

No one who visits Dudley should omit seeing its castle and castle-hill. The castle, a fine old ruin of the true English type, with moat, court and keep, dungeon and treble gateway, chapel, guard-room and hall, resembles in extent rather a ruinous village than a single building; while the hill on which it stands forms, we find, a picturesquely wooded eminence, seamed with rough, bosky ravines, and bored deep with gloomy chasms, that were excavated centuries ago as limestone quarries. But their lime has been long since exhausted, and the miner now plies his labors unseen, though not unheard, deep amid the bowels of the mountain. The visiter may hear, in recesses the most recluse and solitary, the frequent rumble of his subterraneous thunder, and see the aspen trembling in the calm, under the influence of the earthquake-like tremor communicated to it from beneath.

The old keep, by much the strongest and most ancient portion of the building, rises on the highest part of the eminence, and commands the town below, part of which lies grouped around the hill-foot, almost within pistol-shot of the walls. In the olden time, this fortress occupied the centre of an extensive woodland district, and was known as the "Castle of the Woods." It had some rather high-handed masters in its day, — among the rest, the stern Leofric, husband of the Lady Godiva, so celebrated in chronicle and song for her ride through Coventry. Even as late as the close of the reign of Elizabeth, a lord of Dudley, at feud with a neighboring proprietor, ancestor of the well-known Lord Lyttleton, issued from the triple gateway, "having," says a local historian of the time, "one hundred and forty persons with him, weaponed, some with bows and sheffes of arrows, some with forest-bills and staves, and came to Mr. Lyttleton's lands at Prestwood and Ashwood; and out of Ashwood he took three hundred and forty-one