

THE SINGLE COMBAT OF LORD WELLIS AND EARL DAVID CRAWFURD

This event took place towards the end of the 14th Century during a brief truce between England and Scotland when Richard II was King of England and Robert III was King of Scotland. Briefly and in modern English the narrative of Hector Boece is as follows.

During the peace, many companies of knights from either country were in the other to do battle for the defence of their honour and for the glory of their arms. Lord Wellis was sent to Scotland as Ambassador and at a banquet there, while the English and the Scots were discussing chivalry, Lord Wellis said: "If you really want to know what English chivalry and valour are like, name the place and the day and I will be glad to show you."

Then said Earl David: "I accept your challenge." It was thereupon agreed that Lord Wellis should choose the place and that Earl David should choose the day. The former chose London Bridge and the latter St. George's Day. Before the day came round the Earl arrived in London with 30 retainers. On St. George's Day both champions were escorted to London Bridge where the great battle was fought and in the third round Earl David threw his opponent from his horse and then dismounting, embraced him. He afterwards visited him till he had recovered from his injuries. There were many other similar incidents at that time; each man trying to show that his own nation was the more loving.

Not long after, Earl David gave a banquet at which were present many English nobles who did not cease to praise themselves most according to their custom. At last when the English Herald had blazoned the Earl David for a valiant and noble knight, an Englishman said: "No wonder the Scots should be noble and valiant seeing that they were begotten by our nobility when their own men were banished and their country almost conquered." Then answered Earl David: "No wonder that the English should be weak and degenerate, for they were begotten by cooks and friars of England when the great nobles thereof were begetting us in Scotland."

Such humanities and kindnesses (concludes the narrative) continuing between the English and Scots, Earl David returned to

Scotland with many nobles of England and, because he vanquished Lord Wellis on St. George's Day, he employed seven priests to sing for him in Our Lady Church at Dundee in honour of St. George.

The original passage reads as follows.

During the peace betwix Inglismen and Scottis, frequent cumpanyis wer of Inglismen in Scotland; and siclik of Scottis in England: throw quhilk, oftymes mony honorabil tornamentis wer betwix Scottis and Inglis, for defence of thair honouris, and glore in armes. Among quhom, wes not litil apprisit, the honorabill victorie gottin be David, Erle of Crawford, on the brig of Londoun, aganis Lord Wellis, in this maner: Lord Wellis was send ambassatour in Scotland, concerning certane hie materis betwix the two Kingis of Inglis and Scottis. And quhen he wes at ane solempne banket, quhare Scottismen and Inglis wer commoning on dedis of armes, this Lord Wellis said: "Lat wourdis have na place. Gif ye know nocht the chevelry and vailyeant dedis of Inglisemen, assailye me, day and place quhen ye list, and ye sall sone have experience." Than said David, Erle of Crawford, "I will assailye." Incontinent, be consent of athir parteis, day and place wes assignit: Lord Wellis chesit the brig of Londoun for the place, and Erle David chesit Sanct Georgis Day, be reason that he wes sum time ane vailyeant knicht. Thus departit Lord Wellis toward London. Afore the day, Erle David come with xxx personis, weil acouterit, to London.

Als sone as the day of battall wes cumin, baith the partyis wer convoyit to the brig. Sone eftir, be sound of trumpat, the two partyis ran haistelie togidder, on thair bardit cursouris, with square and groundin speris, to the deith. Erle David, nochtwithstanding the violent dint of speris brokin in his hewmont and visage, sat so stranglie, that the pepill, movit of vane suspitioun, cryit, Erle David, contrar the lawis of armis, wes bound in the sadil. Erle David, herand this murmour, demontit of his hors; and, but ony support, ascendit agane in the sadill. Incontinent, thay ruschit togidder, with new speris, the secound time, with birnand ire to conques honoure. Bot in the third rink, Lord Wellis wes doung out of the sadill, with sic violence, that he fell to the ground, with gret displeseir of Inglismen. Erle David, seing him fall, demontit haistelie fra his hors, and tenderly embrasit him; that the pepill micht understand he faucht with na hatrant, bot allanerlie for the glore of victorie. In signe of more humanite, he vesityt him ilk day, quhill he recoverit his heill. Mony othir contentionis wes at this time, betwix Inglis-

men and Scottis; ilk man contending to decore his awin nation with maist loving.

Not lang eftir, Erle David maid ane solempne banket, quhair mony noblis of England wer present for the time; nocht ceissing, as thair custome is, to loif maist thameself. At last, quhen the herald of England had blasonit this Erle David, for ane vailyeant and nobil knicht, ane Inglisman, movit of invy, said. "It is not mervel thocht Scottis be nobill and vailyeant; for thay wer gottin be our nobil eldaris, quhen thair faderis wer banist, and thair realme neir conquest. Than said Erle David, "It is no mervell thought Inglisemen be febill and degenerat; for thay wer gottin be cukis and freiris of England, quhen the gret nobillis thairof gat us in Scotland." Sic humaniteis and kindnes continewing betwix Inglis and Scottis, Erle David returnit in Scotland, with mony nobillis of England. And becaus he vincust Lord Wellis apon Sanct Georgis Day, he foundit VII preistis to sing for him, in our Lady Kirk of Dundee, in the honour of Sanct George.

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By Hector Boece, Canon of Aberdeen; and Translated By John
Bellenden, Archdeacon of Moray, and Canon of Ross. The Six-
teenth Book, Chapter Ten.