my God, and to my lord and father, I will seek to recover my pennon, and to beat up their quarters this night." He set out at once, accompanied by six hundred spears, of knights and squires, and upwards of eight thousand infantry, which he said would be more than enough to fight the Scots.

If Providence is always on the side of the heaviest battalion, as

Napoleon was wont to affirm, then the Scots on this occasion are in imminent danger of having "short shrift." But it has been found that the fortunes of war depend on a variety of circumstances that are frequently of more importance than the number of troops, either on the one side or the other. Discipline and valour, when combined with patriotism and pride-of-arms, have accomplished feats which the heaviest battalions are sometimes impotent to achieve. We by no means wish to imply that the English were deficient in these desirable qualities; far from it. They were splendidly led, and in the encounter displayed the most heroic qualities; but they were matched by a small body of men, of the most dauntless courage and invincible determination who were thoroughly inured to battle, and ever ready at the call of duty, to encounter the most powerful foes. The Scots were taken by surprise. Some were at supper, and others had gone to rest when the alarm was given that the English were approaching.

But up then spake a little page,
Before the peep of dawn —
"O waken ye, waken ye, my good lord,
For Percy's hard at hand."

"Ye lie, ye lie, ye liar loud!
Sae loud I hear ye lie;
For Percy had not men yestreen,
To dight my men and me.

"But I have dream'd a dreary dream,
Beyond the Isle of Sky;
I saw a dead man win a fight,
And I think that man was I."

He belted on his guid braid sword,
And to the field he ran;
But he forgot the helmit good,
That should have kept his brain.

The battle now raged in earnest. A bright warm day had been followed by a clear still moonlight night. "The fight," says Godscroft, "was continued very hard as among noble men on both sides, who did esteem more of glory than life. Percy strove to repair the foil he got at Newcastle, and the Earl Douglas did as much labour to keep the honour he had won. So in unequal numbers, but both eager in mind, they continued fighting a great part of the night. At last a cloud covering the face of the moon, not being able to discern friend from foe, they took some respite for a while; but so soon as the cloud was gone, the English gave so hard a charge, that the Scots were put back in such sort, that the Douglas standard was in great peril to have been lost. This did so irritate him, that he himself in the one wing, and the two Hepburns (father and son) in the other, pressing through the ranks of their own men, and advancing to the place where the greatest peril appeared, renewed a hard conflict, and by giving and receiving many wounds, they restored their men into the

place from whence they had been beaten, and continued the fight till the next day at noon."[9] Foremost, in the thick of the fray, was the dauntless Douglas, laying about him on every side with a mace of iron, which two ordinary men were not able to lift, "and making a lane round about wheresoever he went."

> When Percy wi' the Douglas met
> I wat he was fu' fain!
> They swakked their swords till sair they swat,
> And the blood ran down like rain.

"Thus he advanced like another Hector, thinking to recover and conquer the field, from his own prowess, until he was met by three spears that were pointed at him: one struck him on the shoulder, another on the stomach, near the belly, and the third entered his thigh. He could never disengage himself from these spears, but was borne to the ground fighting desperately. From that moment he never rose again. Some of his knights and squires had followed him, but not all; for though the moon shone it was rather dark. The three English lances knew they had struck down some person of considerable rank, but never thought it was Earl Douglas: had they known it they would have been so rejoiced that their courage would have been redoubled, and the fortune of the day had consequently been determined to their side. The Scots were ignorant also of their loss till the battle was over, otherwise

[9] Godscroft, pp. 99-100.

they would certainly, from despair, have been discomfited."[10]

When at last the dying Douglas was discovered by his kinsman, James Lindsay and John and Walter Sinclair, and was asked how he fared, he replied, "I do well dying as my predecessors have done before; not on a bed of lingering sickness, but in the field. These things I require you as my last petitions; First, that ye keep my death close both from my own folk, and from the enemy; then that ye suffer not my standard to be lost, or cast down; and last that ye avenge my death, and bury me at Melrose with my father. If I could hope for these things, I should die with the greater contentment, for long since I heard a prophecy that a dead man should win a field, and I hope in God it shall be I."[11]

"My wound is deep; I fain would sleep,
Take thou the vanguard of the three,
And hide me by the bracken bush,
That grows on yonder lilye lee.

"O bury me by the bracken bush,
Beneath the blooming brier,
Let never living mortal ken,
A kindly Scot lies here."[12]

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[10] Froissart, Vol. II., p. 369.

[11] Godscroft, p. 100.

[12] Douglas was buried at Melrose beside his father.

Throwing a shroud over the prostrate body of the wounded and dying soldier, that the enemy might not discover who it was that had fallen, they raised the standard and shouted lustily "a Douglas! a Douglas!" and rushed with might and main upon the English host. Soon the English ranks began to waver, and when at last it was known that Hotspur had been taken prisoner by the Earl of Montgomery, "The enemy fled and turned their backs." According to Godscroft there were 1840 of the English slain, 1040 taken prisoners, and 1000 wounded. The losses on the Scottish, according to the same historian, were comparatively trifling, amounting only to 100 slain and 200 taken prisoners.

> This deed was done at Otterbourne
> About the breaking of the day,
> Earl Douglas was buried at the bracken bush,
> And the Percy led captive away.

There are several incidents connected with this famous battle that are worthy of special notice, but one in particular demands a passing word. The Bishop of Durham, at the head of ten thousand men, appeared on the field almost immediately after the battle had ended. The Scots were greatly alarmed, and scarcely knew how, in the circumstances, – having so many prisoners and wounded to attend to, – they were to meet this formidable host. They fortified their camp, having only one pass by which it could be entered; made their prisoners swear that, whether rescued or not, they would remain their prisoners; and then they ordered

their minstrels to play as merrily as possible. The Bishop of Durham had scarcely approached within a league of the Scots when they began to play such a concert that "it seemed as if all the devils in hell had come thither to join in the noise," so that those of the English who had never before heard such were much frightened. As he drew nearer, the noise became more terrific – "the hills redoubling the sound." The Bishop being impressed with the apparent strength of the camp, and not a little alarmed at the discordant piercing sounds which proceeded from it, thought it desirable to retreat as speedily as possible, as it appeared to him that there were greater chances of loss than gain. "He was affrighted with the sound of the horns."

Thus ended one of the most notable battles on record. The flower of the chivalry of both nations took part in it, and never did men acquit themselves with greater credit. Indeed it is generally admitted that the valour displayed on both sides has rarely, if ever, been surpassed. But perhaps most notable of all was the kindness and consideration displayed towards those who had been wounded or taken prisoner. The former were tended with the greatest care; and as for the latter, the most of them were permitted to go back to their homes, after having given their word of honour that they would return when called upon. Not more than four hundred prisoners were carried into Scotland, and some of these were allowed to regain their liberty by naming their own ransom.

Many severe accusations have been brought against Scotsmen,

and especially Borderers, for their cruelty and inhumanity in time of war. It is perhaps possible to make good this indictment; but we do not believe that in regard to such matters the Scots were worse than their neighbours. And if they had great vices, they had also splendid virtues. They were brave, truthful, courteous, too ready perhaps to draw the sword on the slightest provocation, but as has been shown in the present instance, they were incapable of taking a mean advantage of a fallen foe. They loved fighting for its own sake, as well as for the sake of the "booty," but when the battle was over they cherished few resentments. The splendid qualities, physical and moral, so conspicuously brought to view in the battle of Otterburn cannot fail to suggest what a magnificent country Scotland might have become many centuries ago had she only been blessed with wise Kings and a strong Government.

III.
POOR AND LAWLESS

"Mountainous and strange is the country,
And the people rough and savage."

We have seen that the feeling of hatred to the English which prevailed on the Scottish Borders was due to some extent to the memory of the wrongs which the Borderers had suffered at the hands of their hereditary enemies. That this feeling had something to do with the existence and development of the reiving system, must be apparent to every student of history and of human nature. It was the most natural thing in the world that the dwellers on the Scottish Border should seek to retaliate; and as the forces at their command were seldom powerful enough to justify their engaging in open warfare, they resorted to the only other method of revenge which held out to them any hope of success.

But while this aspect of the situation ought to be kept prominently in view, there are other factors of the problem which must not be overlooked. In the Middle Ages the district of country known as the Borders must have presented a very different appearance from what it does at the close of the 19th

century. The Merse, which is now, for the most part, in a high state of cultivation, and capable of bearing the finest crops, was then in a comparatively poor condition, looked at from an agricultural point of view. The soil in many places was thin, poor, and marshy. Drainage was unknown, and the benefits accruing from the rotation of crops, and the system of feeding the soil with artificial manures, so familiar in these days of high farming, were then very inadequately appreciated. Perhaps an exception to this statement ought to be made in favour of the land held and cultivated by the great religious houses, such as Melrose, Jedburgh, and Kelso. The tenants on these lands enjoyed special privileges and immunities, and were thus able to prosecute their labour not only with more skill, but with a greater certainty of success. It is sometimes said that the monks knew where to pitch their camps; that they appropriated to their own use and benefit the fairest and richest parts of the country; but, as Lord Hailes very pertinently remarks, "When we examine the sites of ancient Monasteries, we are sometimes inclined to say with the vulgar, that the clergy in former times always chose the best of the land, and the most commodious habitations, but we do not advert, that religious houses were frequently erected on waste grounds, afterwards improved by the art and industry of the clergy, who alone had art and industry."[13] The land held by these houses was cultivated on more or less scientific principles. "Within the precincts of the wealthier abbeys," says Skelton, "an active

[13] Hailes' Annals, p. 111.

industrial community was housed. The prescribed offices of the church were of course scrupulously observed: but the energies of the society were not exclusively occupied with, nor indeed mainly directed to, the performance of religious duties. The occupants of the monasteries wore the religious garb; but they were road-makers, farmers, merchants, lawyers, as well as priests… The earliest roads in Scotland that deserved the name were made by the Monks and their dependents; and were intended to connect the religious houses as trading societies with the capital or nearest seaport. A decent public road is indispensable to an industrial community: and a considerable portion of the trade of the country was in the hands of the religious orders. The Monks of Melrose sent wool to the Netherlands; others trafficked in corn, in timber, in salmon… Each community, each order, as was natural, had its characteristic likings and dislikings. One house turned out the best scholars and lawyers, another the finest wool and the sweetest mutton; one was famed for poetry and history, another for divinity or medicine."[14] It would therefore be nearer the truth to say that the monks made the districts in which they lived rich and fertile; than that they found them so, and took possession of them in consequence.

But beyond the sphere of these monastic institutions, the state of matters from an agricultural point of view could hardly have been worse. This was mainly due to the fact that, so far as Berwickshire and some parts of Dumfriesshire are concerned,

[14] Maitland of Lethington, vol. I., pp. 69-71.

the tiller of the soil was never sure that he would have the privilege of reaping his harvest. By the time the grain was ready for the sickle an English army might invade the country and give the crops to the flames. This happened so frequently, and the feeling of insecurity thus became so great, that husbandry at times was all but abandoned. There can be no doubt that this was one prime factor in creating the poverty which was so long a marked and painful feature of the life of the Scottish Borders.

On the other hand, there was a considerable extent of country, extending from Jedburgh to Canobie, which was practically unfit for cultivation. The Royal Forest of Ettrick was of great extent, and was reserved as a happy hunting ground for the Court and its minions. Along the banks of the Teviot and the Liddle, embracing a considerable portion of Roxburgh and Dumfries, the extent of land capable of cultivation was by no means great, even though it had been found practical, or politic, to put it under the ploughshare. This region is one of the most mountainous in the South of Scotland, and in ancient times abounded in quaking bogs and inaccessible morasses. This district naturally became the favourite haunt of the Border reiver. Here he could find ways and means either of securing his own cattle, or those he had "lifted," from the search of the enemy by driving them into some inaccessible retreat, the entrance to which it was difficult, if not impossible, for strangers to discover.

Of the general condition of the country at this time a vivid picture has been given by Æneas Sylvius, one of the Piccolomini,

afterwards Pius II., who visited Scotland in the year 1413. He thus writes: – "Concerning Scotland he found these things worthy of repetition. It is an *island joined* to England, stretching two hundred miles to the North, and about fifty broad: a cold country, fertile of few sorts of grain, and generally void of trees, but there is a sulphureous stone dug up which is used for firing. The towns are unwalled, the houses commonly built without lime, and in villages roofed with turf, while a cow's hide supplies the place of a door. The commonalty are poor and uneducated, have abundance of flesh and fish, but eat bread as a dainty. The men are small in stature, but bold; the women fair and comely, and prone to the pleasures of love, kisses being esteemed of less consequence than pressing the hand is in Italy. The wine is all imported; the horses are mostly small ambling nags, only a few being preserved entire for propagation; and neither curry-combs nor reins are used. From Scotland are imported into Flanders hides, wool, salt, fish, and pearls. *Nothing gives the Scots more pleasure than to hear the English dispraised.* The country is divided into two parts, the cultivated lowlands, and the region where agriculture is not used. The wild Scots have a different language, and sometimes eat the bark of trees. There are no wolves. Crows are new inhabitants, and therefore the tree in which they build becomes royal property. At the winter, when the author was there, the day did not exceed four hours."

That there are several inaccuracies in this account goes without saying, but they are just such mistakes as a person

making a hurried run through the country would very naturally commit. Wolves and crows were much more plentiful at that period than the inhabitants wished, as may be seen from various Acts of Parliament which were passed in order to promote their destruction. But the general description of the country here given agrees, in its main details, with other contemporary records, and presents a truly dismal picture of the poverty of the people.

Even as late as the 16th century there were few well-formed roads, other than those already mentioned. There were no posts, either for letters or for travelling. Education was confined to the library of the Convent, where the sons of the barons were taught dialectic and grammar. Society consisted mainly of the agricultural class, who were half enslaved to the lords of the soil, and obliged to follow them in war. The people were fearfully rude and ignorant, much more so than the English – in this respect, indeed, contrasting unfavourably with almost any other European State. Few of them could either read or write; even the most powerful barons were often unable to sign their names. As might be expected in such a condition of society, the nobles exercised great oppression on the poor. The Government of the country was a mere faction of the nobility as against all the rest. It is said that when a man had a suit at law he felt he had no chance without using "influence." Was he to be tried for an offence, his friends considered themselves bound to muster in arms around the court to see that he got justice; that is, to get him off unpunished if they could. Men were accustomed to violence

in all forms as to their daily bread. “The hail realm of Scotland was sae divided in factions that it was hard to get any peaceable man as he rode out the hie way, to profess himself openly, either to be a favourer to the King or Queen. All the people were castin sae lowss, and were become of sic dissolute minds and actions, that nane was in account but he that could either kill or reive his neighbours.”[15]

Such facts as these indicate in a remarkable way the extraordinary weakness of the executive government. It is abundantly evident that the Scottish Parliament was most exemplary in passing measures for the protection and amelioration of the people, but as Buchanan naively remarks, “There was ane Act of Parliament needed in Scotland, a decree to enforce the observance of the others.” The King’s writ did not run in many districts of the country. The unfortunate element in the situation was that it did not always coincide with the interests of the nobles to see that the decrees of the Estates were carried into effect; and as a general rule what did not happen to accord with their humour was set aside as of no moment. The consequence was that many Acts of Parliament, relating especially to the abnormal condition of the Borders, were no sooner passed than they were treated as practically obsolete. This accounts for the curious fact that we find the legislature returning again and again, at brief intervals, to the consideration of the same questions, and issuing orders which

[15] History of James VI.

might as well never have been recorded. When the counsels of a nation are thus divided, and especially when those who are charged with the administration of the law pay no regard to it, in their own persons, it would be a marvel if lawlessness in its multifarious forms did not become the dominant characteristic of the great body of the people. That this was the result produced is painfully evident. The great barons were practically supreme within their own domains, for while the execution of the laws might nominally pertain to the Sovereign, the soldiers belonged to their Chiefs, and were absolutely at their command. Laws which cannot be enforced at the point of the sword must in the nature of the case remain practically inoperative. This unfortunate condition of affairs was a fruitful source of misery and mischief, especially on the Borders, where the prevalence of the clan-system conferred on the Chiefs the most arbitrary and far-reaching powers. Had there been any possibility of bringing the Border barons under effective governmental control "the thefts, herschips, and slaughters," for which this district was so long notorious, would have been in great part prevented. These men not only incited to crime, but standing as they did between the ruler and the ruled, they threw the ægis of their protection over the lawless and disobedient.

If only that nation is to be reckoned happy which has few laws, but is accustomed to obey them, then Scotland, and the Borders in particular, must have been in a most unfortunate condition during a lengthened period of its history. The laws passed were

numerous; the obedience rendered most difficult to discover. But while these enactments rarely succeeded in producing the results aimed at, they are, notwithstanding, exceedingly valuable to the historian because of the interesting light they cast on the conditions and habits of the people. In the year 1567, in the first Parliament of James VI., an important Act was passed, entitled "Anent Theft and Receipt of Theft, Taking of Prisoners by Thieves, or Bands for Ransoms, and Punishment of the same." It relates especially to the Sheriffdoms of Selkirk, Roxburgh, Peebles, Dumfries, and Edinburgh, "and other inhabitants of the remanent Shires of the Realm," bearing that it is not unknown of the continual theft, reif, and oppression committed within the bounds of the said Sheriffdoms, by thieves, traitors, and other ungodly persons, having neither fear of God nor man, which is the chief cause of the said thefts. And that the said thieves and "broken men" commit daily "thefts, reifs, herschips, murders, and fire raisings" upon the peaceable subjects of the country, "besides also takes sundrie of them," detains them in captivity as prisoners, ransoms them, "or lettis them to borrowis for their entrie again." In like manner, it is said, divers subjects of the inland, take and sit under their assurance paying them blackmail, and permitting them to "reif, herrie, and oppress their nichtbouris" with their knowledge and in their sight, without resistance or contradiction.

To remove these inconveniences it was statute and ordained that whoever receipted, fortified, maintained, or gave meat,

harbourage, or assistance to any thieves in their theftuous stealing or deeds, either coming thereto, or passing therefrom, or intercommunes or trysts with them, without licence of the keeper of the country, where the thief remains shall be called therefore at particular diets "criminally other airt and pairt in their theftuous deeds," or proceeded against civilly, after fifteen days warning, "without diet or tabill." It was further ordained under pain of lese majesty, that no true and faithful lieges taken by these men should be holden to enter to them, all bonds to the contrary notwithstanding. And if anyone should happen to take and apprehend any of the said thieves, either in passing to commit said theft, or in the actual doing thereof, or in their returning thencefrom, he was in no case to set them at liberty; but to present them before the Justice, and his deputies in the tolbooth of Edinburgh, within fifteen days, "gif their takeris justifye them not to the death them selfis." Further, it was ordained that none take assurance, or sit under assurance of said thieves, or pay them blackmail, or give them meat or drink, under pain of death. In like manner when thieves repaired to steal or reive within the incountry the lieges were commanded to rise, cry, and raise the fray and follow them, coming or going, on horse and foot, for recovery of the goods stolen, and apprehending of their persons, under pain of being held partakers in the said theft. It was also added that if any open and notorious thief came to a house, the owner of the house might apprehend him without reproach.[16]

[16] Skene's Acts of Parliament.

These enactments are at once minute and comprehensive, and had the power to enforce them corresponded in any degree with the good intentions of those who framed them, there would have been a considerable change produced in the affairs of the Border. But the truth is these so-called statutes were but little better than mere "pious opinions," reflecting credit on those responsible for them, but producing no impression, or next to none, on the country. Not many years after the passing of these Acts we find the Estates busy at work again passing measure after measure for the quieting of the disordered subjects on the Borders, for the staunching of theft and slaughter, and the punishment of "wicked thieves and limmers." Things had gone from bad to worse. Every man's hand was against his neighbour. Clan rose against clan; the Scotts and the Kerrs, the Maxwells and Johnstones, were constantly embroiled in petty warfare, the results of which, however, were sometimes most disastrous. "The broken men" – Græmes, Armstrongs, Bells, and other inhabitants of the Debateable land – finding it either unsafe or inconvenient to commit such frequent "herschips" on the English border, betook themselves with all their accustomed enthusiasm to the plundering of their Scottish neighbours. They are described as "delighting in all mischief, and maist unnaturally and cruelly wasting and destroying, harrying and slaying, their own neighbours." The Privy Council at last determined to deal with these matters, and arranged to sit on the first day of every month in the year for this purpose. Trial and injunction was to

be taken of the diligence done in the execution of things directed the month preceding, and of things necessary and expedient to be put in execution during the next month to come, and that a special register be kept of all that shall happen to be done and directed in matters concerning the quietness and good rule of the Borders. But to make assurance doubly sure it was also ordained at the same time that all landlords and bailies of the lands, should find sufficient caution and surety, under pain of rebellion, to bring all persons guilty of "reife, theft, receipt of theft, depredations, open and avowed fire-raisings, upon deadly feud, protected and maintained by their masters," before "our sovereign lord's Justice," to underlie the law for the same. Failing their doing so, the landlords and bailies were bound to satisfy the party skaithed, and to refund, content, and pay to them their "herschips and skaithes." And further, the chief of the clan, in the bounds where "broken men" dwell, and to which "broken men" repair in their passing to steal and reive, or returning therefrom, shall be bound to make the like stay and arrestment, and publication as the landlords or bailies, and be subject to the like redress, criminal and civil, in case of their failure and negligence. In addition to the foregoing ordinances, it was resolved that all Captains, Chiefs, and Chieftains of the clans, dwelling on the lands of divers landlords, shall enter pledges for those over whom they exercise authority, upon fifteen days' notice, before his Highness and his secret Council, said pledges to be placed as his Highness shall deem convenient – "for the

good rule in time coming, according to the conditions above written whereunto the landlords and bailies are subject; under the pain of the execution of the said pledges to the death, and no redress made by the persons offended for whom the pledges lie."

We also learn from another Act of Parliament, passed at the same time, that all pledges received for the good rule and quietness of the Border shall be placed on the north side of the water of Forth, without exception or dispensation; and the pledges for the good rule of the Highlands and Isles, to be placed on the south side of the same water of Forth.

But one of the most extraordinary Acts passed by this Parliament was an Act forbidding the Scottish Borderers to marry the daughters of the "broken men" or thieves of England, as it was declared this was "not only a hindrance to his Majesty's service and obedience, but also to the common peace and quietness betwixt both the Realms." It was therefore statute and ordained "that nane of the subjects presume to take upon hand to marrie with onie English woman, dwelling in the opposite Marches, without his Highness' express licence, had and obtained to that effect, under the great Seal; under the paine of death, and confiscation of all his goods moveable; and this be a special point of dittay in time cumming."

These enactments were doubtless well meant, and under ordinary circumstances might have been expected to bring about beneficial results; but unfortunately they were treated with callous indifference. No improvement was effected. The "broken

men" were not to be intimidated by such measures. They laughed at Parliament, and scorned the laws. This is brought out in the most conclusive manner in the records of the State Paper Office, as we shall have occasion to point out in succeeding chapters. But proof of another kind lies ready to hand. An Act of Parliament was passed in 1593, just six years after those already noticed, in which complaint is made of the rebellious contempt of his Highness' subjects who, without regard of their dutiful obedience, pass daily to the horn, "for not finding of law surety;" and "for not subscribing of assurances in matter of feud," and for "dinging and stricking his Majesty's messengers," in execution of their offices. Notice is also taken of some who nightly and daily reive, foray, and commit open theft and oppression: "for remead whereof, our said Sovereign Lord, ordains the Acts and laws made before to be put to execution, and ratifies and approves the same in all points." It was further ordained that no respite or remission was to be granted at any time hereafter to any person or persons that pass to the horn for "theft, reif, slauchter, burning or heir-shippe, while the party skaithed be first satisfied; and gif ony respite or remission shall happen to be granted, before the partie grieved be first satisfied, the samin shall be null and of nane avail, be way of exception or reply, without any further declaritour; except the saidis remissiones and respittes be granted, for pacifying of the broken Countries and Borders."[17]

These may be regarded as fair samples of the long list of

[17] Skene's Acts of Parliament.

measures passed at different times by the Scottish Parliament for the regulation of Border affairs during the reign of the Jameses. In reading them one is forcibly reminded of a remark made by one of the English wardens, that "things were very tickle on the Scottish Border." No respect was paid to the law, either by the Chiefs or their clansmen. In the preface to Cary's Memoirs, these Scottish Borderers are described as "equalling the Caffirs in the trade of stealing, and the Hottentots in ignorance and brutality." This savage indictment is borne out by Sir William Bowes who, in a letter to Burghley in the year 1593 – nearly forty years after the Reformation – thus writes: – "The opposite wardens and officers being always Borderers bred and dwelling there, also cherish favourites and strengthen themselves by the worst disposed, to support their factions. And as they are often changed by the King for their misdemeanours, the new man always refuses to answer for attempts before his time. Cessford the warden cannot answer for the whole Middle March, but must seek to Fernihirst for one part, and Buccleuch for Teviotdale.

"*Execrable murders are constantly committed*, whereof 4 new complaints were made to the lords in the few days they were here, and 3 others this month in Atholstonmoor. The gentlemen of the Middle March recount out of their memories nearly 200 Englishmen, miserably murdered by the Scots, since the tenth year of her Majesty's reign, for which no redress hath at all been made… I have presumed to testify this much to your lordship more tediously than I should; yet will be ready to do more

particularly, if you direct me. Praying you to receive from some other, equally heedful of truth – and in meantime trusting you will cover my name from undeserved offence – I pray God to make you an instrument under our gracious sovereign to cure the aforesaid gangrene thus noisomely molesting the foot of this kingdom."[18]

This "gangrene" was of long standing, and as we shall find was not to be easily eradicated.

But while poverty, – largely due to circumstances over which the people had no control, – and lawlessness, – the result of the inherent weakness of the central government, – had much to do in creating that condition of affairs on the Borders which we have briefly described, there were other and perhaps more potent causes which demand consideration. Foremost among these was the almost entire absence of the restraints and sanctions of religion. In one of the Acts of Parliament already noticed it is significantly declared that one of the principal causes of the lawlessness of the Borders was that "they had neither the fear of God nor man." To those familiar with certain phases of Border history this may appear somewhat anomalous. At an early period in the religious life of Scotland this district was brought under the influence of the Evangel by St. Aidan and St. Cuthbert. That the work of these missionaries was signally successful, is shown in the large number of churches planted all over the Borderland. After the time of Queen Margaret, whose influence in certain

[18] Border Papers, vol. II., pp. 80-81.

directions was almost marvellously potent, the great religious houses of the Borders rose in rapid succession, such as Melrose, Kelso, and Jedburgh, each a centre and source of religious and social wellbeing. The moral life of the people, notwithstanding the existence of such beneficent institutions, may have been of an indifferent character; but what the state of matters might have been, had those places, and what they represented, never been in existence at all, it is impossible to conceive. It was a true instinct which led the people to regard the Abbey of Haddington as the "Lamp of the Lothians." And the same designation might have been applied with equal appropriateness to every Abbey in the country. Those places for many generations represented all that was highest and best in the thought and life of Mediævalism. Here law and order were supreme. Round those religious houses industrial, orderly communities sprang up, whose influence was felt throughout the length and breadth of the land. The Monasteries may deserve all that was said of them in later times, but, throughout a considerable period of their history, their influence was almost wholly beneficial. Scotland owes much to them, and there is no reason why the fact should not be generously recognised. It is no doubt true that, for some considerable time before the Reformation, those great institutions had sadly degenerated. "Jeshurun waxed fat and kicked." The time came when they had, perforce, to yield to those disintegrating processes which usually herald the advent of reform. The old order changeth. The new wine of a democratic

Protestantism, in which the claims of the individual, his right to think for himself, and form his own judgments, are prominent ingredients, agreed but indifferently with the old bottles of an earlier Faith and Polity. And so the Monasteries disappeared.

But it was long ere the new light of the Reformation made itself practically felt on the Borders. When the influences which had hitherto been so potent ceased to operate, a condition of religious and moral chaos supervened. Hundreds of churches were left without ministers. Whole districts practically lapsed into barbarism. For at least fifty years after the Reformation, the Scottish Borders were to all intents and purposes out-with the influence of the Church. Even as late as the Covenanting period their condition had not greatly improved. "We learn," says Sir Walter Scott, "from a curious passage in the life of Richard Cameron, a fanatical preacher during what is called the time of 'persecution,' that some of the Borderers retained till a late period their indifference about religious matters. After having been licensed at Haughead, in Teviotdale, he was, according to his biographer, sent first to preach in Annandale. 'He said, How can I go there? I know what sort of people they are.' But Mr Welch said, 'Go your way, Ritchie, and set the fire of hell to their tails.' He went, and the first day he preached on the text —*How shall I put thee among the children, &c.* In the application he said, 'Put you among the children! the offspring of thieves and robbers! we have all heard of Annandale thieves.' Some of them got a merciful cast that day, and told afterwards that it was the

first field meeting they had ever attended, and that they went out of mere curiosity, to see a minister preach in a tent, and people sit on the ground."[19]

During the period of religious decadence, prior to the Reformation, a remarkable custom, not unknown elsewhere, prevailed on the Borders. Owing to the scarcity of clergymen, especially in the Vales of Ewes, Esk, and Liddle, the rites of the church were only intermittently celebrated, a circumstance which gave rise to what was known as *Hand-fasting*. Loving couples who met at fairs and other places of public resort agreed to live together for a certain period, and if, when the *book-a-bosom* man, as the itinerant clergyman was called, came to pay his yearly visit to the district, they were still disposed to remain in wedlock they received the blessing of the church; but if it should happen that either party was dissatisfied, then the union might be terminated, on the express condition, however, that the one desiring to withdraw should become responsible for the maintenance of the child, or children, which may have been born to them. "The connection so formed was binding for one year only, at the expiration of which time either party was at liberty to withdraw from the engagement, or in the event of both being satisfied the 'hand-fasting' was renewed for life. The custom is mentioned by several authors, and was by no means confined to the lower classes, John Lord Maxwell and a sister of the Earl of

[19] Intro. Border Minstrelsy, pp. cxc. – cxci.

Angus being thus contracted in January 1577."[20]

[20] Armstrong's Liddisdale, p. 81.

IV.
RAIDS AND FORAYS

"Then forward bound both horse and hound,
And rattle o'er the vale;
As the wintry breeze through leafless trees
Drives on the pattering hail.

"Behind their course the English fells
In deepening blue retire;
Till soon before them boldly swells
The muir of dun Redswire."

Leyden.

To give anything like an adequate account of the various raids and forays, on the one side of the Border and the other, would fill many volumes. These raids, as we have already noticed, began at an early period, and were carried on almost without intermission for at least three hundred years. The Armstrongs and Elliots in Liddesdale, and many of the other noted clans in Merse and Teviotdale, were "always riding." As an English warden remarks in one of his despatches to the Government: – "They lie still never a night" – a statement which may be accepted as literally true. At some point or other along the Border line, invasions either on the part of the Scots or English were

constantly occurring. In this respect, more especially during the reign of Queen Elizabeth, the Scots were perhaps the principal offenders. But as a general rule their invasions, though frequent, were on a comparatively small scale, partaking rather of the nature of forays than of raids. They would hurriedly cross the Border of an evening, drive together as many cattle or sheep as they could find, and then hasten back with all possible speed to their own country. Sometimes, if they were compelled to go a considerable distance inland, they would hide during the day in some quiet glen, within the enemy's territory, and then sally forth as soon as the moon lent her kindly aid, and accomplish with the utmost expedition the task which had brought them thither. It is said that these incursions were marked with the desire of spoil rather than of slaughter, a statement which may be true so far as forays generally are concerned, but which certainly does not apply to the more important raids. These latter incursions were marked with every element of ferocity and bloodshed. In some of the raids conducted by Cessford and Buccleuch, in the 15th century, in Redesdale and Tynedale, many lives were sacrificed, and all who offered resistance were put to the sword. Hertford, Wharton, and others, in their raids upon the Scottish Border seemed often more intent on shedding blood than securing booty. The statement that these incursions were marked with a desire of spoil rather than bloodshed must therefore be accepted *cum grano salis*.

It would seem that the season of year most favourable to

reiving was between Michaelmas and Martinmas. The reason of this is not difficult to discover. The reivers in their expeditions hardly ever went on foot. They rode small hackneys – hardy, well-built animals – on which they cantered over hill and dale, moor and meadow, a circumstance which gained for them the name of *hobylers*. In the late autumn the moors and mosses were drier than at any other season of the year, which made riding, in certain districts especially, a much more easy and expeditious undertaking. Then the winter supply had to be secured. The beef tub required replenishing, and as the "mart" was rarely ever fed at home it had to be sought for elsewhere. It was a case of all hands to work, and every available horse or rider was brought into requisition.

Leslie has given a graphic description of the methods adopted by the Border reivers to secure their booty. Everything was gone about in the most orderly and deliberate manner. He says that the reivers never told their beads with so much devotion as when they were setting out on a marauding expedition, and expected a good booty as a recompense of their devotion! "They sally out of their own borders in troops, through unfrequented ways and many intricate windings. In the day time they refresh themselves and their horses in lurking places they had pitched on before, till they arrive in the dark at those places they have a design upon. As soon as they have seized upon their booty, they, in like manner, return home in the night; through blind ways and fetching many a compass. The more skilful any captain is to pass through

these wild deserts, crooked turnings, and deep precipices, in the thickest mists and darkness, his reputation is the greater, and he is looked upon as a man of an excellent head, and they are so very cunning, that they seldom have their booty taken from them, unless sometimes, when by the help of bloodhounds, following them exactly upon the track, they may chance to fall into the hands of their adversaries. When being taken they have so much persuasive eloquence, and so many smooth and insinuating words at command, that if they do not move their judges, nay and even their adversaries, to have mercy, yet they incite them to admiration and compassion."

Such a skilful "Captain," as is here referred to, was the famous Hobbie Noble, who terminated his adventurous career in "Merrie Carlisle," where so many famous freebooters, at one time or other, have paid the last penalty of the law. Speaking of himself, he says: —

"But will ye stay till the day gae down,
Until the night come o'er the ground,
And I'll be a guide worth ony twa
That may in Liddisdale be found!

"Though the night be dark as pick and tar,
I'll guide ye o'er yon hill sae hie;
And bring ye a' in safety back,
If ye'll be true and follow me."

But the skill of the leader of the foray was not always sufficient to bring his followers safely back to their homes and families. When the bloodhounds were put on the track it was often a matter of the greatest difficulty for the thieves to elude their pursuers.

> "The russet bloodhound wont, near Annand's stream,
> To trace the sly thief with avenging foot
> Close as an evil conscience."

These useful animals were kept at different points along the Border, and as they rendered most important services, we are not surprised to learn that a good sleuth-hound often sold as high as a hundred crowns.

It may be interesting, before proceeding to give an account of some of the more famous raids, to glance briefly at the manner in which the raiders were armed and accoutred for the fray. Froissart has given the following account of the Scottish Borderers, and Scottish soldiers generally, as they appeared towards the close of the fourteenth century. "The Scots," he says, "are bold, hardy, and much inured to war. When they make their invasions into England, they march from twenty to four-and-twenty leagues without halting, as well by night as by day; for they are all on horseback, except the camp followers, who are on foot. The knights and esquires are mounted on large bay horses, the common people on little Galloways. They bring no carriages with them, on account of the mountains they have to pass in Northumberland; neither do they carry with them any

provisions of bread and wine, for the habits of sobriety are such in time of war that they will live a long time on flesh half sodden, without bread, and drink the river water without wine. They have therefore no occasion for pots or pans, for they dress the flesh of their cattle in the skins after they have taken them off; and being sure to find plenty of them in the country which they invade, they carry none with them. Under the flaps of his saddle each man carries a broad plate of metal, behind the saddle a little bag of oatmeal. When they have eaten too much of the sodden flesh, and their stomach appears weak and empty, they place this plate over the fire, mix with water their oatmeal, and when the plate is heated they put a little of the paste upon it and make a thin cake like a cracknel or biscuit, which they eat to warm their stomachs; it is therefore no wonder they perform a longer day's march than other soldiers. In this manner the Scots entered England, destroying and burning everything as they passed. They seized more cattle than they knew what to do with. Their army consisted of four thousand men at arms, knights, and esquires, well mounted, besides twenty thousand men, bold and hardy, armed after the manner of their country, and mounted upon little hackneys that are never tied up or dressed, but are turned immediately after the day's march to pasture on the heath or in the field."[21]

It may be said that this description – which, it may be remarked, is as graphic in outline as it is minute in detail –

[21] Froissart, vol. I., p. 18.

applies rather to the regular army than to those undisciplined marauding bands which infested the Borders, and to which the name "reivers" or "mosstroopers" is usually assigned. This is no doubt true. At the same time, it must not be forgotten that many of the more important raids were undertaken by large bodies of troops, numbering sometimes three or four thousand men. This much at least is certain that the Border reiver was always well mounted, and well armed with lance or spear, which, on occasion, he could use with much dexterity and skill. With a steel cap on his head, a jack slung over his shoulders, a pistol or hagbut at his belt, he was ever ready for the fray, and prepared to give or take the hardest blows. He was naturally fond of fighting. Like Dandie Dinmont's terriers he never could get enough of it, and must have found life peculiarly irksome when he was compelled to desist from his favourite pastime. He lived in the saddle, and was as unaccustomed to the ordinary occupations of the world as the wild Arab of the desert.

Even to enumerate the raids and forays on the one side or the other, of which some record has been left either in the Histories of the two Kingdoms, or in the archives of the State Paper Office, would be an almost endless task, and moreover would serve no really useful purpose. The details of the "burnings," "herschips," and "slaughters," which were the necessary concomitants of these invasions, are much the same in all cases. It is a dreary tale of theft and oppression, bloodshed and murder. The following incidents may be taken as fairly illustrative examples.

During the reign of Henry VIII. the relations between the two kingdoms were often of a most unsatisfactory and unsettled character. This was due to a variety of causes, partly political and partly religious. The same difficulties cropped up in the subsequent reigns of Edward, Mary, and Elizabeth, and the consequence was that war clouds were ever hanging, dark and threatening, on the horizon. The mutual antagonism between the two countries fostered the raiding tendencies of both kingdoms. The Scots were intent on despoiling their more wealthy neighbours, and the English never missed an opportunity of humiliating and crippling their ancient foes.

Two of the most destructive invasions, or raids, on the part of the English were conducted by the Earl of Hertford and Sir Ralph Eure. The former invaded the country both by sea and land. Edinburgh and Leith suffered severely. The Abbey and Palace of Holyrood were given to the flames. All along the east coast, and southwards as far as Merse and Teviotdale, marked the steps of the retreating and relentless invaders. Henry's savage instructions were faithfully carried out. When Hertford set out on this expedition he was commanded "to put all to fire and sword, to burn Edinburgh town, and to raze and deface it; when you have sacked it, and gotten what you can out of it, as that it may remain for ever a perpetual memory of the vengeance of God lighted upon it, for their falsehood and disloyalty. Do what you can out of hand, and without long tarrying, to beat down and overthrow the Castle, sack Holyrood-house, and as

many towns and villages about Edinburgh as ye conveniently can; sack Leith and burn and subvert it, and all the rest, putting man, woman, and child to fire and sword, without exception, where any resistance shall be made against you; and this done, pass over to the Fife land, and extend the extremities and destructions in all towns and villages whereunto you may reach conveniently, and not forgetting amongst all the rest so to spoil and turn upside down the Cardinal's town of St. Andrews, as the upper stone may be the nether, and not one stick stand by another, sparing no creature alive within the same, specially such as in friendship or blood be allied to the Cardinal."[22]

This hideous policy on the part of the English King was fruitful mainly of bitter memories. He did not accomplish the object he had in view, but he certainly succeeded in engendering in the Scottish mind a feeling of the most bitter hostility. It produced, however, one good result. It alienated from the English monarch some of those nobles who had for some time been wavering in their allegiance to the Scottish throne, and had been, either secretly or openly, lending their aid to further the machinations of the English government.

But destructive as Hertford's invasion proved (which has been well described as only a foray on a large scale), it was totally eclipsed by the raid undertaken by Sir Ralph Eure in the following year, 1544. He crossed the Scottish Border with a considerable army, and laid waste nearly the whole of Merse

[22] Taylor's History, vol. I., p. 583.

and Teviotdale, reducing that large and important district to a blackened desert. Jedburgh and Kelso were burnt to the ground, and the surrounding country plundered and destroyed. "The whole number of towns, towers, stedes, barnekins, parish churches, bastel-houses, seized, destroyed, and burnt, in all the Border country, was an hundred and ninety-two, Scots slain four hundred, prisoners taken eight hundred and sixteen, nolt ten thousand three hundred and eighty-six, sheep twelve thousand four hundred and ninety-six, gayts (goats) two hundred, bolls of corn eight hundred and fifty, insight gear – an indefinite quantity.

"The great part of these devastations were committed in the Mers and Teviotdale… The other commanders of chief note, besides Sir Ralph Eure, were Sir Brian Laiton and Sir George Bowes. On the 17th July, Bowes, Laiton, and others burnt Dunse, the chief town of the Mers, and John Carr's son with his garrison entered Greenlaw, and carried off a booty of cattle, sheep, and horses. On the 19th of the same month, the men of Tyndale and Ridsdale, returning from a road into Tiviotdale, fought with the laird of Ferniherst and his company, and took himself and his son John prisoners. On July 24th the Wark garrison, the Captain of Norham Castle, and H. Eure, burnt long Ednim, made many prisoners, took a bastel-house strongly kept, and got a booty of forty nolt and thirty horses, besides those on which their prisoners were mounted, each on a horse. August 2d, the captain of Norham burnt the town of Home, hard to the castle gates, with the surrounding stedes. September 6th, Sir Ralph

Eure burnt Eikford church and town, the barnekyn of Ormiston, and won by assault the Moss Tower, burnt it, and slew thirty-four people within it; he likewise burnt several other places in that neighbourhood, and carried off more than five hundred nolt and six hundred sheep, with a hundred horseload of spoils got in the tower. September 27th, the men of the east and part of the middle march won the church of Eccles by assault, and slew eight men in the abbey and town, most part gentlemen of head sirnames; they also took several prisoners, and burnt and spoiled the said abbey and town. On the same day the garrison of Berwick brought out of the east end of the Mers six hundred bolls of corn, and took prisoner Patrick Home, brother's son to the laird of Ayton. November 5th, the men of the middle march burnt Lessudden, in which were sixteen strong bastel-houses, slew several of the owners, and burnt much corn. November 9th, Sir George Bowes and Sir Brian Laiton burnt Dryburgh, a market town, all except the church, with much corn, and brought away a hundred nolt, sixty nags, an hundred sheep, and much other booty, spoilage, and insight-gear."[23]

This record is an instructive one. It shows how these merciless raiders were dominated by the spirit of destruction and revenge. Nothing was spared which it was possible for them to destroy. This invasion must have proved peculiarly vexatious and disheartening to the Scottish Borderers. Flodden had left them terribly crippled. The damage they had sustained was not only

[23] Ridpath's Border History, p. 550.

of a material kind – the loss of men and resources – it was also, to a certain extent, moral and intellectual. They had become utterly disheartened, and it was some considerable time before they regained their wonted confidence and intrepidity:

> "Dool and wae for the order, sent our lads to the Border!
> The English, for ance, by guile wan the day:
> The flowers of the forest, that fought aye the foremost,
> The prime of our land, are cauld in the clay.
>
> "We'll hear nae mair lilting, at the ewe milking;
> Women and bairns are heartless and wae:
> Sighing and moaning on ilka green loaning —
> The flowers of the forest are a' wede awae."

The darkest part of the night precedes the dawn. Help was forthcoming from an unexpected quarter. Henry had promised to give Eure a grant of all the land he could conquer in Merse, Teviotdale, and Lauderdale, and it so happened that the greater part of the district named belonged to Angus, who was then in disgrace at the Scottish Court, and for some time had been currying favour with the English King. When he learned what had taken place, his indignation was unbounded. He swore that "if Ralph Eure dared to act upon the grant, he would write his sasine, or instrument of possession, on his skin with sharp pens and bloody ink." Scotland has not unfrequently been deserted by her nobles at the most critical periods of her history, but

just as often has she been saved by their valour and patriotism. On the present occasion, Angus was not moved to action, perhaps, by any really patriotic feeling. Had his own interests not been imperilled, he would in all probability have remained an idle spectator of the ruin and devastation which, like a flood, was rushing over the land. Be this as it may, he acted with promptitude and effect. Having been joined by the Regent, who brought with him a small and hastily-gathered force, Angus challenged the English army at Melrose; and, though at first he was compelled to retreat, he hung upon the rear of the enemy until, joined by Sir Walter Scott of Buccleuch and the redoubtable Norman Leslie, he gave them battle on Ancrum Moor. The English, flushed with confidence by their former successes, rushed precipitately upon the Scottish army, believing that their ranks had fallen into confusion, and were preparing for flight. It was not long ere they were undeceived. The Scots were ready for the encounter, and in a short time completely routed the formidable host by which they were assailed. The battle speedily became a slaughter. Sir Ralph Eure and Sir Brian Layton both lay dead on the field, a thousand prisoners were taken, among them being many persons of rank, for whom high ransoms were exacted. It is said that the peasantry of the neighbourhood, hitherto only spectators of the short conflict, drew near to intercept and cut down the English; and women, whose hearts had been steeled against the fugitives by their atrocious barbarities, joined in the pursuit, and spurred on the

conquerors by calling upon them to "remember Broomhouse." One of these heroines has been immortalized. Her monument may still be seen in the neighbourhood of Ancrum. On it were inscribed the following lines: —

> "Fair maiden Lilliard lies under this stane,
> Little was her stature, but great was her fame;
> Upon the English loons she laid many thumps,
> And when they cutted off her legs she fought upon her stumps."

Some may be disposed to think that the devastations caused by Hertford and Sir Ralph Eure must be exceptional; that the raiding and reiving must have gone on much more quietly than such accounts would lead us to suppose. But this is not so. The Borders were kept in a constant state of turmoil. They had no sooner recovered from one invasion than they were subjected to another. Long before Hertford's time, for example, Lord Dacre, one of the English wardens, made a succession of the most disastrous raids on the Scottish Border, and carried off immense quantities of booty. He was exultant over his good fortune. Writing under date October 29, 1513, he says: – "On Tewsday at night last past, I sent diverse of my tennents of Gillislande to the nombre of lx. personnes in Eskdalemoor upon the Middill Merches, and there brynt vii. howses, tooke and brougth away xxxvj. head of cattle and much insight. On weddinsday at thre of the clok efter noon, my broder Sir Christopher assembled

diverse of the kings subjects beyng under my reull, and roode all night into Scotland, and on Thurisday, in the mornynge, they began upon the said Middill Merchies and brynt Stakeheugh, with the hamletts belonging to them, down, Irewyn bwrne, being the chambrelain of Scotland owne lands and undre his reull, continewally birnyng from the Breke of day to oone of the clok after noon, and there wan, tooke and brought awey cccc. hede of cattell, ccc. shepe, certaine horses and verey miche insight, and slew two men, hurte and wounded diverse other persones and horses, and then entered Ingland ground again at vij. of the clok that night."[24]

Such a record as this ought to have given great satisfaction to the Government. Lord Dacre had evidently done his utmost to impoverish and ruin the unfortunate Scottish Borderers. But the English appetite at this time was not easily satisfied. Naturally enough Dacre's invasion led to reprisals, and so successful had the Scots been in their forays on the opposite Border that the English Government blamed their representative for not having prevented these raids. In reply to these rather unjust complaints, Dacre wrote saying that "for oone cattell taken by the Scotts we have takyn, won and brought awey out of Scotland a hundreth; and for oone shepe two hundreth of a surity. And has for townships and housis, burnt in any of the said Est, Middill, and West Marches within my reull, fro the begynnyng of this warr unto this daye… I assure your lordships for truthe that I have

[24] Quoted by Sir Herbert Maxwell, Hist. Dumfries and Galloway, p. 958-9.

and hes caused to be burnt and distroyed sex times moo townys and howsys within the West and Middill Marches of Scotland, in the same season then is done to us, as I may be trusted, and as I shall evidently prove. For the watter of Liddall being xij. myles of length… whereupon was a hundreth pleughs;… the watter of Ewse being viij. myles of length in the said Marches, whereupon was vii. pleughs… lyes all and every of them waist now, noo corn sawn upon the said ground… Upon the West marches I have burnt and distroyed the townships of Annand (together with thirty-three others mentioned in detail), and the Water of Esk from Stabulgorton down to Cannonby, being vi. myles in lenth, whereas there was in all tymes passed four hundreth ploughes and above, which are now clearly waisted and noo man duelling in any of them in this daye, save oonly in the towrys of Annand Steepel and Walghapp (Wauchope)."[25]

As might be expected these inroads were not allowed to pass unredressed, as the Scots never missed an opportunity of retaliating. During the latter half of the fifteenth century they were considerably weakened by the successive wars in which they were compelled to engage in their own defence; but we find that a century later, during the reign of Elizabeth, they had completely recovered, and made their power felt in no uncertain manner. They raided upon the opposite Border without intermission, plundering all and sundry, sparing only those who were prepared to pay them blackmail, "that they might be free

[25] Quoted by Sir Herbert Maxwell, Hist. Dumfries and Galloway, p. 159-60.

from their cumber." The English wardens were comparatively helpless, owing to their lack of men and horses to defend the Marches. The Scottish reivers were not easily captured; and when it came to an encounter, unless matched against a greatly superior force, they almost invariably gave a good account of themselves. We find Eure affirming, in a letter to Cecil, under date May, 1596, that the spoils of his March amounted to the sum of £120,000, "the redress for which is so cunningly delayed that the Queen's service is ruined."[26] Sir Robert Cary, who was warden of the East March, has a still more doleful tale to relate. He says that when he applied to the opposite warden for redress he "got nothing but fair words." He furnished his Government with a note of the "slaughters, stouthes, and reafes," committed within his wardenry, which shows that the Scottish reivers were ever ready to make the most of their opportunities. The following is the suggestive list: —

"Nicolos Bolton of Mindrum slain in daylight at his own plough by Sir Robert Kerre of the Spielaw and his servants.

"Thomas Storie of Killam slain there by night by Sir Robert Kerre and his servants.

"John Selby of Pawston slain by the Burnes defending his own goods in his own house there.

"John Ewart of Corham slain on English ground at the rescue of Englishmen bringing their own goods.

"'Reafes.' – In Hethpoole in daylight by the Davisons, Yonges,

[26] Border Papers, vol. I., p. 131.

and Burnes of 40 kyen and oxen, and hurting Thomas and Peter Storye, &c., in peril of their lives. Another there by daylight by the Kerres, Yonges, and Taites, of 46 head of neate, shooting John Gray with a 'peice' in peril of death, and hurting one of the Brewhouses following, and taking his horse. In West Newton in daylight by James Davidson of the Burnyrigge, &c., of 5 horse and mares; another there at night taking up 2 horses, 20 neate, and insight worth 20 nobles.

"On Thomas Routledge of Killam, at night, by the Yonges, of 30 kyen and oxen. On Adam Smith of Brigge mylle at night by the Kerres, Yonges, Burnes, &c., of 20 neate, and 5 horse and mares. In Cowpland, by the Yonges, Burnes, and Kerres on Gilbert Wright, 'by cutting up his doores with axes,' of 30 neate, 4 horses and mares, and insight worth £10. In Haggeston by the Yonges, Halles, Pyles, and Amysleyes, 'by cutting up their doores with axes,' of 30 neate, 5 naegs, and hunting 4 men in peril of death. On Ralph Selby, of West wood, by the Yonges, &c., 'by breaking his tower,' and taking 3 geldings worth £60 sterling 'and better.'"[27]

Then follows a long list of "Stouthes," which it would only be a weariness to repeat. These incidents had all occurred in this March within a brief period, and may be accepted as an illustration of what was going on almost every day in the year within the respective wardenries. This game, it may be said, was indulged in with equal spirit and pertinacity on both sides. We

[27] Border Papers, vol. II., pp. 147-8.

read of two men in the Middle March in England coming into Liddesdale and carrying off 30 score kye and oxen, 31 score sheep and "gait," 24 horse and mares, and all their insight – "the people being at their schellis, lipning for no harme, and wounded twa puir men to their deid." At the same time, Captain Carvell, with 2000 "waigit" men, by Lord Scrope's special command, burnt "six myle of boundis in Liddisdale, tuik sindrie puir men and band them twa and twa in leisches and cordis, and that 'naikit,' taking awa a 1000 kye and oxen, 2000 sheep and 'sex scoir of hors and merris,' to the great wrak of the puir subjects."[28]

[28] Border Papers, vol. II., p. 181.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.