

## III.

## ANCIENT IRISH CASTLES COMPARED WITH SCOTTISH TYPES.

By J. S. FLEMING, F.S.A. Scot.

In the thirteenth century the Anglo-Norman invaders had firmly established themselves, with their laws and institutions, in Ireland, and thoroughly Normanised and encastled their conquered possessions.

These Castles may be divided into two classes—the scientific planned fortification of a massive *doujon* or citadel, standing in an extensive court of several acres, surrounded by embattled walls with towers, entered by a barbican gateway, with drawbridge, and all surrounded by a moat, of the Norman period—in which we have in Trim Castle an excellent example; and *second*, the lesser castle or keep, a single massive tower of the Anglo-Irish period, of which the ruins now existing show they were so numerous as to have formed the residences of the principal inhabitants of the island. The writer possesses 250 sketches, most unpublished, and many without either name or history, of these structures. Of the last, Balleybur Tower is a fair example. Of the castle proper, few, if any, exist in their original condition or are inhabited (Cromwell's campaign accounts for the ruined condition of most), and only a few of the tower type are inhabited, chiefly by the labouring class, or they are generally utilised as cattle stalls, or for storing farm produce, lumber, etc., by the adjoining farmer. This keep, in its earliest erection, which seems to have been general in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, retains more markedly the Norman features, and all subsequent erections show the added English influence, evidently following closely the architectural changes in England down to Queen Elizabeth's reign, when these characteristics, with the native combinations, had developed into a type as distinctive for Ireland as the Tudor and Baronial types at that period were for England and Scotland

respectively. There is no mistaking the architecture of an Irish keep of the period before named for that of either Scotland or England.<sup>1</sup>

The general features of the tower type are rectangular 40 x 30 feet, and its massive foundations arising from a batter of about 12 feet to about 60 feet in height, with mid-height flanking turrets, and a larger machicolated one pending over, and thus protecting the doorway, the latter pointed, its lintel of two large stones, the basement and uppermost flat vaulted, the lights in the former mere slits, while the other, the principal apartment, is well lighted by two or more mullioned windows.

The narrow stair is within the thickness of the two walls forming the angle. The characteristics of the batter, mullioned windows, and crow-stepped, coronated battlements, supported on leaf or tongue-shaped corbels, form distinctive features from those represented in the Scottish type, and markedly so in the entire absence of external sculptured armorial panels with dates, or initials of its builder, a common feature in Scottish towers. The apartments and interior walls and chimneys, etc. of the Irish towers are, however, more skilfully arranged and perfectly built, and show great taste in the sculptured chimney-pieces, wall recesses, and windows.

The erection of this type of fortified residence in Ireland seems to have continued a century later than similar structures in Scotland, and a Scottish antiquary's experiences mislead him in estimating their ages.

There is an absence in Ireland of the "mansion" residence, so numerous in Scotland, which replaces the fortified tower discarded in the early seventeenth century (1603), on the accession of James VI. to the English crown.

*Trim Castle* (fig. 1), ancient name *Ath-Trium* ("Ford of Bourtrees"), is admitted by archæologists to be the only castle in Ireland deserving that name, and is regarded as the finest specimen of an Anglo-Norman fortress. It was a principal stronghold of "The Pale." The erections cover a triangular area of about 3 acres, and the outer walls are 486 yards in circumference, with eight circular towers placed at equal

<sup>1</sup> Contrast the difference of types in the sketches, figs. 17, 18, and 19.

distances in them, and two large gate towers on north and south sides respectively. The north-west boundary was formerly washed by the river Boyne (which flows through the town), now a marsh. The *west* or Town Gate tower occupies the centre of that wall. It is greatly ruined, has grooves for a portcullis, and over the archway of the passage an aperture of 2 feet square, named the "Murder Hole" in Ireland,



Fig. 1. Irish type, Trim Castle, South Gateway.

through which the garrison could throw stones, or from which lead, etc. could be poured on its assailants. The extramural ruins bear indications of an added drawbridge, and probably a barbican beyond. The lower half of the tower is rectangular, the upper octagonal, and its ruins about 20 feet high, and the passage 40 feet deep, through it. The *south* Gate Tower is circular, but with Gothic-shaped doors, and has grooves for a portcullis, and ruins of pointed arched buildings; a stair descending through them crosses the moat by a stone arch, with a barbican beyond,

and a drawbridge. The *moat*, its waters supplied from the Boyne, surrounds two sides of the wall, and that river bounds the third. The *citadel*, or *donjon*, a square structure, stands in the centre of the courtyard or bawn. It is externally in fair condition, but the inside is almost gone. It is composed of four narrow square towers at the angles of a massive rectangular building, and the whole form a 20-sided figure. The lower wall of the tower proper is 12 feet in thickness, and side ones 4 to 6 feet thick, with internal stairs to the top about 60 feet in height. On the summit of each angle of the centre tower a square turret of 17 feet high completes the apex. These square turrets have curved arched internal supports, and the sketch shows the manner of their junction. Inserted in the south wall of an upper chamber is a single stone, with small Gothic-shaped recesses (aumbreys probably), and a singular small triangular aperture right through the wall. The windows in this chamber have remains of mullions. No sculptured stone with heraldic bearings is seen on its walls. Hugh de Lacy, who accompanied "Strongbow" on the invasion, and then held Meath, erected the earlier part of this castle, upon what had been an ancient mote, in 1173.

The Irish type is more pronounced in the keep of *Auchanure Castle* (fig. 2). It is a roofless but otherwise complete rectangular tower of six storeys, 40 feet by 28 feet, with a batter of about 12 feet at the base. The stair formed in the internal south-east angle is entered by a pointed doorway, the lintel two enormous stones. It has flanking square turrets mid-height, and a machicolated gallery on the battlements immediately over the doorway, numerous loops in its walls, and, an unusual feature, also gun-loops in the three internal walls of and commanding each landing of the staircase. The top floor, the usual principal apartment, has large mullioned windows and a wide chimney. The castle buildings stand on what is virtually an island formed by a stream, which separates into two branches immediately above it, surrounds its walls, forming a deep fosse, and reunites (no doubt artificially) immediately below the rock, and the entrance is by that part of the rock which joins the mainland, under which this branch of the stream has tunnelled a passage. The

stream thus encloses a fortified walled court of an irregular triangle or quadrangle of 178 feet on south and 158 feet on east sides. It stands on the banks of Lough Corrib, at the point of the stream's embouchure into it, and is distant about 2 miles from the village of Ouchterard. It is stated

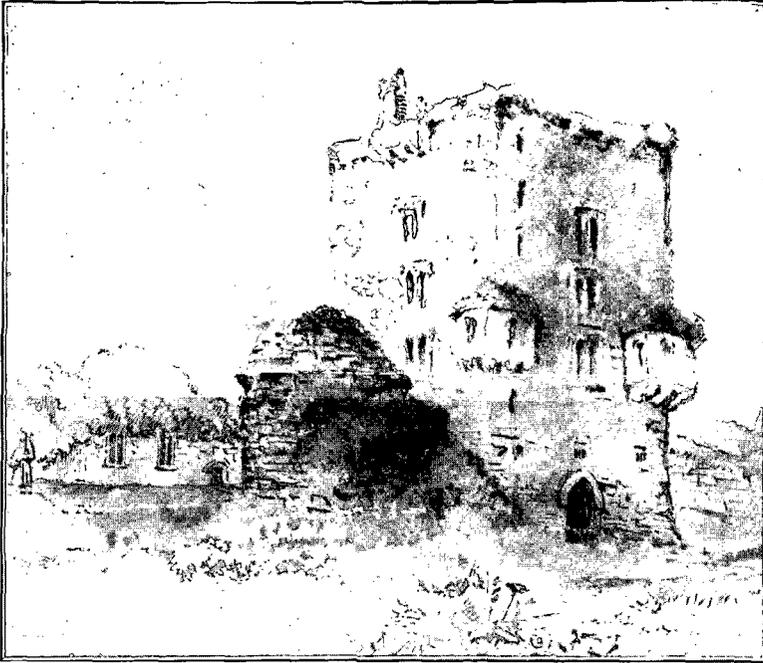


Fig. 2. Auchanure Castle, Irish type.

to have been erected by the chief of the O'Flahertys, of princely rank, in the early sixteenth century. The purpose of the circular, dome-roofed, small two-storey structure in the court is presently a subject of conjecture. It seems a watch tower, with guardroom in its vaulted basement (which has loops); as a sentinel's position, on the gallery encircling its top, has a view of the whole court and its surrounding walls. The one wall

shown in the sketch is all that the erosion of the river has left of the great hall or chapel.

*Sauchie Tower* (fig. 3), a rectangular ashler-built keep, is situated midway between Alloa and Tillicoultry, and the sketch (1854) shows the roof

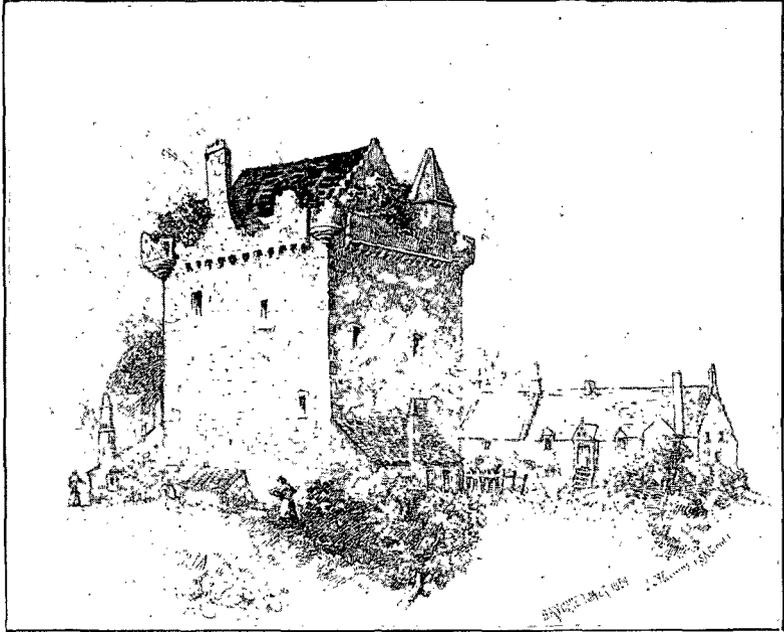


Fig. 3. Sauchie Tower, Scottish type.

(now gone), but then in a fairly complete condition. It is 34 by 28 feet, of four floors and basement, the latter divided into two apartments (a small guardroom and the kitchen, apparently), with an open draw-well. It has open circular turrets at its angles, and is entered by a doorway and spiral stair leading to the upper apartments, and thence to the machicolated battlements, to which it gives access through a small octagonal stone tower or guards' house.

The first floor is of one apartment, and from its fine sculptured chimney, 8 feet wide (fig. 4), seems to have been the principal chamber. The same pattern of the jambs I find prevalent in Scottish towers of this period (fifteenth century), and it may be contrasted with the jamb sculpture of similar Irish keeps of like date—Burnchurch Castle, for instance (fig. 14).

It was for centuries the chief seat of the Shaw family, and is supposed to have been erected by the noted Sir James Shaw in the reign of James III. or James IV. He held the office of comptroller to

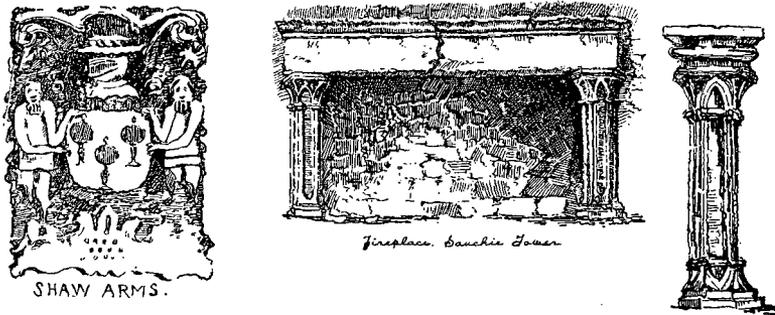


Fig. 4. Details, Sauchie Tower.

James III., and had the custody of his infant son Prince James, afterwards James IV. His armorial bearings (fig. 4) appear on the sculptured panel I found built in the wall of an adjacent modern building, viz. three flagons or covered cups, and two savages as supporters.

The more recent mansion, erected by Alex. Shaw in 1631, is shown as adjoining the old tower. It contains, rudely sculptured, his arms and initials, date 1631, and motto "I mein weil," and several curious French inscriptions on its dormers.

*The Keep of Balleybur, Kilkenny* (fig. 5) is situated about 4 Irish miles south of that town. Being inhabited, and that by a labourer's family, it preserves its original condition, and affords an interesting insight into

the social arrangements of fortified domestic buildings at this period. It is a square tower, 38 by 30 feet, walls 3 feet thick, and of four storeys exclusive of basement, all single chambers 20 feet square, now

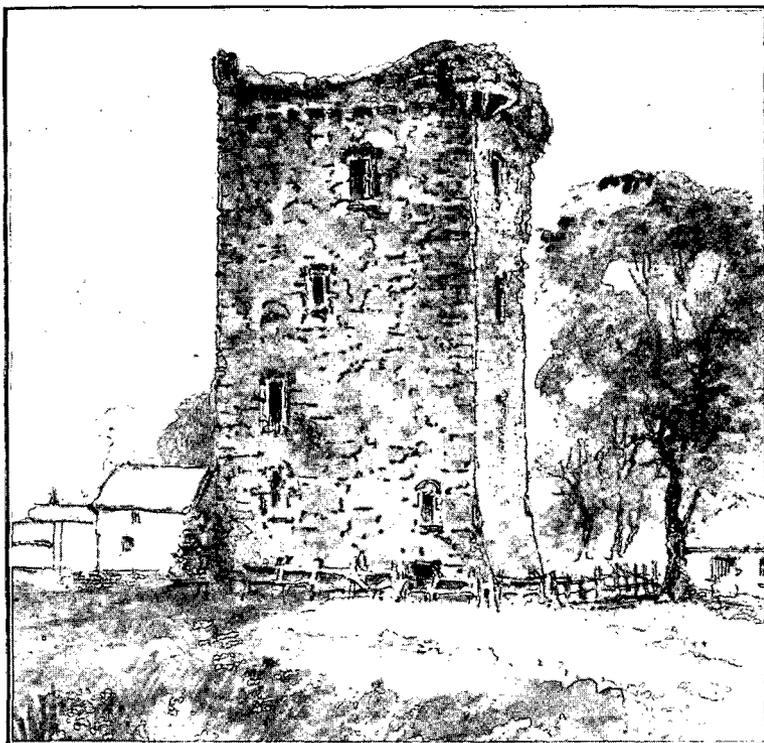


Fig. 5. Irish type (Balleybur Castle).

roofless, but the vaulted roof of the third floor makes the fabric weather proof, and preserves its inhabitants from discomfort. It is entered by a pointed doorway (fig. 6) (the lintel of two immense slabs) 7 by 4 feet wide, which has two shot-holes, one in the left jamb and the other at the junction of the lintel stones—a singular arrangement. This doorway may be contrasted with the Scottish type shown in the doorway of

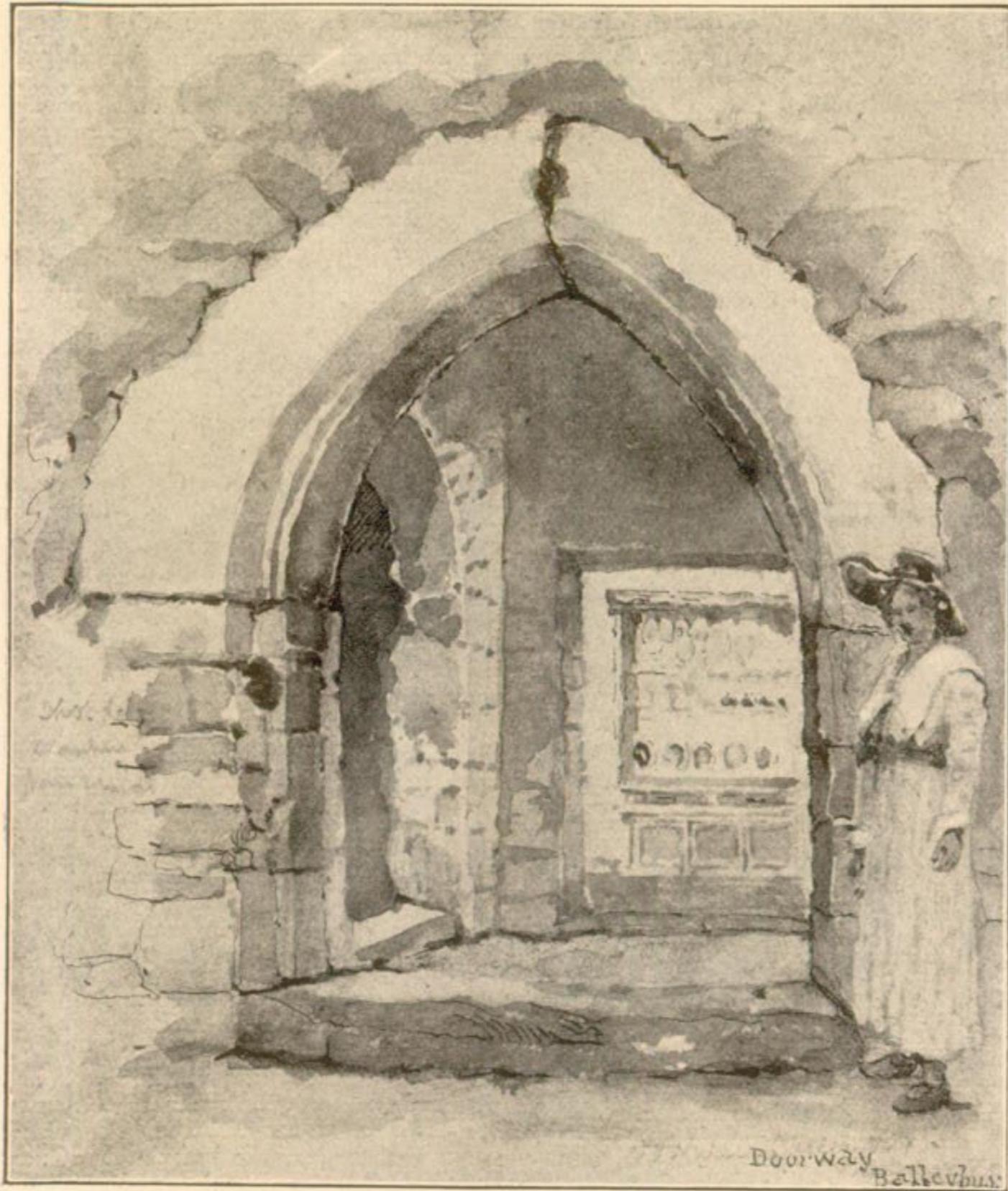


Fig. 6. Irish type (Doorway, Ballevbur Castle).

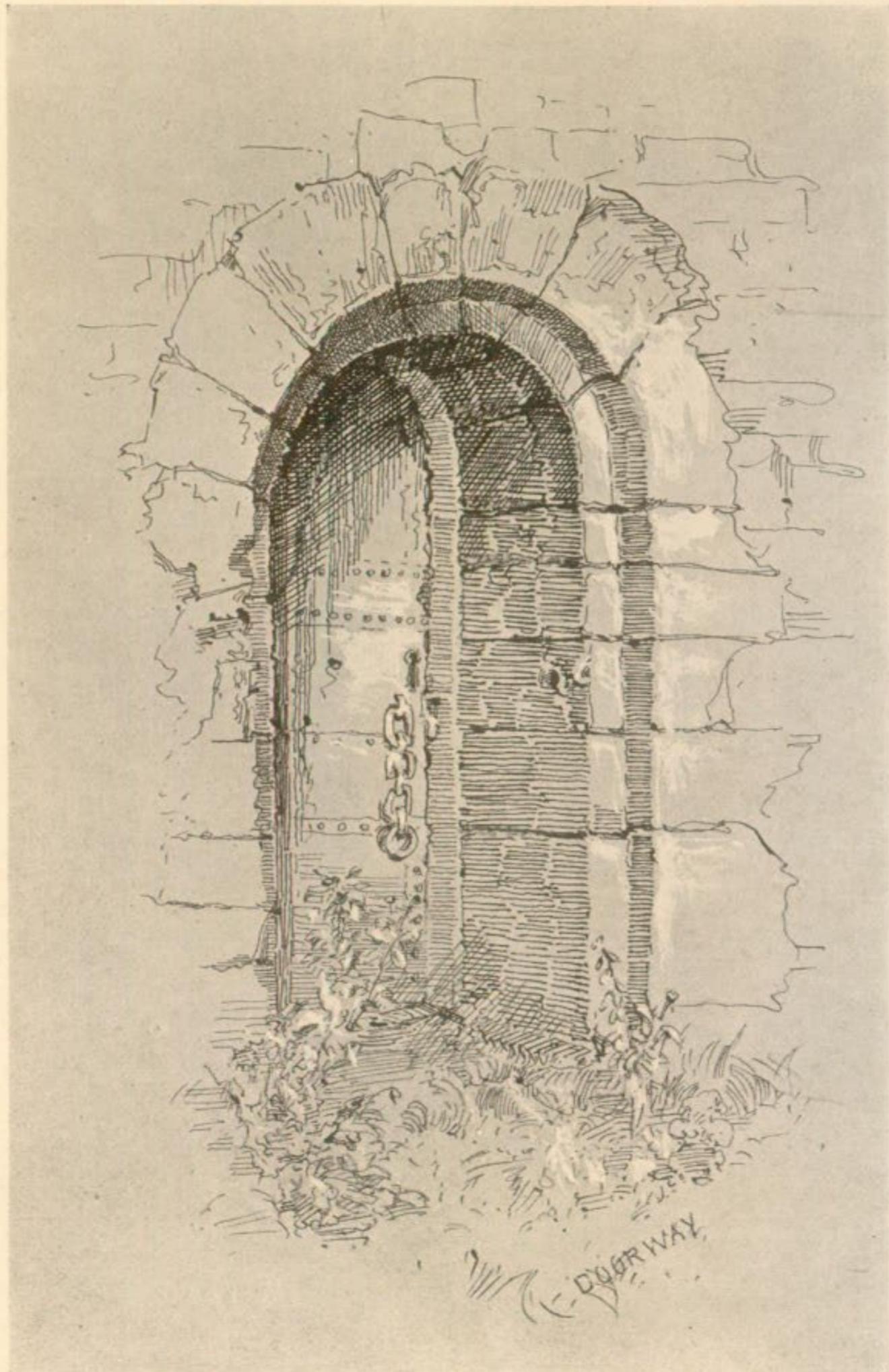


Fig. 7. Scottish type (Doorway, Cardoness Castle).

Cardoness Castle (fig. 7). A circular narrow stair in the angle of the thickness of the corner walls on the left leads to the upper flats, all single apartments, the uppermost, now roofless, being the principal

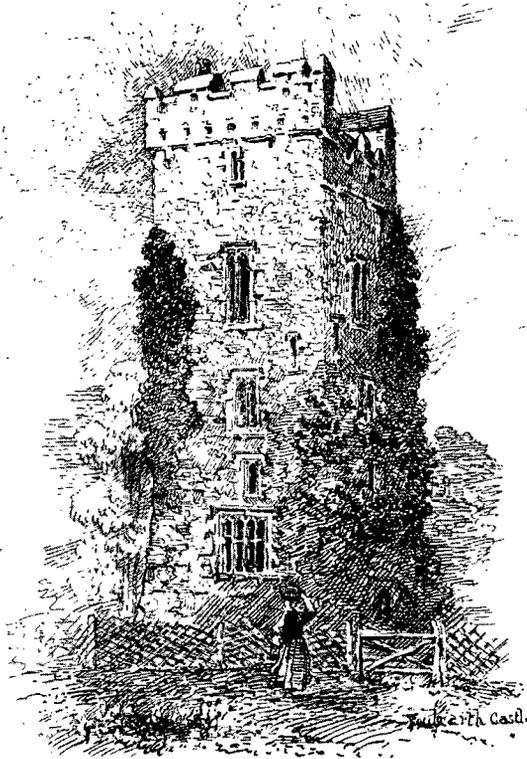


Fig. 8. Irish (Foulscrath Castle).

one. This has been well lighted by large mullioned windows, has a massive chimney, and from it a narrow stair leads to the battlements, on which is the usual warder's tower. The walls of this apartment, by the projecting corbels, evidently supported the beams of a wooden

roof, covered probably with slabs. The passage between it and the battlements, virtually the walls' thickness, is covered with moulded stone slabs, sloping to throw off the rain, and the square overhanging turret covering the castle doorway is entered off the battlements. The blackened oak beams supporting the roof of the basement, presently used as a kitchen, are 15 inches thick—all shown in the sketch. All the internal walls are plain and rude, with massive chimney, and window jambs, lintels without ornament or relieving sculpture beyond the mullioned windows. The second storey, covered by a vaulted roof, seems to have been the dormitory. Its construction is peculiar, as in the massive thickness of the walls carried up from the basement are formed in the masonry recesses or chambers which one writer ascribes as sleeping-places formed to secure the fixtures for sleeping purposes. They are so used by the present inmates. The castle's erection is assigned to Thomas Comerford, who died 2nd February 1588, "seized in the manor castle and town of Balleybur."

*Foulsrath Castle* (fig. 8) is situated  $2\frac{1}{2}$  miles from Balleyraggit, Kilkenny county. A square-keep of six storeys of ashler masonry is in excellent preservation, and had only recently been evacuated by the proprietor. The internal measurements of the upper apartments are 39 by 27 feet, of the basement 30 feet north to south by 24 feet east to west (this difference being accounted for by numerous wall recesses on this floor); its walls are 11 feet thick, with recesses in east and south sides. All windows are pointed, have mullions, and are all complete and glazed. A more modern, extensive, two-storey wing has been added to the rear, which has disarranged the original entrance, although the pointed doorway (fig. 9), with oaken door, in which was the massive key, remains perfect. The doorway is 7 by 5 feet, and enters on a vestibule 5 feet square; the wall facing the door has a gun-loop (a Greek cross), and in the left jamb of the doorway is a small gun-shot hole, both commanding the entrance.

There is no appearance of outer defences, either of wall or fosse. It is singular in having no angle turrets, galleries, or wall projections.

It is stated to have been erected by a family of that name, "Foul-

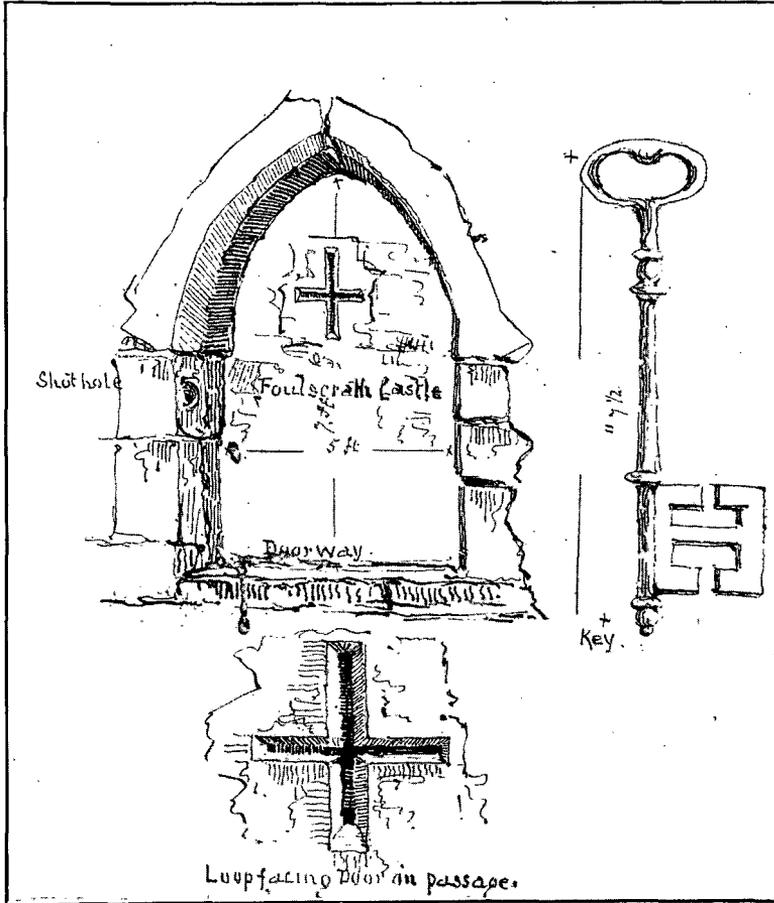


Fig. 9. Details (Foulscrath Castle).

scrath," probably in the late sixteenth century, as it is in excellent preservation.

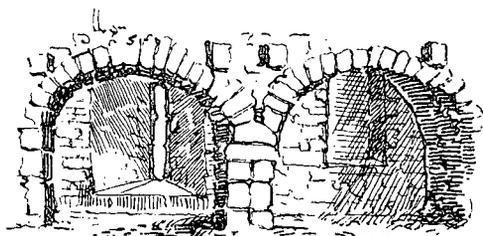
*Newton Castle* (fig. 10), about 6 miles from Kilkenny, is a rectangular,

roofless keep of ashler, 30 by 24 feet externally, walls 3 feet thick. The vaulted basement (fig. 11), presently used for cattle, has two arches, supported on a pillar near its south wall, supplementing the

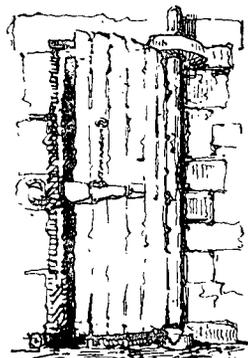


Fig. 10. Irish type (Newton Castle).

strength of the foundation, necessitated perhaps by the thinness of the foundation walls, and its ceiling is about 30 feet high, with corbels at mid-height for supporting the beams of an entresol. It is entered by the usual pointed doorway, 6 feet by 3 feet 4 inches, through a small



Newton. SoWall basement. arcade



Mode of hanging doors.

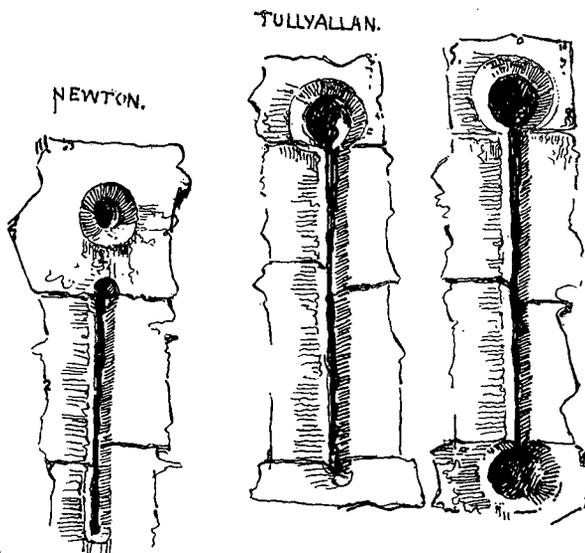


Fig. 11. Details (Newton Castle) and Scottish loops.

vestibule, to the circular stair in the left angle ; in the left jamb a

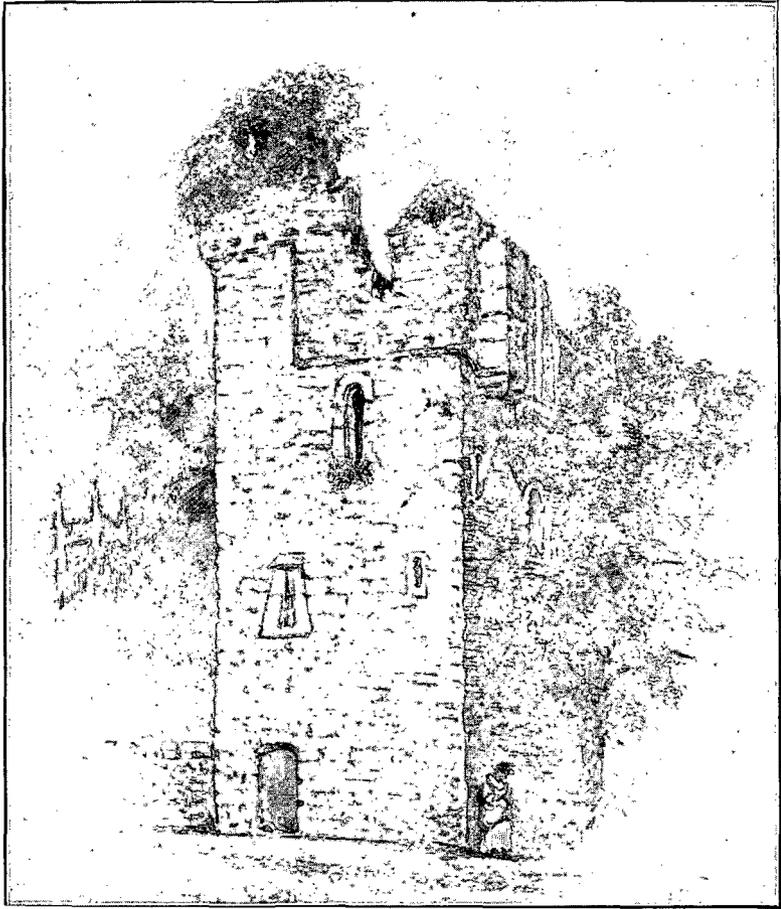


Fig. 12. Irish type (Dalkey Tower).

shot-hole and over the vestibule a "murder hole" respectively command the vestibule and entrance.

*Dalkey* has three Keeps or minor Castles of the usual Irish type,

one of which is now the completed, restored, or repaired building, presently used as the Town House, with its public clock (fig. 19), and



Fig. 13. Irish type (Burnchurch Castle).

the other (fig. 12) a small roofless tower, its walls imperfect and ruined, standing on the opposite side of the street, whose ages and the original owners' names are to me unknown.

*Burnchurch or Burnchurch Castle* (fig. 13) is adjacent to Balleybur Tower, and 4 miles distant from Kilkenny. It presently consists of

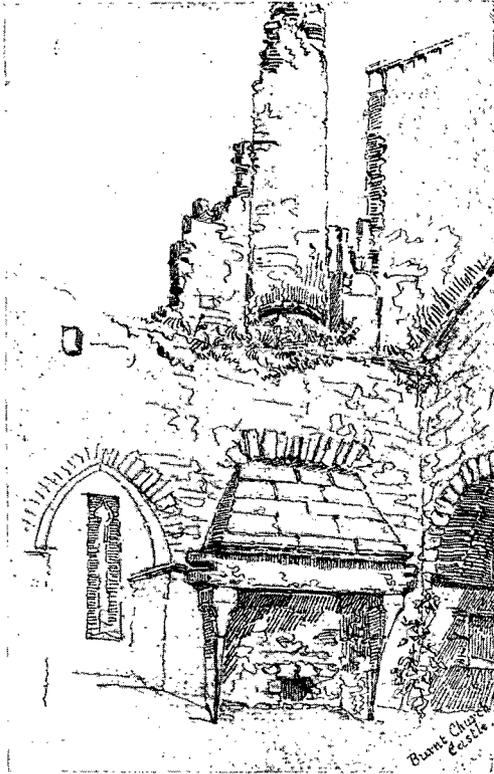


Fig. 14. Details (Burnchurch Castle).

an externally complete, but roofless, six-storey, square ashler keep, with mullioned windows, and a small circular tower, situated about 150 feet distant therefrom, having formed the corner tower of an enclosing wall of a large triangular court or bawn attached to the castle, the connecting ruined walls of which appear in an early drawing,

but all has now been levelled down. The walls of the keep rise with the usual batter, and have in the apex of each corner, at about 12 feet in height, a slit or gun-loop. The upper and better chamber is roofless, and has a fine chimney-piece (fig. 14), and been well lighted with mullioned windows (fig. 15). The castle has a pointed doorway, and, what is unusual, this is raised 4 or 5 feet above the ground, and is reached by four or five stone steps direct off the court.

The castle belonged to the Fitzgeralds, Barons of the County Palatine, by whom it is alleged to have been built, probably in the sixteenth

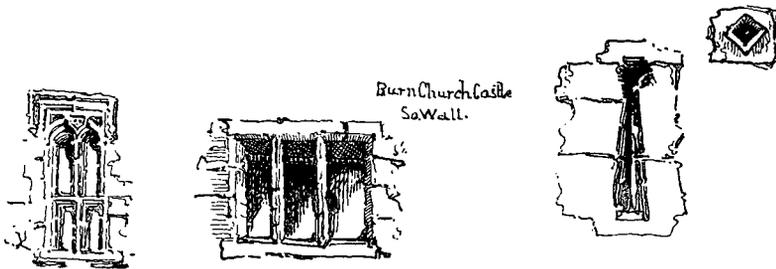


Fig. 15. Irish Windows, etc. (Burnchurch Castle).

century. It and the circular tower are in excellent preservation, and stand now in a large wooded park.

The early intimate relations between Scotland and England through the marriage of Alexander III. to Margaret, daughter of Henry III. (1257), which brought not only her English attendants, but an influx of English barons who settled down in Scotland; and the subsequent War of Independence on the invasions of Edward I. of England (ceasing only in 1314), who penetrated into every county, burning and destroying in his course the castles of the recalcitrant Scottish barons, and parcelling out their lands amongst his followers, who rebuilt and occupied them, were bound to show some English features in the fortifications re-erected between these dates. That influence had apparently ceased, and is invisible in the existing remains of structures ascribed to the fifteenth century,

the tower or keep of that period showing an independent native type. Although several keeps in Wigtonshire (with which Ireland in that epoch had, as the nearest point of intercommunication, necessarily frequent intercourse) show a suggestion of Irish castle architecture in the similarity of the internal arrangements of the keep type, it cannot be said with certainty that these characteristics are borrowed from that country. The large castles of Bothwell, Doune, and Inverlochy, and some others, seem more of Norman construction than of either English or Scottish, but not of Ireland. The three sketches—(fig. 3) Sauchie Tower (1431), Clackmannanshire; (fig. 16) Coxton Tower, Elginshire, some years later; and (fig. 17) Muckrach Castle (1598)—may fairly show the devolution from the fifteenth century square, massive, fortified keep, to the semi-fortified house of Muckrach, a type of the baronial mansion of the late sixteenth century.

*Coxton Tower* (fig. 16), a solitary square tower roofed with stone flags, situated about 4 miles from Elgin, and quite adjacent to Kinloss ruined abbey, having a square turret of stone on its left angle, and at two others circular turrets, although entire, is unoccupied.

The entrance is by a door on the first floor, to which access is presently by a modern outside stair, but formerly that must have been by a movable trap stair, as it is the only access to the main building, there being no internal intercommunication with the basement floor, which has a separate door direct off the court. This door of plate iron, and the main door of oak, trenailed, are still hanging on the respective doorways. The panel over the main doorway, with heraldic bearings and initials, apparently refer to the owner's name and arms, but if the date 1644 (which is in incised figures, whilst the other lettering, etc. are sculptured in relief, and may have been thus cut of a subsequent date) applies to him, then from its extra strong walls, 5 feet thick, numerous gunloop-holes, and defensive precautions against surprise, its period of construction would be applicable to an early unsettled state of the country, and he could scarcely be the builder.

The date of the erection might go back one hundred years earlier. It is an uncommon type of Scottish keep.

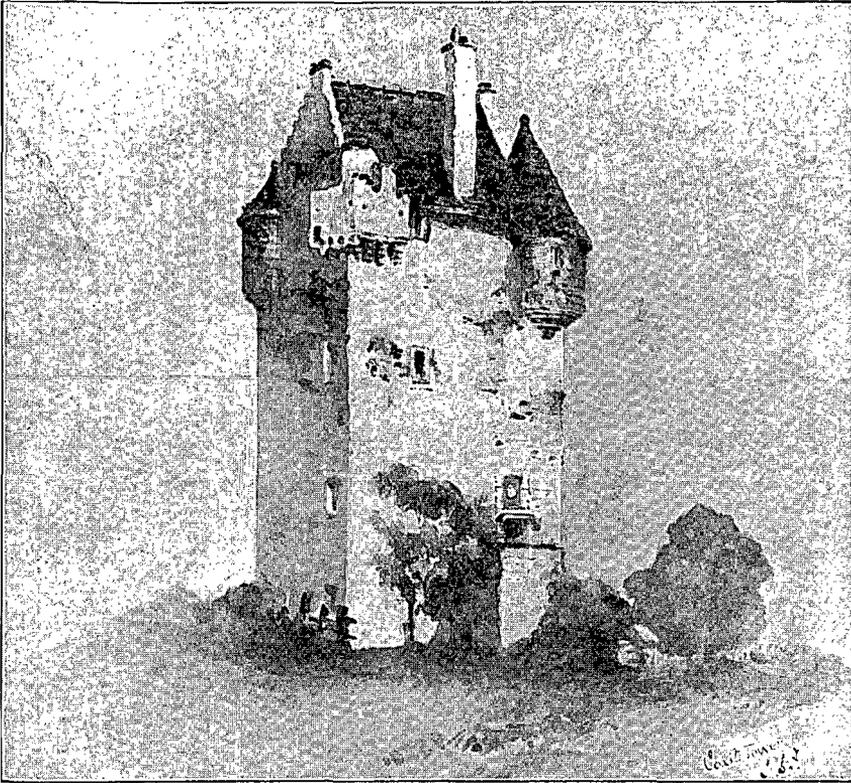


Fig. 16. Scottish type (Coxton Tower).

A panel with the same arms appears to be over the inside of the window of the principal apartment.

There is no appearance of a fosse or any outworks, but probably a small walled court surrounded it. Messrs M'Gibbon & Ross give very full detailed drawings of the tower, but no history of it beyond that

it belonged to the Inneses of Invermarkie, whose arms are over the doorway, and is now the property of the Earl of Fife. They add that it is one of the most remarkable buildings of its class.



Fig. 17. Scottish type (Muckrach Castle).

*Muckrach Castle* (fig. 17), the early seat of the Grants, stands on the north bank of a small but steep ravine, which formed its south defence, and is distant 4 miles from Broomhill station on the Highland Railway. The roofless walls had originally formed an oblong, four-storey structure, 52 by 24 feet, with an external circular tower (in which is the doorway and staircase) 30 feet in diameter, on its west

side, and this tower has a square superstructure. A narrow circular

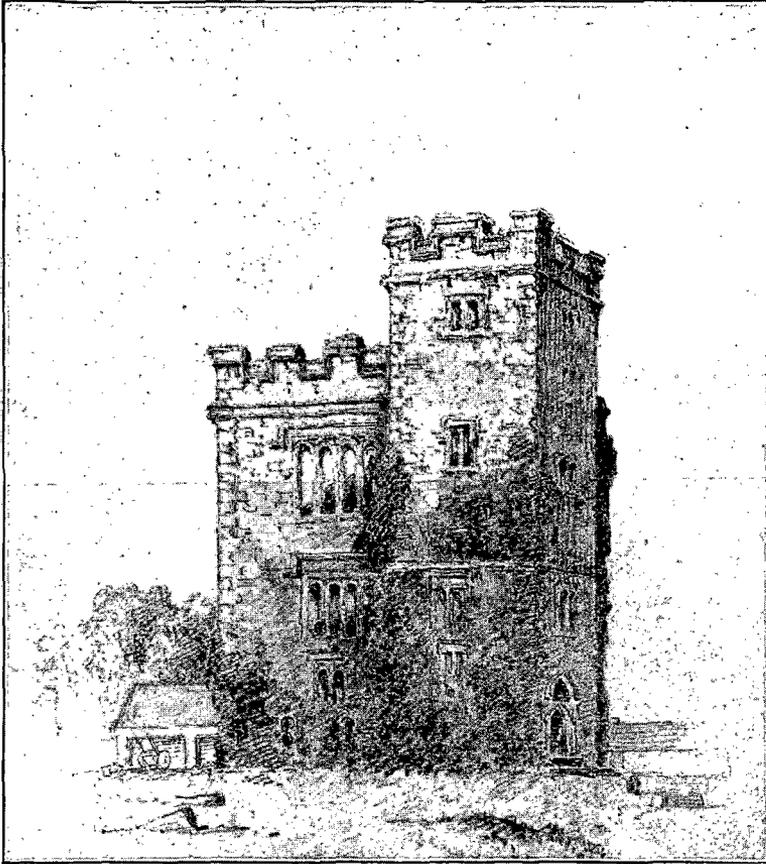


Fig. 18. English type (Pengergask Castle).

turret continued the stair from the first floor to the upper apartments, the floors of which are all gone. The walls are 3 feet thick, and the basement chambers are vaulted (9 feet high), and their walls pierced with

a gun-loop in each of the north, south, and west, and with two in the east walls, which form the only lights.

A space, 24 by 15 feet, seems, from its ruined walls attached to the east gable, to have been a court. All the windows had iron stanchions. No sculptured stone appears on its walls, but it is stated to have been erected in 1598, and that it formed the first seat of the chief of the Clan Grant, by whom it was erected.

#### ENGLISH TYPE.

*Pengerseg or Pengergask Castle* (fig. 18), St Breage, Cornwall, which, when visited in 1904, was roofless, and used as a hayloft and storage for grain by the adjoining farmer, is described as a castellated *Block*, and as having been built (visited more likely) by Henry VIII. It is a square embattled tower, built of granite, of three storeys in height, and a lesser one forming the staircase, with pointed doorway on its north side. A hole in the gallery over the passage commands the entrance, and machicolations support the battlements.

Its modern appearance is deceptive to the eye as to its age, arising from the hard granite stones of the structure, and its mullioned windows being complete, thus exhibiting externally no disintegration from the weather effects of the four centuries of its existence.

There remains perfect a wainscot or oak panelling, accompanied by paintings and old quaint letter inscriptions in the first floor, the principal apartment.

The writer in the Cornwall Survey expresses his opinion that the building and decorations are of the time of Henry VIII, at the latter end of whose reign the manor was held by a Millington, who immured himself, from a supposed manslaughter he had committed. That and its subsequent accidental destruction by fire gave rise to a local legend. From the surrounding traces of walls it seems to have originally been more than a blockhouse, as M'Kenzie (*Castles of England*, 1897) calls it.

IRISH URBAN TYPE.

The distinction thus shown is as marked in the respective national



Fig. 19. Irish type (Dalkey Castle), contrasted with Scottish and English type (figs. 17 and 18).

types of their domestic or urban architecture, but with a better sense of refinement in the super-excellence of the buildings of Ireland; and two fairly typical examples, both of wealthy merchants of the respective

nations, and benefactors of their respective townsmen, erected in 1582 and 1633 respectively, that period of remarkable commercial prosperity which benefited both countries, are the mansions of John Rothes, Kilkenny, and John Cowan, Stirling.

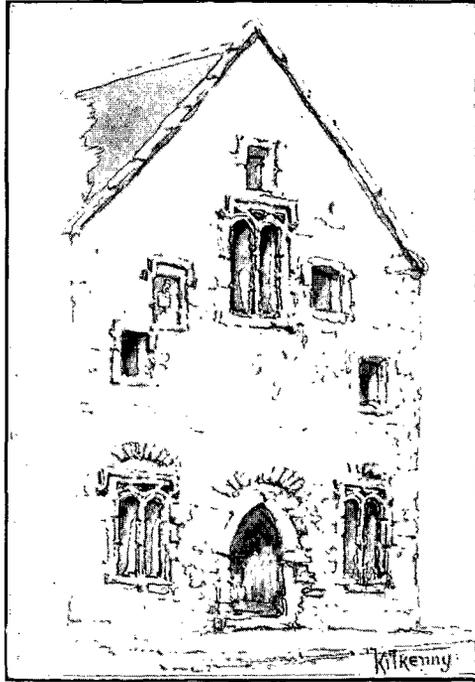


Fig. 20. Irish Urban type.

That of Rothes (1604) having been much altered and modernised, the adjacent house of Richard Shee, also a merchant, and a public benefactor, as existing in its original state (1582), is substituted (fig. 20). Although an almshouse, it carries the main features characteristic of the town architecture of Kilkenny.

The two panels enclosing the respective armorial bearings of the

owners, John Rothes, his spouse Rose Archer (fig. 21), and Richard Shee and his spouse Margaret Sherlock, are affixed to their respective edifices. The striking stone-canopied draw-well, with the exquisite ancient lettering in Latin sculptured on the pediment (fig. 22), appears the not least

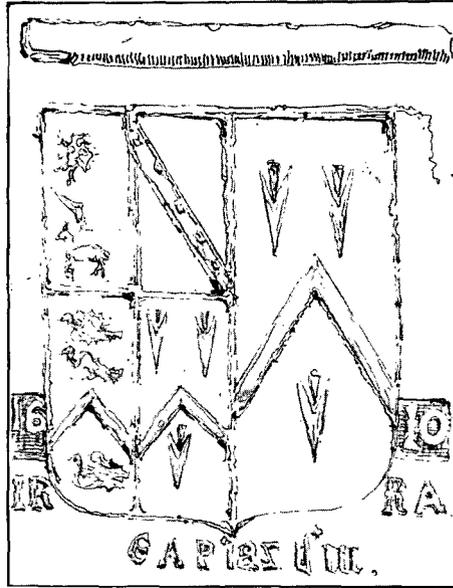


Fig. 21. Armorial Slab on John Rothes' Mansion.

interesting part of Rothes mansion. The inscription reads: *Orate pro animabus Johannis Rothe, Mercatoris, et uxoris eius Rosae Archer qui fontem hanc, et hec (haec) Aedificia fieri fecerunt.* "Pray for the souls of John Rothes, Merchant, and his wife, Rose Archer, who caused this well and those buildings to be made."

The architectural features of the above house, sculptured armorial panels, and canopied well of Irish type, may be contrasted with John Cowan's Ludging (fig. 23), its dormers, with initials, dates, and armorial

shield sculptured thereon, and its plain stone-built open well, the type of Scotland.

A significant illustration of the scarcity of coin and resort to barter

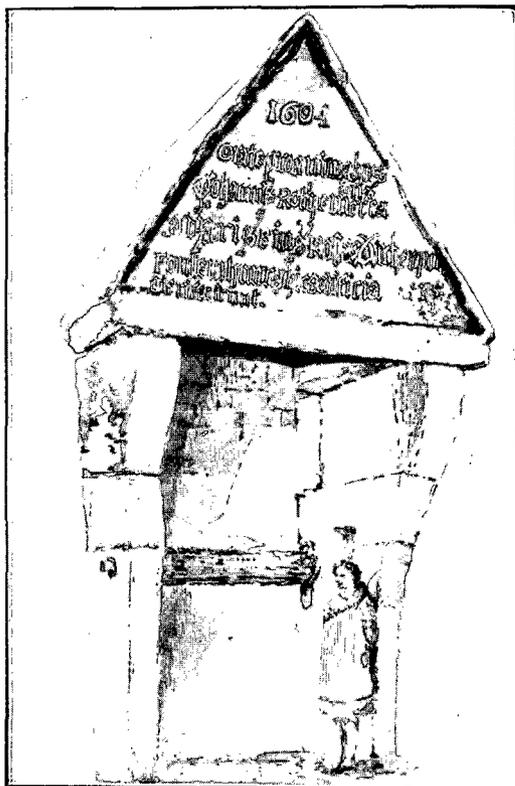


Fig. 22. Canopied Draw-well of John Rothes' Mansion.

during this period of commercial prosperity is given in John Rothes' Will (a voluminous document of 30,000 words). He bequeaths to his four daughters (named), *inter alia*, "Four score of bags of porte corn to help them to buy jewels, vizt.: 20 bags to every one of them, Kilkenny measure, in wheates, oates, and paritis."

To account for the number, diversified sizes and form of construction of these fortifications, one has only to refer to the charters of grants to the invaders, containing the conditions imposed on the undertakers at the Plantation of Ulster.

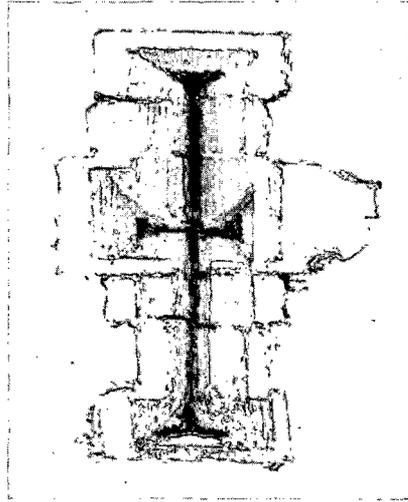


Fig. 23. John Cowan's Ludging, Stirling (Scottish Urban).

- (1) Every undertaker of the greatest proportion of 2000 acres shall, within two years after the date of his letters-patent, build there-upon a strong castle, with a strong court or bawn about it.
- (2) Undertakers of second or middle proportion of 1500 acres shall build a strong stone or brick house thereupon, with a strong court or bawn.

- (3) Undertakers of the least proportion of 1000 acres, a strong court or bawn at least; and all the undertakers shall cause their tenants to build houses for themselves and families *near* the principal castle, house, or bawn, for their mutual defence and protection.

It might have been expected that consideration for their own safety in a hostile country, and protection of the property of which they had dispossessed the natives, would have made it unnecessary to stipulate for such compulsory obligations on the adventurers to build fortified houses as the charters imposed on them. Self-preservation obviously demanded this of themselves.



Scottish loop (Bothwell Castle).