

THE ANCIENT CASTLE OF PLYMOUTH.

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BEFORE the last vestiges of the ancient castle of Plymouth are removed, it may be of some interest to put upon record the little that is known of a building which played an important part in the history of Plymouth, and therefore in the history of the nation. The fortifications of Plymouth date from the latter part of the fourteenth century, under orders made by Edward III (1374), and Richard II (1378). The last-named monarch granted one hundred marks yearly for twenty years and six years' customs duties for the purpose, and walls of some kind were erected under the oversight of the Prior of Plympton, as lord of the town. These defences did not, however, prevent the spoiling of the place by the Bretons in the opening years of the fifteenth century, when 600 houses were burnt; and the inhabitants then, under patent from Henry IV, erected a wall with towers and other defences. This was the date of the construction of the castle.

The site was well chosen—a rocky spur at the eastern end of the Hoe, immediately overlooking and commanding the narrow entrance to the ancient harbour of Plymouth, which still retains its olden name of Sutton Pool. As beseemed a town under ecclesiastical proprietorship, the church authorities gave their powerful aid to the work. Bishop Stafford in 1416 granted an indulgence towards the erection of two towers and the repair of a causeway or quay, which probably occupied the site in part of the present Barbican Pier. That he was an effective helper in the undertaking, the fact mentioned by Risdon, that his “armories” had been “engraven in the work”, sufficiently indicates. Other bishops followed Stafford's lead. Lacy in 1449 granted another indulgence to all true penitents contributing *ad novam fabricacionem fosse vie juxta castrum infra villam de Plymouth*. Seventy years

afterwards Veysey also assisted in strengthening the defences.

The earliest description of the castle is that of Leland, who calls it "a strong Castel quadrate, having at eche corner a great round tower", and adds, "it seemeth to be no very old peece of work". This description corresponds very closely with the drawing in the well-known map of the southern and western coasts, *temp.* Henry VIII, preserved in the British Museum, which I reproduce; and also with Risdon's statement, "A castle they have garretted with turrets at every corner". From this "castel quadrate" the present arms of the town, a saltire for St. Andrew, the patron Saint, between four castles, are believed to be derived. There was an earlier coat, a ship on the waves, with three masts surmounted by fire beacons, and this has been curiously embodied in the modern seal.

The municipal records of Plymouth contain many references to the castle, and show that it was maintained by the appropriation of one of the towers or castles to each of the then four wards of the town, by the names of which the towers were occasionally known. Moreover, as the Mayor of the town in those early days was Commander-in-Chief of the borough forces, and all the inhabitants had to take their part in the "watch and ward", or else to find a substitute, so the heads of the little community—the "twelve and twenty-four"—were supposed to act as the castle garrison. The text of an order is extant, made by Humphrey Fownes, Mayor in 1588-9 and 1596-7, setting forth who should inhabit the castle "in time of warre". Three Aldermen and six Councillors were set apart for each tower, the Mayor taking his station in the north-eastern, which would be that more immediately overlooking the entrance to Sutton Pool.

Work was done upon the castle in 1508-9, when, after it had been made clean, at a cost of *iiii*s. for "mete and drynke for the beggers that labored aboute" its cleansing for a day, stone was brought from Prince Rock for its reparation or improvement. At another date we read of the pulling down of the ivy that grew on the castle walls and the clearing of the ditch; but as time went on the castle became comparatively of less importance, in conse-

quence of the erection of various "gun platforms" and bulwarks, partly by individual patriotism and liberality, on the sea face of the Hoe, which after the defeat of the Armada were "methodised into a fort regular", and which were the small beginnings of the present citadel.

Unfortunately, very few of the entries afford any clue to the real character of the building, beyond what we have already seen; but it is evident that each of the towers consisted of an upper and a lower floor with a platform roof. Under Elizabeth the platforms were covered with lead; and in 1590 "7 brass pieces were playnted uppon the iiij castells". In all probability the castle was allowed to fall into decay after the conclusion of the siege, in which it played its part in the defence of the town against the Cavaliers; and it is quite certain the town would not be allowed to maintain it after the citadel was built.

Still, within the past hundred years there must have been very considerable remains of this venerable structure. The last portions of importance left were the north-eastern tower, and the foundations of the south-eastern, with the gateway. To the MS. recollections of an old townsman, named Harris, we are indebted for the only particulars that can be gleaned of the appearance of the fabric early in the present century. In 1807 he says that there only remained one castle, and that "brought down almost to the internal base, there being on the inside about five feet serving for a breastwork, and a garden wall, the area being let for a garden. The diameter of this castle was about 30 feet; 200 feet to the south there were the remains of one with a diameter of only 10 feet; finally removed about 1804." The tower which Harris describes disappeared only within very recent years; and he evidently overlooked the existence of other relics of the castle, some of which have continued to the present day, including those of the gateway in Lambhay Street, for the drawing and plan of which I am indebted to my friend Mr. C. W. Dymond, F.S.A. The preservation, until the visit of the British Archæological Association, of this most interesting relic of old Plymouth, is clearly due to the utilization of the eastern flanking turret as a dwelling.

The barbican of the castle has long existed but in the name it has given to the pier at the entrance of Sutton Pool ; and Harris has preserved the only description which we have. It was of small extent, not quite the breadth of the present pier, and had a breastwork. In the enclosure there was an old one-roomed building with a porch, having the town arms on the front and the date 1528. "In the pavement was the figure of a gunner in the act of firing a cannon, said by tradition to record the bravery of one man, who, when Plymouth was besieged, and only one charge of powder left, fired the cannon, which had been crammed to the muzzle and placed in a lane by which the besiegers approached, scattering death around and losing his own life !" Believe it who list. The ground of the barbican was dug away for the pier, and four square subterranean chambers discovered outside the wall, and below high water-mark. Stone shot have been found in the castle remains.
