XXI. *Ancient Norman-French Poem on the erection of the Walls of New Ross, in Ireland, A. D. 1265. Communicated by* FREDERIC MADDEN, *Esq. F.S.A. in a Letter to* HENRY ELLIS, *Esq. F.R.S. Secretary.*

Read 22d January 1829.

British Museum, January 21st 1829.

MY DEAR SIR,

AMONG the Harleian MSS. in the British Museum, is preserved a highly curious volume, written at the commencement of the fourteenth century, containing a miscellaneous collection of pieces in verse and prose, apparently the production of an Irish Ecclesiastic, and chiefly of a satirical description. Most of these pieces are in English or Latin, and there is great reason to conclude that they are from the pen of Friar *Michael Kyldare*, who is expressly named as the author of a Ballad, fol. 10, and who is erroneously assigned by Ritson, in his *Bibliographia Poetica*, to the fifteenth, instead of the thirteenth and beginning of the succeeding century. But towards the close of this MS. (which, from the folios having been strangely misplaced, is very difficult to follow in the order of contents,) occurs an extremely interesting Poem, written in the ancient or Norman French language, contributing in a remarkable degree to throw illustration on the early topography and history of the town of New Ross, in Ireland, and on this account I trust the Society may not deem it unworthy of its being submitted to their notice.

The Poem in question is thus mentioned in the Harleian catalogue,
VOL. XXII. 2 s

Nº. 913, art. 43. “*Rithmus facture ville de Rosse*, being a French Poem upon the quarrel which happened there, between Sir Morice and Sir Wauter A. D. 1265.” This is not a very accurate description, since the object of the writer (who was an eye-witness, and therefore, of undoubted authority,) was not to relate a quarrel between two anonymous Knights, but to give a detailed and highly interesting narrative of the erection of the walls and fortifications of the town of Ross; occasioned by the dread felt by the inhabitants, lest the unprotected and open situation of the place might cause them to suffer from a feud, then raging with violence between two powerful Barons. These Barons were Maurice Fitz Maurice,^a the chief of the Geraldine faction, and Walter de Burgo, or Bourke, Earl of Ulster, whose deadly wars, as Sir James Ware writes, under the year 1264, “wrought blood-shed and troubles throughout the realm of Ireland.”

The turbulent violence of the former party proceeded to such a height, that, on the interposition of Richard de Rupella, (called also Capella, Rochel, and des Roches,) the Chief Justiciary, the Geraldines not only slighted his authority, but forcibly seized on his person, and placed him with several others (among whom was Richard de Burgo, son of Walter,) in confinement. The very inadequate means possessed by the English Sovereign of quelling this spirit of discord, is sufficiently evident during the whole of the early period of Irish History, and more particularly during the reign of Henry the Third. By the appointment, however, of Sir David Barry, in 1267, to the office of Justiciary, the violence of the Geraldines seems in some degree to have been controlled, and their power lessened. But the weakness of the King's representative, in attempting to subdue the feuds of these turbulent Barons, is clearly manifested by the rapid changes which take place during this period, in the office of Justiciary, a fresh successor being nomi-

^a Sir James Ware calls him Earl of Desmond, and says he was drowned in 1268, whilst crossing from Ireland to Wales; but both these errors are corrected by Cox. The first Earl of Desmond was Maurice Fitz Thomas, created by Edward the Third, the 27th of August, 1329.

nated nearly every twelvemonth. At length, either from the increased ascendancy of the Geraldine party, or, what is more probable, from the policy of the English Monarch, Maurice Fitz Maurice was constituted the Royal deputy in 1272. He appears to have immediately taken advantage of this mark of favour, to revenge himself on the O'Briens, his hereditary enemies; but, being in his own turn betrayed by some of his followers, he was in the succeeding year, A. D. 1273, taken prisoner, and obliged to give satisfaction for the death of his opponents. After a fresh series of similar contests, the details of which it would be of little value to repeat, he died in the town of Ross, A. D. 1286, and the same year proved fatal to his son Gerald Fitz Maurice, and his son-in-law, Thomas de Clare.

His adversary, Walter de Burgo, who married the daughter of Hugh de Lacy, and in her right, inherited the Earldom of Ulster on her father's death, in 1264, and in his own right in 1264, was involved in the same scene of blood-shed, and on the cessation of the feud with the Geraldines, laid claim to the territory of Connaught; but being opposed by the O'Connors, and defeated in a conflict, he did not long survive, but after a week's sickness, expired in the castle of Galway, 28th July, 1271, and was interred in the abbey of Athaffil.^b

These historical data sufficiently confirm the account of the Poet, in ascribing the erection of the walls of Ross to this troublesome period, and prove Camden to have been mistaken, when he states the walls to have been built by Isabel, daughter of Richard Earl Strongbow.^c

So little is known of the early history of this town, that our Topographers all content themselves with describing it as having once been a place of great strength and extent, situated in a large ravine, formed

^b Lodge.

^c Grose, in his *Antiq. of Ireland*, vol. i. p. 49, repeats an absurd variation of the same tradition, ascribing the inclosure of New Ross with a wall to *Rose Macrue*, sister of Strongbow, in the year 1310 (!) who is said also to have built Hook Tower, in the Barony of Shelburn, in the same County, and to have been buried at Ross, in the Church of St. Saviour.

by the junction of the rivers Barrow and Nore. Of its high walls, frowning towers, and gates (the erection of which, in 1265, forms the subject of the Poem we are illustrating), many remains existed in the time of Camden, and partly continue to the present day. It was a place of considerable trade so early as the reign of Henry the Fifth, and obtained Charters from several of the English Sovereigns, the earliest of which is supposed to be that of Henry the Fourth. Its fort is still so capacious, that ships of 700 tons burthen may come up to the quay; but the commerce of the town decreased subsequently to such a degree, that in 1776 only five or six brigs were to be seen in it.^d Among the Collections of the second Randle Holmes for the city of Chester, MS. Harl. 2173, fol. 42, b. is the copy of "A certyficat from the Soueraine [Mayor] of *New Rosse* ats *Rosse Pont*, in Ireland, to shew how wee be free wth them, and they wth the Citty of Chester, of all Customs," 29 Eliz. 1587. A seal was appended to this document, with the figures of a greyhound pulling down a stag on it, and beneath, a bridge raised on several arches, from which bridge the appellation of *Ross Pont* was doubtless derived. Round the edge we read, s. OFFICI. . . SUPERIOR NEWE ROSSE There were formerly many religious houses in New Ross. In 1267, the Franciscans are said first to have settled there, and a convent of Augustine hermits was founded in the reign of Edward the Third. Sir John Devereux subsequently erected the convent of St. Saviour's on the site of the Franciscan Monastery, and part of it is still appropriated to the use of a parish church. The more modern history of this place is chiefly remarkable for the gallant defence made by the garrison against the rebels, in 1798, under the command of General Sir Henry Johnson, Bart. who yet survives.

Having thus attempted to illustrate in some measure the subject of the Poem, I shall proceed to give a hasty abstract of it. The writer commences in the following abrupt manner: "I have an inclination

^d From Camden, Young, Seward, and Musgrave.

to write in *romance*, if it pleases you to hear me; for a story that is not listened to, is of no more value than a berry. I pray you therefore to give attention, and you shall hear a fine adventure (?) of a town in Ireland, the most beautiful of its size that I know in any country. Its inhabitants were alarmed by the feud existing between two Barons, whose names you see here written, Sir *Morice* and Sir *Wauter*. The name of this town I will now disclose to you; it is called *Ros*. It is the *New Pont-de-Ros*." He then proceeds to relate how the principal men of the town, together with the commonalty, assembled to take measures for their safety, and it was resolved to surround the town with a wall of mortar and stone. They commenced accordingly on the Feast of the Purification, [2d. Feb. A. D. 1265,] and marked out the *fossé*, or line of circumvallation. Workmen were speedily hired, and above a hundred each day came out to labor under the direction of the *burgesses*. When this preliminary step was completed, they again assembled, and determined to establish a *purveance*, or bye-law, such (says the poet) as was never yet heard of in England or France; which was publicly proclaimed the next day to the people, and received with applause. This law was as follows: That on the ensuing *Monday*, the vintners, the mercers, the merchants, and the drapers, should go and work at the fossé from the hour of prime till noon. This was readily complied with, and above 1000 men, writes the poet, "went out to work every Monday, with brave banners and great pomp, attended by flutes^e and tabors. So soon as the hour of noon had sounded, these fine fellows

^e The flute is mentioned as a musical instrument in the romances of Alexander, Dolopathos, and several others of the 13th and 14th centuries. In a curious poem of Guillaume de Machault, a writer of the 14th century, among other instruments of music is noticed "*la flauste brehaigne*;" on which Roquefort remarks, "C'étoit probablement une flûte champêtre." But may we not interpret this the *Irish flute*, in contra-distinction to the flute *traversière*, or German flute? Walker, in his *Historical Memoirs of the Irish Bards*, p. 90, has stated, that no record exists to prove the use of the flute among the ancient Irish, but at the same time owns it is highly probable this instrument was known to them, particularly from the length of some of the notes in the early Irish melodies appearing calculated rather for the flute than the harp.

returned home, with their banners borne before them, and the young men singing loudly and caroling through the town." The priests also, who accompanied this party, fell to work at the fossé, and labored right well, more so than the others, being, as the poet states, "young and skilful, of tall stature, strong and well-housed." The mariners likewise proceeded in good array to the fossé, to the number of 600, with a banner preceding them, on which was depicted a vessel. "And if all the people in the ships and barges," adds the writer, "had been hired, they would have amounted in truth to 1100 men,"—a convincing proof of the importance of the town at that time as a mercantile port.

On the *Tuesday* this party was succeeded by another, consisting of the tailors and clothworkers, the tent-makers, fullers, and "celers," who went out in a similar manner as the former, but were not so numerous, amounting only to 400 men. On the *Wednesday* a different set was employed, viz. the cordwainers, tanners, and butchers. "Many brave bachelors," writes the poet, "were among them, and their banners were painted as appertains to their craft. In number I believe they were about 300, taking together little and great, and they went forth caroling loudly as the first party did." On the *Thursday* came the fishermen and hucksters. Their standards were of various sorts, but on one which preceded them was painted a fish and a platter. These were in number 500, and with them were associated also the "waynpayns,"^f who were 32 in number. On the *Friday* went out the ,^g in number 350, with their banners borne before them, unto the border of the fossé. On the *Saturday* succeeded the carpenters, blacksmiths, and masons, in number about 350, and set to work with alacrity like the rest.

Lastly, on the *Sunday* assembled in procession the ladies of the town. "Know verily," says the poet, "that they were excellent laborers, but their number I cannot certainly tell. No man alive might count them, but they all went forth to cast stones, and carry them from the fossé.

^f Wainwrights?

^g The word is illegible in the MS.

Whoever had been there to look at them, might have seen many a beautiful woman, many a mantle of scarlet, green, and russet, many a fair folded cloak, and many a gay colored garment. In all the countries I ever visited, never saw I so many fair ladies. He should have been born in a fortunate hour who might make his choice among them." The ladies also carried banners, in imitation of the other parties, and when they were tired of the duty assigned to them, they walked round the fossé, singing sweetly to encourage the workmen. On their return to the town, the richer sort held a convivial meeting, and as we are told, "made sport, drank (whiskey?) and sang," encouraging each other, and resolving to make a gate, which should be called the *Ladies Gate*, and there would fix their prison. After paying a compliment to these heroines, in the usual style of most compliments, and therefore not worth repeating, the poet returns to the fossé, which he says was made twenty feet in depth, and its length extended above a league. When it shall be completed, adds the writer, they may then sleep securely, and will not require a guard, for if 40,000 men were to attack the town, they would never be able to enter it. "For they have sufficient means of defence; many a white hauberk and haubergeon, many a doublet and coat of mail, and many a savage garçon. Many good cross-bow men have they, and many good archers. Never in any town beheld I so many good glaives, nor so many cross-bows hanging on the wall, nor so many quarrels to shoot withal; and every house full of maces, good shields, and talevaces.^h They are well provided, I warrant you, to defend themselves from their enemies. For the cross-bow men in reality amount to 363 in number, as counted at their muster, and enrolled in the muster-roll. And of other archers have they 1,200 brave fellows, be assured; and besides these, there are 3000 men armed with lances or axes in the town; and knights on horseback 104, well armed for the combat."

^h See Roquefort, v. *Talevas*, and Notes and Glossary to the Romance of Havelok, v. 2320.

This curious and minute statement of their forces is well worthy of some additional illustration; but I hasten to the conclusion. The poet assures us, that the object of the inhabitants was by no means to court an assault, but simply for their own protection; for which, says he, no one ought to blame them. They appear, however, to have amply provided for their safety, for the writer continues: "When the wall shall be completely carried round and fortified, no one in Ireland will be so hardy as to attack them. For by the time they have twice sounded a horn, the people are assembled and fly to arms; each has an ambition to be before his neighbour, so courageous and valiant are they to revenge themselves on an enemy. God grant they may obtain revenge, and preserve the town with honour, and let all say *Amen pur charité!* For it is the most hospitable town that exists in any island, and every stranger is welcomed with joy, and may buy and sell at his will, without any thing being demanded of him. I commend the town, and all who inhabit it, unto God. Amen."

This was done in the year of the Incarnation of our Lord, 1265.

Such, my dear Sir, is the substance of this very curious and unique Poem, which I again beg leave to submit to the attention of the Society.

Believe me, my dear Sir,

Yours, very faithfully,

FREDERIC MADDEN.

To HENRY ELLIS, Esq. F.R.S. Secretary.
&c. &c. &c.

[MS. Harl. 913. 12mo. Vell. sæc. xiv. init.]

[Fol. 64.] *Rithmus facture ville de Rosse.*

Talent me prent de rimaunceir.
 S'il vous plet de escoteir.
 Kar parole qe n'est oié.
 Ne uaut pas vn aillié.ⁱ
 Pur ce vous prie d'escoter.
 Si me oies ben aucer.
 De vne vile en Ireland.
 La plus bele de sa grand.
 Qe ie sache en nule tere.
 Mes poure auoint de vn gerre.
 Qe fu par entre deus barouns.
 Vei ci escrit amdeus lur nuns.
 Sire Morice e Sire Wauter.
 Le noun de la vile voil nomer.
 Ros le deuez apeler.
 C'est le nouel pont de Ros.
 Ce fu lur poure ke ne furent clos.
 A lur conseil vn ioure alerent.
 E tot la commune en senterent.
 Lur conseil pristerent en tele maner.
 Qe .i. mure de morter e de de^k pere.

ⁱ A similar phrase occurs in the French Poem on the death of Sir Thomas Turbeville, preserved in the MS. Cott. Cal. A. xviii.

“Sire Edeward pur la grant rauye
 De France *re dona une ayllé.*”

^k *Sic* in MS.

Voilent enture la vile feire.
 Qe poure auoint de cel géere.
 A la chandeler commencerent.
 De mercher la fosse y alerent.
 Coment le mure dut aler.
 Aleint liz prodoms mercher.
 E auoint le mure marché
 Pur ouerors vnt tost mandé.

[Fol. 64. b.] Cent ov plus chescun iour.
 I vont ouerer od grand honur.
 Les burgeis entur la fosse alerent.
 E gent lowis poi espleiterent.
 E a lure conseil re-alerent.
 E vn purueans pur parlerent.
 Ke vnkes tele purueance.
 Ne fu en Engleter, ne en France.
 E lendemain en firent crier.
 E tot la commune enssembler.
 La purueance fu la mustré.
 E tot la commune ben païé.
 Vne prodome sus leua.
 La purueans i mustra.

Dies lune. ¶ Ke le Lundi tot primers.
 Irrunt a la fosse le[s] vineters.
 Mercers, marchans, e drapers.
 Ensemblement od lez vineters.
 Del oure de prime de ke nune sonée.
 Dussent ouerer au fossée.
 E si si funt eus mult bonement.
 Iuont ouerir od bele gent.
 M. Mil e plus pur voir vous die.
 Iuont ouerir chescun lundi.

O beles baners e grantz honurs.
E od floites e taburs.
E ausi tost cum noune soune.
Iuont al ostel li prodome.
[Fol. 61.] Lure baners y vont deuant.
La ieune gent haut chantant.
Par tot la vile karoler.
Oue grant ioi vount laborer.
E les prestres quan ont chanté.
Si vont ouerir au fossé.
E travellent mut durement.
Plus qe ne funt autre gent.
Kar i sunt ieuenz e voysés.
E grans e forts ben soïornés.
Le[s] mariners kant al ostel sunt.
En bele maner au fosse vount.
Lure baner en vete deuont.
La nef dedens est depoint.
E apres la baner vont suent.
DC. Bien vj. cenx de bel gent.
E si fusent tuz alouteus.
Tuz le nefz e bateus.
XI.^c Plus i auerent de xi. cens.
Sachez pur ueir de bone gens.
¶ Le Mardi prochein suent apres.
I vont taillurs e parmters.
Tenturers, fulr^{rs} e celers.
Bele gent sunt de lur mesters.
I vont ouerir, cum dit deuant.
Mes ne sunt tant de gent.
CCCC. Mes bien sunt iiij. cens.
Sachez pur veir de bele gens.

- [Fol. 61. b.] **Le Mekirdi** prochein suant.
 I vont autre maner de gent.
 Cordiwaners, tannors, macecrers.
 Mult i a de beus bachelers.
 Lur baners en sunt depeint.
 Si com a lur mester apeint.
- ccc. **CCC.** sunt si cum ie quit.
 Qe oue grant e oue petit.
 E hautement vont karoler.
 Ausi com funt li primer.
- ¶ **Le Judi** vont li pescurs.
 E lez regraturs trestuz.
 Qe ble uendunt e poissuns.
 Diuers sunt lur gonfanuns,
 Bien y vont en icel our.
- cccc. **CCCC.** od grant honor.
 E karolent e chantent haut.
 Com le primers par d. . . aut.
 Lez waynpayns vont ausi.
 Meimes en icel Judi.
 Apres les altres vont derer.
 E par deuant ount bele baner.
 Le esquele e le peissun par dedens.
 En lur baner est depeins.
 Issi vont eus au fossée.
- xxxij. **XXXIJ.** sunt pur verité.
- ¶ **Le[s]** parti . . s vont le Uendredi.
- ccc. d. Bien sunt ccc. e demy.
- [Fol. 55.] **Lur baners** en sunt deuant.
 Al orle de fosse en estant.
 Lez carpenters vont le Samadai.
 E feuers e masuns autresi.

Mult bele gent sunt ie vous pleui.
 ecc. d. Ben sunt ecc. e demy.
 E tuz vont ouerir od bon corage.
 Sachz de ce en funt qe sage.
 ¶ Le Demaing les dames i vont.
 Sachez de ueires bon ouere i funt.
Numerus non est. Le nombre ne sai de cert nomer.
 Nule hom viuant ne les puit conter.
 Totez la pere i vont ieter.
 E hors de fosse a porter.
 Ki qe la fut pur esgarder.
 Meint bele dame y put il veer.
 Meint mantel de escarlet.
 E de verd e de burnet.
 E meint bone roket bien ridée.
 Meint blank fen ben colourée.
 Ke vnkes en tere ou ie ai esté.
 Tantz bele dames ne vi en fossée.
 Mult fu cil en bon vre née.
 Ke purreit choiser a sa uolunté.
 Meint bele baner lur sunt deuant.
 Tant cum sunt la pere partant.
 [Fol. 55. b.] E quant ont la pere aportée.
 Tant cum plect a uolunté.
 Entur la fosse vont chanter.
 Auant qe en vile volen[t] entrer.
 E quant en la vile sunt entrés.
 Les richez dames sunt ensemblés.
 E iuent et beiuent e karolent.
 E de bons en ueisurus en parolent.
 E chescun a autre en confort.
 E dient qe ferunt vn port.

La port de dames auera a noune.
 E la en ferunt lur prisune.
 E qi en lur prisun est entré.
 De tut n'en auera sa uolunté.
 Il ne di pas pur nule blame.
 Bon serreit estre en prisun de dame.
 Kar bone dame est deboner.
 Qe ia ne li leireit vilein fere.
 De dames ore me voil lesser.
 E du fosse plus en parler.
 Le fosse est xx. pees par funt.
 E vne lue de vei teint ben de lung.
 Al oure qe serra tot parfeit.
 Ia n'auera mester de auer gayte.
 Mes dormir puunt surement.
 Ia n'auerunt gard de male gent.
 Me ke uenissent xl. mile.
 Ia nen entrunt dedens la vile.
 [Fol. 56.] Kar eus vnt acez de garnesuns.
 Meint blanc auberk, e aubersuns.
 Meint parpunt, e meint aketun.
 E meint sauvage garsun.
 E mult de bon arblasters.
 E de arc de main mult bons archers.
 Qe vnkes en vile ou ie ai estée.
 Ne vi tant de bone glenné.
 Ne tant arblastes au pareis pendre.
 Ne tant de quarels pur despendre.
 E chescun oustel plein de maces.
 E bonez escuz e tolfaces.
 Bien sunt garnis ie vous pleuis.
 Pur bien defendre de lur enemis.

Qe arblaster, vus di pur vers.
ccc. [lxiiij.] CCC. sunt ————— lxiiij.
Ke a lur mostresun furent contez.
E en loure rol sunt arollez.
xijc. E de autres archers xii. cens.
Sachez pur ueir de bon gens.
iii. E de autre part furent ij. mile.
O lances, e od haches de membles la uile.
c. iiij. E gens a chiual C. e quater.
Bien furent armes pur combater.
Me ie vous die tot sanz faille.
Eus ne desirent nule bataille.
Mes lur vile voleint garder.
De maueis gent, a lur pouer.
[Fol. 56. b.] Nule home de ce ne lez dut blamer.
Qe lur vile voleint fermer.
Qe quant la uile serra fermé.
E le mure tot vironé.
N'ad ires en Irland si hardi.
Q'il oserent asailler ie vus pleui.
Qe kant vnt j. corne ij. feez cornée.
Tantost la commune est ensemblée.
E as armes vont tost corant.
Chescun a envie pur aler deuant.
Tant sunt coraius e hardi.
Pur eus uenger de lur enemi.
Deu lur doint si en venger.
E la vile a honur garder.
Qe deus en seit de tot païé.
E tuz diez amen pur charité.
Kar ce est la plus franch uile.
Qe seit en certain ne en yle.

E tot hom estrange est ben venu.
E de grant ioi est rescev.
E chater e vendre en pute ben.
Qe nul hom ne li demandra reen.
A deu la uile ie command.
E tous qe dedens sunt habitand. Amen, amen, amen.

Ce fu fet l'an del incarnation n're seignur, M. cc. lx. v.