

Douglas & Piercy :

OR, THE

HUNTING

AT

Chevychase,

IN PROSE AND VERSE.

A Memorable Battle fought by
Earls DOUGLAS and PIERCY :
in which, about Fourteen hundred
Scotsmen, and near Two
thousand Englishmen, were
slain in one day.



FALKIRK.

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THE
H I S T O R Y
OF THE
BATTLE OF CHEVYCHASE,
IN PROSE AND VERSE.

THE noble family of the Piercies, Earls of Northumberland, have had a high esteem amongst the English nobility, and for their valour and noble exploits, famed not only in our history, but throughout the world! A large account might here be given of the descent of that noble Earl, who is to be a chief part of the subject of the following history; however, I shall only observe, that history records him for the fortunate valour of a courageous Knight, who killed the King of Scots, by running his spear into his eye, as he was besieging Alnwick Castle; and his other name was changed, and that of Piercy given, together with the Earldom of Northumberland; and to the first Earl, this Earl

of whom we are to treat, was grandson, and heir both of his virtues and valour.

The noble Earl of Northumberland taking his progress, gallantly attended with fifteen hundred stout archers, passed on to the marches of Scotland, of which, by commission from the King, he was to have been Lord-lieutenant; and wishing for some venison at dinner, he was informed, that in a large forest beyond the Tweed, called Chevy Chase, belonging to Earl Douglas, a Scotch nobleman, there was such store of it, that the like was in no part of the kingdom. Provisions being scarce on the English side in those borders, this report made his men so forward, that they desired they might go out in parties, and bring as much as they could get away undiscovered; but he, despising such a way that looked too much like deer-stealing, told them, if their courage was sufficient to venture for it fairly, he would venture with them; and so hunting it down as a fair game, it should be brought off with honour, as a lawful prize, taken in an enemy's country: For then K. Henry II. of England, in whose reign it happened, was at war with the Scots, tho' there had been, for a while, an interval, or cessation of arms. To this motion of the noble Earl's, they gave their unanimous con-

sent, by throwing up their caps, with a loud shout. And so the Earl made a vow, that for three days he would take his pleasure in hunting in Cheycheale. And, thereupon, sending for his dogs and toils, early on a midsummer morning, they passed the Tweed; and were by a guide directed to the place, which was about six miles nearer Edinburgh.

So to the game they went; the dogs were put on to rouse the harts; the horns sounding, the huntsmen's shouts, with the noise of the dogs, alarmed all the country round. The villagers thinking it had been the sound of war, or some sudden invasion, were so terrified, that many of them fled with what they could carry away, for fear of being plundered; and with their groundless fears put the whole neighbourhood, for many miles, into consternation and confusion!

The harts and roes, tho' swift in their running, could not, however, outstrip the English archers, they laying some scores of them on the ground. They killed so many, that they knew not how to get them carried off; such was their success in hunting the first day. At night, they kindled great fires, and roasted the fat sides and haunches; with which they refreshed themselves.

But, whilst the Earl was at supper with divers Knights, Squires and Gentlemen, on a table of boards laid on supporters of turf, and sitting on seats raised on a turf bank, such accommodation as the rural place could afford; at the close of it, and just as he was about to give orders to the huntsmen to begin the sport the next morning with the sun-rising, in came a messenger dressed in scarlet livery, laced with gold, and a badge of arms on a plate of silver, fastened on his breast; which shewed him to be sent by some person of quality. Whereupon, the Earl commanding silence, demanded from whence he came, and what his business was. Upon which he thus began, with a haughty mein:

“ Sir,” said he, “ whoever you are I know not, but my Master, the noble, valiant, and always victorious Earl Douglas, chief Ranger to the King of Scotland, and to whom these Parks and Chases belong, hearing you have boldly presumed to enter them, and destroy his deer, without leave or consent, by me tells you, that if you do not suddenly depart, your lives shall pay for the injury you have done, before to-morrow noon!”

This being denounced, he was about to depart; but the undaunted Earl Piercy, taking him by the sleeve, said,

“ Sir, It is proper you should carry an answer back to your Lord; and that is this: Tell him my name is Piercy; a name at which Scotland has trembled! and that I am of so true English courage, that threats are in vain to terrify me.— Tell him, moreover, I have proposed to take my pleasure in these Forests and Chases for two days longer; and if he be so valiant as you say, let him hinder my sport, if he be so bold as to attempt it, at the hazard of his life.”

Upon this, the messenger departed with speed to the Scotch Earl, who lay at Edinburgh, and related what was given him in charge by Earl Piercy: At which the Scotch Earl raged, walking up and down, threatening all manner of punishments on those he should take prisoners; and enquired particularly the number of the English, but the messenger could give him no certain account, only guessed there might be about ten or twelve hundred men, for many of them were in distant parts of the forest, when he delivered his message.

Whereupon he ordered his horse and armour (which were overlaid with gold) to be got ready against morning light; also all his friends and servants, together with as many as made up two thousand spearmen, to be mustered without letting them know what design he had in hand. However, they disputed not to obey him, having, next the King, the chief command of the kingdom.

The Earl of Northumberland, tho' in an enemy's country, and far from any succour, yet relying on his own and the courage of his men (the choicest archers of England) was so far from being daunted, tho' he might reasonably expect a greater number against him, he ordered the tables to be spread a second time, and store of wine went round, which they had brought with them in great plenty. Healths went round, to the King, the Earl, and to the prosperity of their sport the next day; and then, setting scouts for their protection thro' the night, reposed themselves.

The sun no sooner gilded the horizon with his rays, and the early lark mounted on high, tuned her melodious notes, than the sport was renewed; and the woods, forest, plains and hills, resounded with the pleasing noise of hounds, so that, altogether, they made a curious harmony!

This morning they killed a very stately hart, the largest that had been seen in the kingdom! Whereupon the huntsman run to call the Earl, that he might see the charming creature; and he declared he had never seen any so large.

Earl Piercy remembering the message sent him the former night, he turned to a Knight on his left hand, saying, "The time, Sir Knight, draws near, that, if Earl Douglas keeps his word, we shall have another kind of sport to undertake; he promised this morning to make us a visit, therefore let it be your care to keep our men together, lest some of them be surpris'd; for, man to man, said he, I fear them not. But, if I thought he would not come, we would remove hence to the next forest; for thither, I perceive, most of the deer, frighted from this forest, are fled." He had no sooner uttered these words, than one of his 'Squires, called Witherington, came hastily to him, saying, "My noble Lord, cause the dogs be immediately called off, and muster up your bold archers; for from yonder hill I saw Earl Douglas coming directly towards you, though yet above two miles distant, having a great troop of spearmen, which I guess not less than two thousand." "I thank thee heartily," replied the Earl,

“ for this news; and doubt not thy courage, which I have seen tried in so many dangers.” At this, the Squire bowing low, said, “ My Lord, I doubt not so to behave myself this day, that living or dead, I shall be worthy of your esteem.” Immediately hereupon the horns blew a retreat, the dogs were called off, the toils taken up, and the valiant archers muttered about their noble leader, who fired their courage with the following oration: “ My renowned countrymen and fellows in arms, always victorious in battle, still triumphing in the spoils of our enemies; it was with your consent we passed the Tweed for sport and recreation, but that is suddenly like to be disturbed, and we have another work to undertake. Earl Douglas, who owns this Chase and forest, has sent me a challenge, and is now going to give us battle, or shamefully to make us fly over the Tweed: Pull up your spirits then, and consider you are Englishmen; that Percy fights at your head, who never, either in France or Scotland, feared the face of any. Be courageous then, and for the honour of our King, the renown of our country, living or dying me, you may gain a lasting fame and memory, that shall not end but with time itself,

and gain you renown to all posterity."— Having thus said, they all shouted so loud, in token of consent and lively courage, that the hills and dales sent back the echoes of their voice, and immediately fell into order, pruning their arrows, and stringing their bows, made of trusty yew.

The English archers (in number about fifteen hundred) were no sooner in readiness, than Earl Douglas appeared on the top of the hill that descended into the plain upon which Piercy stood, mounted on a stately white steed, his gilded armour reflecting with the sun-beams, and his men, in order, behind him, with their glittering spears! Their number was computed about two thousand. Upon this, Piercy took a leading staff in his hand, and a trusty sword by his side, and caused his men move forward by slow paces, whilst he marched in the front.— By this time Douglas being come within forty paces, sternly demanded whose men they were, that durst so boldly presume to hunt in his forest, and kill his deer? That whomever they were, since they had dared to do it, they must expect to be severely punished; commanding them to yield immediately as his prisoners, if they expected mercy from him.

PIERCY, enraged with a generous fury, ordered his men to halt; and drawing nearer, said, " Earl Douglas, it matters not whose men we are, but such you will find us, that what we have done we will justify; and what deer we have killed, we will carry away; or leave our own bodies dead behind us, which will cost very dear in the blood of those that dare oppose us." This being spoken with an undaunted resolution, made Douglas grow a little calmer: " O, said he, I know thee now, Lord Piercy! thou art a Peer, an Earl, as well as I; therefore, if thou art as brave as fame report thee, what need we destroy our men, by engaging them in this combat; the quarrel being properly between you and me; let our swords decide it." This unexpected offer overjoyed Piercy! who, drawing his victorious sword, bid defiance to the challenger. But it could not be. fate had involved many more lives in this quarrel than the two Earls; for Witherington, a valiant English Squire, standing by the Earl, when this combat was about to begin, clapt between them with his sword, and made a stand, saying, " My noble Lord, it shall never be told Henry our King, that we let you fight, whilst we stood looking on. How should we

be reproached with cowardice, if this was suffered or known! With hearts and hands we are ready to live or die in your cause; and, therefore, whilst I am able to stand, more swords than one shall this encounter." Percy, though grieved at this hindrance, seeing all his men resolute, and of the same opinion, found himself constrained to yield to their importunities; and so both sides were ordered to make ready for battle.

The English archers on the left division immediately sent a flight of fatal arrows, which laid threescore of the Scots dead on the place! And the right division letting fly on the flank of their battalion, gauled them most miserably. Douglas seeing his men discouraged, by being killed so at a distance, and that another volley might put them into disorder, commanded them speedily to advance, and come to a close fight; by which means he thought to render the English bows (which was their chief weapons) useles: but in this he was deceived; for they kept such excellent order, that whenever the front opened, the archers behind feathered the Scots with showers of deadly arrows, whilst the others kept them in play with their swords. However, both being furious, they fought

desperately, insomuch that the ground was covered with dead and wounded men, arrows, shieves of spears, broken swords, and streams of blood; nothing was heard but confused noise, groans and cries! And now Earl Piercy being backed by divers Knights and 'Squires, men at arms, and other weapons, cut off the tops of the enemies' spears, pointed against him, and, like a tempest, broke in amongst them with such fury and slaughter, that he laid heaps of dead on either hand, and before him, so that he was, in a manner, stopped with the carcasses of the slain; which raised a great cry about him, insomuch that Earl Douglas, who was fighting on the other side, and had signalized his valour very much, was forced to give over, and come to the succour of his broken forces. Piercy and Douglas met like two enraged lions! No armour was proof against their well-tempered swords, so that by the mighty strokes they gave each other, the place they fought on, was sprinkled with their noble blood! Douglas beginning to faint, yet ashamed to yield, thus spake to Piercy, "Noble Lord, you see your blood flows fast, and death you cannot escape, if you contend with me much longer; I therefore, in pity to you, would have you yield

yourself my prisoner: You shall be nobly used, and I'll present you to James, our King, as one of worth and courage."— To this Piercy replied, "As for my life take you no care, but surely guard your own; my honour I prefer before all things on earth; and it never shall be said, that Piercy yielded to a Scot." While they were thus conversing, an arrow from the archers ended the combat, by piercing Douglas to the heart; who thereupon fell to the ground. His last words were, "Fight on, my merry men; revenge my death, for I am slain, and Piercy lives to see me fall!"

PIERCY was much affected with his death, and endeavoured to raise him from the ground, and much commending his valour. But, while he was thus lamenting his death, Sir Hugh Montgomery, Douglas' chief favourite, broke through the rank, and run him through the body, so that he fell on Douglas, having only time to encourage his men, and so gave up the ghost. But his death was not long unrevenged, for an English arrow passed thro' Montgomery's body, so that the feathers of the arrows were wet in his heart's blood. Thus fell these two great chieftains, the glory of England and Scotland!

But though the chiefs were slain, the battle continued with great fury, either side scorning to yield, though the sun declined, having continued almost a whole summer's day. Few were left alive, and those who remained were so wounded and wearied, that they were constrained to depart by consent.

Witherington especially distinguished himself in this action, as he had promised, till a Scot, coming behind him with a broad sword, cut off his legs! But he raised himself on his bleeding stumps with his hands, and pierced his enemy! But, thro' loss of blood he soon expired.

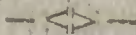
Of the Scots there remained but 55; and of the English only 53!!!

The following Ballad was composed on the occasion; which gives the Scotch account of that memorable transaction.



THE
HUNTING OF CHEVYCHASE.

An Ancient Heroic Ballad.



ALL happiness attend our King,
our nation, one and all :

A woeful hunting once there did
in Chevychase befall !

To drive the deer with hound and horn,
Earl Percy took his way,
The child may rue, that was unborn,
the hunting of that day.

The stout Earl of Northumberland
a solemn vow did make,

His pleasure, in the Scottish woods,
three summer's days to take.

The choicest parts of Chevychase
to kill and bear away.

These tidings to Earl Douglas came,
in Scotland where he lay ;

Who sent Earl Percy present word,
he would prevent his sport.

The English Earl, not fearing him,
did to the wood resort,

With twenty hundred bow-men bold,
all chosen men of might,

Who knew full well, in time of need,
to aim their shafts aright.

The gallant grey hounds swiftly ran,
to chase the fallow-deer :

On Monday they began to hunt,
when day-light did appear ;

And long before high noon they had
an hundred fat bucks slain !

Then, having din'd, the rovers went
to rouse them up again.

The bow-men muster'd on the hill,
well able to endure :

Their backsides all, with special care,
that day were guarded sure.

The hounds ran swiftly thro' the wood,
the nimble deer to take ;

And with their cries the hills and dales
an echo shrill did make.

Earl Piercy to the quarry went,
to view the fallow-deer ;

Quoth he, Earl Douglas promised
this day to meet me here :

But if I thought he would not come,
no longer would I stay.

With that a brave young gentleman
thus to the Earl did say,

Lo! yonder doth Lord Douglas come!
his men in armour bright!

Full fifteen hundred Scottish spears,
all marching in our fight!

All valiant men of Tiviotdale,
come from the river Tweed.

Then cease your sports, Earl Percy said,
and take your bows with speed!

And go with me, my countrymen,
yur coourage to advance;

For there was ne'er a champion yet,
in Scotland or in France,

That ever did on horse-back come,
but, if my hap it were,

I durit encounter man for man,
with him to break a spear.

Lord Douglas, on a milk-white steed,
most like a baron bold,

Rode foremost of the company,
whose armour shone like gold!

Shew me, said he, whose men ye be,
that hunt so boldly here,

That, without my consent, do chase
and kill my fallow-deer?

The first man that did answer make,
was noble Percy he,

Who said, We list not to declare,
and show whose men we be:

Yet we will spend our dearest blood;
the choicest harts to slay.

Then Douglas swore a solemn oath,
and thus, in rage, did say :

Ere thus I will outbraved be,
one of us two shall die !

I know thee well, an Earl thou art,
Lord Piercy, so am I :

But trust me, Piercy, pity it were,
and great offence, to kill

Any of these our harmless men,
for they have done no ill :

Let me and thee the battle try,
and set our men aside.

Accurst be he, said Earl Piercy,
by whom this is deny'd.

Then stept a gallant Esquire forth,
call'd Withrington by name,

Who said, I would not have it told
to Henry, my king, for shame,

That e'er my Captain fought on foot,
and I stood looking on.

You be two Earls, said Withrington;
and I a 'Squire alone,

I'll do the best that I may do,
while I have power to stand ;

Whilst I have power to wield my sword,
I'll fight with heart and hand.

Our Scottish archers bent their bows,
their hearts were good and true :

At the first flight of arrows bent,
they fourscore English flew!

To drive the deer with hound and horn,
Douglas bad on the bent:

A Captain, mov'd wi' meikle pride,
the spears in shivers went!

They clos'd full fast on every side,
no slackness there was found;

And many a gallant gentleman
lay gasping on the ground!

O! but it was a grief to see,
and likewise for to hear,

The cries of men lying in their gore,
all scattered here and there!

At last thir two stout Earls did meet,
like chieftains of great might,

Like lions mov'd, they fear'd no lord,
they made a cruel fight!

They fought until they both did sweat,
with swords of temper'd steel,

Until the blood, like drops of rain,
they trinkling down did feel.

Yield thee Lord Piercy, Douglas said,
In faith I will thee bring

Where thou shalt high advanced be
by James our Scottish king:

Thy ransom I will freely give,
and this report of thee,

Thou art the most courageous Knight
that ever I did see.

No, Douglas, quoth Lord Piercy then,
thy proffer I do scorn;

I will not yield to any Scot
that ever yet was born.

With that there came an arrow keen
out of an English bow,

Which struck Lord Douglas to the heart,
a deep and deadly blow!

Who never spoke more words than these,
“ Fight on, my merry men all;

For why, my life is at an end,
Lord Piercy sees me fall!”

Then, leaving life, Lord Piercy took
Lord Douglas by the hand,

And said, “ Alas! O for thy life
I'd freely lose my land!

O but my very heart doth bleed
with sorrow for thy sake!

For sure a more renowned Knight
the field did never take!”

A Knight among the Scots there was,
who saw Earl Douglas die,

Who straight in wrath, did vow revenge
upon the Earl Piercy:

Sir Hugh Montgomery he was call'd,
who, with a spear full bright,

Well mounted on a gallant steed,
rode fiercely thro' the fight:

He past the English archers all,
without or dread or fear.

And thro' Earl Piercy's body then
he thrust his hateful spear

With such a vehement force and might,
he did his body gore,

The spear went thro' the other side
a long cloth yard and more!

So thus did both these Nobles die,
whose courage none could slain.

An English archer then perceiv'd
his noble Lord was slain,

He had a bow bent in his hand,
made of a trusty tree,

An arrow of a cloth yard's length
unto the head drew he;

Against Sir Hugh Montgomery then
so righ his shaft he set,

The grey goose wings that were therein
in his heart's blood were wet!

The fight did last from break of day
till setting of the sun;

For when they rung the evening bell
the battle scarce was done.

With the Lord Piercy there was slain
Sir John of Ogerton,

Sir Robert Ratcliff, and Sir John,
Sir James, that bold baron.

Sir George, and also good Sir Hugh,
both knights of good account;

Good Sir Ralph Raby there was slain,
whose prowess did surmount.

For Withrington I needs must wail,
as one in doleful dumps,
For when his legs were smitten off,
he fought upon his stumps!

And with Earl Douglas there was slain
Sir Hugh Montgomery,
Sir Charles Murray, that from the field
one foot would never fly.

Sir Charles Murray of Ratcliff too,
his sister's son was he;

Sir David Lamb, so well esteem'd,
yet saved could not be.

And the Lord Maxwell, in likewise,
did with Earl Douglas die.

Of fifteen hundred Scottish spears
went home but fifty-three.

Of twenty hundred Englishmen
scarce fifty-five did flee;

The rest were slain at Chevy Chase,
under the green-wood tree.

Next day did many widows come,
their husbands to bewail;

They wash'd their wounds in brinish tears,
great sorrow did prevail.

Their bodies, bath'd in purple blood,
they carry'd them away;

They kiss'd them, dead, a thousand times,
when they were cold as clay.

The news were brought to Edinburgh,
 where Scotland's king did reign,
 That brave Earl Douglas suddenly
 was with an arrow slain!

Now peace be with him, said our King,
 sith 'twill no better be;
 I trust I have in my realm
 five hundred good as he.
 Like tidings to King Henry went,
 within as short a space,
 That Piercy of Northumberland
 was slain at Chevy Chase!

O heavy news! King Henry said,
 England can witness be;
 I have not any Captain more
 of such account as he.
 Now of the rest, of small account,
 did many hundreds die:
 Thus ends the hunt of Chevy Chase,
 made by the Earl Piercy.

Long live the King, and bless the land
 with plenty, joy and peace,
 And grant, henceforth, that foul debates
 'twixt noblemen may cease.

F I N I S.