

**THE SIEGE OF
BERWICK,
A TRAGEDY**

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The Siege of Berwick, a Tragedy by H. E. H. Jerningham

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H. E. H. JERNINGHAM

**THE SIEGE OF
BERWICK,
A TRAGEDY**



EDWD JERNINGHAM, ESQR

From an Original Picture.

THE
SIEGE OF BERWICK,

A TRAGEDY,


BY MR. JERNINGHAM:

AS PERFORMED AT THE

Theatre-Royal, Covent-Garden

IN 1794.

EDITED BY H. E. H. JERNINGHAM, M.P.


LONDON:

M.DCC.XCIV.—M.DCCC.LXXXII.

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TO
ADAM DARLING, Esq.,

Mayor of Berwick-on-Tweed.

Mr. MAYOR,—

With your permission, and in grateful remembrance of recent conflicts happily less stirring than those more distant events to which the present work relates, I beg, through you, to dedicate to the citizens of our historical Border town the reprint of a tragedy entitled the "Siege of Berwick," which was written and published in 1794 by a direct ancestor of mine.

Mr. Jerningham's works were issued in a complete form in the year 1806, but out of the four volumes which constituted the collection of his poems and dramas I have never been able to obtain more than the two first; and I owe to the kindness of a friend the possession of the copy of the "Siege of Berwick," of the reprint of which I am now asking your acceptance.

Mr. Edward Jerningham, known as the Poet Jerningham and still better as the personal friend of the literary Lords Chesterfield and Carlisle, was born in 1727 and died in 1812.

A scholar and a linguist of considerable repute, he lived on intimate terms with all the most distinguished literary men of his time both in England and on the Continent.

While his poetical merits gained for him the encomium of Burke, his amiability of character saved him from the satirical shafts of Byron. Speaking of his poem, "The Shakespeare Gallery," Burke declared "he had not seen anything so well finished."

Hearing that Mr. Jerningham had joined Lord Carlisle in the cabal against him, Lord Byron not only spared him in his "English Bards and Scotch Reviewers," but declared in a footnote that he "hoped" the rumour that had reached him was "not" true, as "he was one of the few who were kind to me when a boy, so pour on, I shall endure."

Mr. Jerningham's poetical vein was of a very unequal temper, however, and it must be allowed that much that he has written deserves the stricture of Lord Macaulay, who, alluding to a Lady Millar at Bath "who kept a vase wherein poets were wont to put bad verses," immediately mentions Mr. Jerningham as writing "verses fit to be put into the vase of Lady Millar."

Be this as it may, however, the accompanying drama is not wanting in merit.

The only disappointing feature of it is that, while the author often rises to considerable force and energy of both sentiment and expression, these desirable qualities are not sufficiently sustained, and interest suddenly flags when it should be most kept up. It would seem as if the author's poetical bark never was favoured with sufficient breeze to keep its sails well filled, or as if the steersman was defective.

Historically, too, the account is incorrect. Mr. Jerningham disdains time with the daring which is the privilege

of poets, just as George Warrington disdained place in his tragedy of "Pocahontas."

We may not perhaps attach much importance as to which of Sir Alexander Seton, or his "gude ladie," was most anxious to sacrifice the lives of their children to duty and their country's honour; we may be wholly indifferent as to whether Sir Alexander had one or two sons, and that either or both were hung; we may even go the length of not caring whether these sons came into the power of the enemy by being made prisoners of war, or handed to him as hostages, or delivered into his hands by their desire to become willing victims of the tyrant's thirst for blood; we can leave all that to the poet's fancy, but we don't like to hear young Seton talk of emulating the Black Prince's prowess at the battle of Crecy when we know that that battle was fought thirteen years after the siege of Berwick, viz., in 1346.

But, having noticed this inaccuracy, I think the fact that a namesake of mine a hundred years back took for his text one of the most dramatic episodes of our Border history, and wove it into a drama which was played at Drury Lane by such known actors as the two Popes, is sufficient justification for my republishing his work for the benefit of the townspeople of Berwick, who, during your mayoralty, sir, have allowed me to lay siege to their civic rights and place myself under their obligation.

I remain,

Your faithful and obedient Servant,

HUBERT E. H. JERNINGHAM.



INTRODUCTORY NOTICE.

ON the 12th of April 1333 King Edward III. appeared before Berwick, and began its siege by a strict blockade. On the 19th of July the "batel of Berwick" or battle of Halidon Hill was fought.

"Seven earls, 900 knights, 400 esquires, and 32,000 men died in the field" before Berwick passed into English hands.

Sir William Keith was governor of the town, and Patrick Earl of Dunbar commanded the citadel.

The English were encamped at Tweedmouth and Spittal, but finding the siege a slow operation unsuited to his restless disposition, King Edward crossed the Tweed and ravaged all the country which lies between Scone, Dundee, and Dunbarton, returning to his camp before Berwick early in July.

In the meanwhile, Lord Douglas, brother of Sir William, and Regent during the minority of David Bruce's son, had raised a powerful army for the purpose of relieving Berwick, but hearing of Edward's depredations in Scotland, he changed his original purpose, and crossed the Tweed into Northumberland, ravaging the coast until he reached the impregnable fortress of Bamborough, where Queen Philippa was waiting the return of her lord.

Douglas invested the place in the hope that King