

LXXVIII.

SIR HENRY PERCY, CALLED "HOTSPUR."

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THE names of many knights who were degraded, attainted, or slain in battle against the reigning Sovereign, having nevertheless been recorded in the catalogues of the Order, we must impute the exclusion of one so renowned as that of Sir Henry Percy to an oblivion of the fact (recovered by the research of Anstis) that he had been, during fifteen years, a member of the illustrious fraternity.¹

This distinguished person is well known as the eldest son of Henry the first earl of Northumberland by Margaret, daughter of Ralph lord Nevil of Raby. He was, as we gather from his own statement,² born in or about 1366, and armed in his twelfth year,—an early introduction to martial habits, which may have been deemed essential to the future possessor of a vast domain near the Scottish border, maintainable only against an ever active foe by extraordinary vigilance, foresight, and courage. Having, in 1377, during the feast of St. George at Windsor, received from the venerable hands of Edward III. the honour of knighthood, in company with prince Richard, Thomas of Woodstock, Henry of Bolingbroke, and his own younger brothers, Thomas and Ralph Percy,³ he was, in the following year, placed in the retinue of his warlike father when that earl hastened to expel from Berwick a Scottish detachment, which, in contempt of the truce, had surprised the citadel.⁴ The town itself had been so completely dismantled in the recent war that it presented no resistance to the English troops, who carried the castle by assault, after a siege of nine days, and put the garrison to the sword. The earl of Douglas arrived too late for the relief of the place; and was pursued in his retreat by Northumberland, whose vanguard, falling into an ambuscade, was totally routed.

The young hero, having gained experience from these and

¹ See pp. 251. 254.

³ See p. 11.

² Scrope and Grosv. roll, p. 199.

⁴ Wals. p. 223.

similar military enterprises, was, in 1381, called upon to prove his knowledge of the laws of honour and chivalry; being included in a royal commission to supply his noble father's place as one of the judges of a solemn combat, to be held near Liliot's cross in the march-land between John Chattowe, a Scots esquire and William de Badby, an Englishman.¹

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In 1383, sir Henry Percy was joined in commission with his father and John lord Nevil to receive the residue of the ransom due for David Bruce.² He was nominated, in 1384, one of the commissioners for guarding the marches towards Scotland;³ and the appointment was renewed in 1386, with the additional grant of the custody of Berwick:⁴ and Walsingham relates that the incessant activity with which he exercised these functions, and harassed and coerced the restless borderers, induced them to apply to him the *nom de guerre* by which he is more commonly remembered in history.⁵ The same author informs us that, in this year, upon a rumour of the intention of the French to lay siege to Calais, the town was largely supplied with provisions and with a reinforcement of able warriors, amongst whom was sir Henry Percy. There being, however, no indication of the enemy's approach, the impatient Hotspur, after a brief sojourn, assembled his followers; and, having scoured the districts of the Morinie and Picardy, returned home.⁶ On the 30th October, in the same year, he gave his testimony, in the refectory of Westminster abbey, in the Scrope and Grosvenor controversy.⁷ About this time, he and his brother sir Ralph Percy were stationed at Yarmouth, with 300 men at arms and 600 archers, to resist the expected invasion.⁸ In 1387, after his return from a short maritime expedition against the French, in which he acquitted himself with honour,⁹ the appointment of warden of the marches having been again conferred upon him, in conjunction with John de Beaumont, he proceeded into the north.¹⁰ In 1388, he was honoured with the Garter.¹¹ Dur-

¹ Rymer, vol. vii. 353.

² Ibid. p. 415.

³ Rot. Scoc. 8 Ric. 2, m. 9.

⁴ Ibid. 9 Ric. 2, m. 6.

⁵ Wals. p. 350.

⁶ Ibid. ⁷ Ser. & Grosv. roll, ut supra.

⁸ Froissart, t. x. p. 174.

⁹ Rot. Franc. 11 Ric. 2, m. 21; Wals. p. 357.

¹⁰ Rot. Pat. 11 Ric. 2, m. 25, à tergo.

¹¹ Sir Henry Percy is, for the

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ing this year, his good fortune, for a while forsook him; not, however, without adding to his fame. The Scots, under the earl of Fife, as commander-in-chief, invaded England; their army, being in two divisions, of which one entered by the western march near Carlisle; and the other, under the young earl of Douglas, accompanied by the earls of March and Moray, proceeded through Northumberland, crossed the Tyne, and wasted and destroyed with fire and sword the bishopric of Durham, penetrating nearly to the gates of York.¹ Douglas passed, on his return, triumphantly under the walls of Newcastle, within which the gallant Percy and his brother then held garrison. The force of the youthful soldiers was thought to be unequal to encounter the enemy in battle; but their chivalrous spirit prompted them to invite the Scottish knights to break a few spears without the gates. In a personal combat with Douglas, Hotspur's pennon remained in the hands of his adversary, who, after tauntingly assuring him that he would plant the valued prize upon his tower at Dalkeith, resumed his march to join the main body of the army. Percy having, on the second day, learnt that the Scottish forces were still separate, and, being eager to revenge at once the cruelties of the raid, and to recover his pennon which Douglas had dared him to fetch from before his tent, hastened, without awaiting the promised reinforcement from the bishop of Durham, with about eight thousand men, in pursuit of the enemy. They joined battle at Otterburn, in Redesdale; and, after a most sanguinary conflict, which proved fatal to the heroic Douglas,² the Scots at length prevailed, and both

first time, mentioned as a knight of the Order, in a wardrobe account recording the issue of robes for his attendance at St. George's feast in 1388; and it is evident (see Appendix, N^o XIII. sec. 2) that he could have been then admitted into no other stall than the thirteenth, on the Prince's side, which had become vacant by the attainder of the duke of Ireland, in February preceding the feast. Robes were also prepared for him in 1389 and 1390; and he probably continued to fill the same stall

until the attainder of the earl of Arundel in 1397; when, it is presumed, he was translated to the tenth stall, on the same side, and succeeded, in the thirteenth, by sir Simon Felbrigge; the names of both appearing in the wardrobe account of 1399, and Felbrigge having certainly been installed in the lowest seat in the royal chapel.

¹ Rymer, vol. vii. 594.

² Froissart gives his circumstantial narrative of the battle upon the authority of two eye-witnesses.

Percys, with almost all the English of condition who survived the action, were conducted as prisoners into Scotland.

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This memorable event happened on the 19th of August 1388.

Our knight was speedily ransomed, and resumed his command in the marches.¹ On the 16th of October 1389 it was agreed in council that the custody of Carlisle, together with that of the west march, should be committed to him for five years beyond the term of his indenture;² and this was soon afterwards carried into effect.³ In 1390 we find him again at Calais, conducting several expeditions towards Boulogne; and, during that campaign, raising the siege of Brest.⁴ In that year he was one of the subscribers of the letter to the pope, complaining of the excesses of the clergy;⁵ and also a commissioner for correcting misprisions against the treaty of Lenlyngham.⁶ In 1390-1 he was retained to serve the king, in peace and war, during his life, with an annuity of 100*l.* out of the exchequer.⁷ In 1393 he was appointed to superintend a hastilude at Calais between Richard Redman and William Haliburton, each having three associates.⁸ He was recalled, in the course of that year from Calais,⁹ and again nominated warden of the east march and governor of Berwick.¹⁰ In 1394 he was a commissioner for punishing infractions of the truce,¹¹ and for treating with Scotland.¹² In the following year Percy

Tom. xi. ed. Buchon, p. 420. The assertion, repeated by Dugdale, after Knyghton, Walsyngham, and others, that Douglas fell by the hand of Hotspur, is not confirmed by the French chronicler, who would have gloried in describing a second personal encounter between the two young heroes. His statement is, that the earl, whom he likens to Hector, finding that his people had begun to give way, seized with both hands a battle-axe, and, rushing into the throng, cleared for himself a passage, as if determined to win the day by his individual exertion; but that his progress was arrested by three lances, which pierced, at the same moment, his shoulder, breast, and thigh, and bore him to the ground,

from whence he arose no more. The action is eloquently described by sir Walter Scott, in chapter xv. of his History of Scotland.

¹ Rot. Scoc. 12 Ric. 2, m. 5.

² Cotton. MS. Cleop. F. III. fo. 3.

³ Rot. Pat. 14 Ric. 2, m. 39.

⁴ Knyghton, col. 2678 and 2696.

⁵ Rymer, vol. vii. 675.

⁶ Ibid. p. 678.

⁷ Rot. Pat. 14 Ric. 2, p. 2, m. 38, *per inspex.*

⁸ Ibid. 16 Ric. 2, m. 17; Rymer, vol. vii. p. 745, where the place of combat is said to be *Carlisle*.

⁹ Ypod. Neustr. p. 152.

¹⁰ Rot. Scoc. 16 Ric. 2, m. 2.

¹¹ Rymer, vol. vii. p. 780.

¹² Ibid. p. 786.

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was again employed in France.¹ On the 26th October 1398, as warden of the east march, he signed, with George Dunbar earl of March, who had the custody of the Scottish border, a convention for a truce.² In the year following Hotspur, in company with his father, joined Henry of Bolingbroke upon his landing at Ravenspur.

It is notorious that Henry IV. rewarded, with a lavish hand, the important aid of the Percys towards his establishment on the throne. Hotspur, with a renewal of his commission of warden of the east march and governor of Berwick and Roxburgh on 21st October 1399,³ was appointed justiciary of Chester, North Wales, and Flintshire; constable of the castles of Chester, Flint, Conway, Caernarvon, and Bamborough.⁴ He had also a grant of the island of Anglesey, and castle of Beaumaris, for life.⁵

The expiration of the truce with Scotland led to fresh inroads upon the English border; and the king, within a fortnight after his accession, declared in parliament his intention of undertaking in person an expedition against that kingdom.⁶ His preparations being completed, and having received into his allegiance the earl of March⁷ (who, in revenge of private wrongs, had seceded from the Scottish court)⁸ he entered Scotland, in August 1400, at the head of a powerful army: but, after committing great ravages, and failing in his attempt to possess himself of Edinburgh castle, he retraced his steps; leaving the continuation of the war to the Percys and to Dunbar, his new vassal. Those able warriors defeated a gallant band, assembled by the Scottish barons of the border under sir Patrick Hepburn, at Nesbitmoor, where that distinguished veteran and some of the bravest knights of Lothian were either captured or slain.

The discontent of Hotspur and of the earl his father, which in the sequel ripened into rebellion, may probably

¹ Rot. Franc. 19 Ric. 2, m. 14.

² Rymer, vol. viii. p. 54.

³ Rot. Soc. 1 Hen. 4, m. 14.

⁴ Rot. Pat. 1 Hen. 4, m. 8, and p. 4, m. 6.

⁵ Ibid. p. 4, m. 7.

⁶ Rot. Parl. vol. iii. p. 428.

⁷ Rymer, vol. viii. p. 153.

⁸ This earl had, perhaps, contemplated a similar secession during the former reign; for, on 12th December 1387, he obtained from

be traced to a royal order resulting from this action.¹ The feudal law or custom recognised a right in the captor to put his prisoner "to his finance," or, in other words, to claim a ransom proportionate to his rank; but the king now commanded the wardens of the marches to retain in custody, without ransom, their Scottish prisoners. Whether the number taken at Nesbit was sufficiently considerable to induce the Percys to remonstrate against the violation, in that particular instance, of an acknowledged right, does not appear; it is however certain that a repetition of it, on a subsequent occasion, was one of the proximate causes of their defection.

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In 1401 sir Henry Percy was actively engaged in the exercise of his functions, as justiciary of North Wales, in reducing to obedience the native chieftains, and gaining possession of the castles in that province which had been granted to him by the crown.² In the following year Archibald earl of Douglas, encouraged by the absence of king Henry (then occupied with the suppression of Glendower's rebellion in Wales) collected the strength of Scotland to carry again the flames of war into the English territory. The task of resisting this powerful invasion was committed to the earl of Northumberland and his illustrious son, and its difficulty was materially diminished by the talent and experience of the renegade earl of March, who was well acquainted with the impetuous and imprudent mode of Scottish warfare. By his counsel, the invaders were suffered to advance to the centre of Northumberland; to gorge themselves with plunder; and to commence undisturbed a careless retreat towards their own country. The battle at Homildon-hill, near Wooler, fought on the 14th September 1402, raised the fame of Hotspur to its zenith. Douglas, after receiving five wounds

Richard II. letters of safe conduct and protection for himself and one hundred Scottish knights, of his retinue, to pass into and reside in any part of England he might think fit. Rymer, vol. vii. p. 565.

¹ 30th Oct. 1400. Rymer, vol. viii. p. 162.

² Cotton. MS. Cleop. F. III, from which many most interesting letters are printed among *Ellis's Original Letters*, second series, vol. i. and in vol. i. of *Proceedings and Ordinances of the Privy Council*, published under the direction of the late Record Commission.

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and suffering the loss of an eye, and the earls of Fife, Murray, and Angus, with eighty other men of eminence, were amongst his prisoners.¹ The king, a second time, denied the profits of ransom to the captors; but bestowed upon them that which he had not to give, the entire earldom of Douglas, which remained to be conquered.²

The whole energies of the Percys appear thenceforward to have been devoted to the strengthening of their party, preparatory to an open rupture between them and their sovereign. A large number of the nobility is said to have encouraged their rebellion by promises of assistance, which were not fulfilled.³ The co-operation of Glendower was also secured by assigning to him, as his share of the expected spoils, the dominion of Wales, including Shrewsbury and the parts of Shropshire on the Welsh side of the Severn. The king seems to have been unapprised of the conspiracy, unless he politically concealed his knowledge by a public grant of lands to the earl so late as the 2nd March 1402-3.⁴ The hostile intentions of Hotspur were, however, soon manifested by assembling an army, as warden of the east march, with the professed design of invading Scotland; and, after a mock siege of an unimportant fortalice within the northern border, in June 1403, suddenly directing his march southwards, with the evident purpose of joining the forces of Glendower. A great portion of the gentry and men of Cheshire gathered under his standard, during his progress through that county; and he was met by his uncle, the earl of Worcester, on his entrance into Staffordshire. In the mean time, the king, aware of the urgent necessity of preventing his occupation of Shrewsbury, and junction with Glendower, pursued the rebel army with surprising rapidity. The royalists reached Lichfield on the 17th, and entered Shrewsbury on the 19th of July, a few hours only before the arrival of Hotspur at the castle foregate of the town. The king immediately ordered the suburb to be set on fire; and issued out of the castle gates to offer battle to the in-

¹ Wals. p. 408.

² Scott's History of Scotland,
vol. i. p. 239.

³ Hardyng's Chron. fol. cci. ccii.

⁴ Rymer, vol. viii. pp. 278. 289.

surgents. Percy, unwilling to risk an immediate action just at the close of a harassing march, desisted from the attack on the town, and retired to the Bull-field, an extensive common stretching eastward from the village of Upper Berwick. His rear was here protected by woody and impervious precipices, and his force was flanked, on one side, by the river, a communication by Shelton-ford being left open in case Glendower should arrive, as he hoped, on the opposite bank. At break of day, on Saturday the 21st of July, the king marched out of the town on the Hadnall road; and, on his advance, Percy broke up in haste, and proceeded to Hately-field; from whence, after haranguing his followers, and showing to them that a conflict was inevitable, he despatched by two esquires the celebrated defiance, in which the three Percys attempted, by accusing the king of the most flagitious crimes, to justify their insurrection. When the hostile armies were drawn up in battle array, awaiting the signal for the onset, the abbot of Shrewsbury and the clerk of the privy seal were sent by king Henry to offer to the rebels an amnesty, and redress of grievances. Hotspur, moved at the moment by the unlooked-for overture, conscious of the inferiority of his numbers, and despairing of the timely support of Glendower, requested his uncle to repair to the royal camp. It is said that Worcester, on his return, misrepresented the pacific disposition of the monarch, and incited his less implacable nephew to commit his fortunes to the issue.

The gallant Percy perceived that the die was cast;¹ and both parties rushed to the conflict, rending the air with the war-cries of "St. George!" and "Esperance Percy!" In the mean time, the wily Glendower is said to have approached as near as Shelton; and, from a branch of a lofty oak (whose hoary trunk yet remains) to have been a prudent spectator

¹ It is stated that, at this moment, Hotspur called for his favourite sword, and was informed by an attendant that it had been inadvertently left at Upper Berwick. Percy, who had not previously known the name of the

village at which he had halted, then exclaimed, "*Now is my plough drawing to its last furrow; for a wizard told me in Northumberland that I should perish at Berwick, which I vainly interpreted of that town in the North!*"

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of the awful combat. Our limits forbid a description of the battle.¹ It is well known that the combatants on both sides displayed a valour almost incredible;² that the issue was long doubtful; and that Percy raging, separated from his attendants, through the adverse ranks, in quest of the sovereign, fell, surrounded by enemies, by an unknown hand. The king himself, with a loud voice, proclaimed the death of his formidable adversary; and the rebels, deprived of their leader, fled in despair from the fatal field.

The mortal remains of the hero had been, on the day following the battle, committed to the earth by his near kinsman Thomas Nevil lord Furnival, but were inhumanly disinterred, and, after an ignominious exposure of them in the public street, disgraceful only to the king who ordered it, the head was severed from the body, and the latter, divided into quarters, transmitted, in compliance with the savage custom of the age, to as many cities of the realm. The public records show the eagerness with which the apparently inconsiderable goods and chattels of the deceased were gathered into the royal coffers.³

¹ The action is briefly, but admirably, described by Walsingham, p. 409; and, among modern authors, perhaps with the greatest accuracy, and the best local information, by the late reverend and learned J. B. Blakeway, in his excellent History of Shrewsbury, vol. i. pp. 183—195. He has erred, however, in the date, which he places on the 20th, instead of the 21st July, being on Saturday, the eve of the feast of St. Mary Magdalen. Mr. Blakeway has also, when referring (at p. 183, and, in the note, at p. 191) to Hotspur's previous battle, followed Dugdale's mistake in calling it "the victory of Halidown-hill," instead of *Homildon-hill*. It is remarkable that, on the Exchequer issue-roll between Easter and Michaelmas 1403, the following entries occur of payments made on and soon after Tuesday the 17th of July in that year.—"Hen. Com. Northumb. et Hen. de Percy fil. eiusdem comitis custodi-

bus march. vs. Scociam In denar. eis lib'at. p' man. Tho. Carinka cl'ici & Ric'i Hamme Scutiferi sup' vad' suis & hominum suorum secum retinentium sup' salv' custod. march. p'd'ctor' dexvi li. xiijs. iiij d." — "D'v'is nunciis & cursoribus missis ad o'es & sing'los com. Angl. de p'clamoe faciend. de morte Henr. P'cy unacu aliis rebell. interfect. in bello inter d'ctum regem & illos ex p'te dicti Hen. P'cy juxta Salop' & de capone Tho. Percy com. Wigorn. in dicto bello, ex s."

² The king is said to have slain thirty-six men with his own hand!

³ "Mart. 20 Nov. 5 Hen. 4. De Joh'e Walcot nup' maiore civ. Lond. & Esc. regis in eadem civitate de precio unius colle [olle?] que fuit Henr. Percy Regi foris x li." — "Merc. 16 Jan. eod. aº de Joh'e Shadworth cive Lond. xi li. vij s. vi d. de bonis & catall. que fuer. Hen. de Percy Regi for'." &c.

By his wife, Elizabeth Mortimer (the daughter of Edmond fourth earl of March by Philippa Plantagenet), who survived him and experienced the revengeful persecution of the king,¹ Hotspur left an infant son, Henry Percy, and a daughter, Elizabeth, married first to John lord Clifford, and, secondly, to Ralph second earl of Westmorland. The young Henry was, by the earl of Northumberland his grandfather, carried into Scotland, and, in the sequel, generously restored by Henry V. to the family estates and honours.

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ARMS.

Quarterly, first and fourth, Louvaine, Or, a lion rampant Azure, second and third, Lucy, Gules, three luces hauriant Argent.

LXXIX.

JOHN SECOND LORD DEVEREUX.

THE family of this highly celebrated person derived its surname from the town of Evreux in Normandy, and acquired lands in Cornwall, and other western counties of England, soon after the conquest. Stephen Devereux, Deverose, or De Ebrois, served under kings John and Henry III; and was succeeded by his son, William Devereux, who, taking part with the barons, fell at Evesham in 1265,² leaving a son, of the same name, who, after gaining distinction in the wars of Gascony, had summons, as a peer of parliament, in 1299.³ It is stated that the last-mentioned William had issue sir Walter Devereux, who was the father of the gallant individual now under our notice.⁴

JOHN
LORD
DEVEREUX.

Sir John Devereux was ordered to join the army in Aquitaine in 1368,⁵ and, in the year following, commanded at

¹ Rymer, vol. viii. p. 334, 8th Oct. 1403.

² Dugdale's Baronage, vol. ii. p. 175.

³ The summons was "Will'o de

Ebroicis, chivaler," and dated 6th Feb. 27 Ed. 1.

⁴ Vinc. No. 20, fo. 248, in Coll. Armor.

⁵ Rot. Vasc. 42 Ed. 3, m. 4.