

DRAYTON BEAUCHAMP

IV. MANORIAL HISTORY.

The account of Drayton Beauchamp, in the "Domesday Survey," is as follows :—

"The lands of Earl Morton; in Erlai Hundred.

"In Drayton, William, the son of Nigel, holds one hide and a half. The arable one carucate; the pasture one carucate; and woods for twenty-five hogs. It is valued, and always has been valued, at twenty shillings. This land was held previously by the widow of Brictric, and she had power to sell it. In the same village, Lipsi holds of the Earl one hide and a half, and two-thirds of a virgate. The arable is one carucate. There are two villeins,* two serfs, one carucate of pasture, and woods for twenty-five hogs. It is valued, and always has been valued, at seventy shillings. This land was previously held by a vassal of King Edward, and he was entitled to sell it.

"The lands of Magno Brito, in Erlai Hundred.

"In Drayton, Helgot holds of Magno Brito six hides and three virgates for one manor and three acres. The arable land is four carucates. In the demesne is one, and thirteen villeins have three carucates. There are two servants, three carucates of pasture, and woods for two hundred hogs. The whole is worth, and is valued at, four pounds — in the time of King Edward one hundred shillings. Aluric, a thane of King Edward's, held this manor and could sell it."

By the foregoing account, which was given between fourteen and twenty years after the Conquest, we find that all the Saxon proprietors had been dispossessed, and that their lands had passed into the hands of two Norman Chieftains — the Earl of Morton and Magno Brito. The possessions of Magno Brito, exclusive of his manor at Helpesthorpe, were 810 acres, reckoning a hide at 120 acres, and a virgate at 80 acres; and they must have been at the south-eastern end of Drayton, including the present parish of Cholesbury, for the Advowson of Cholesbury belonged to Magno's family, who gave it to the Knights Templers in 1091. It is also mentioned that Magno's lands contained woods sufficient to feed two hundred hogs, which shews that the Chiltern Hills, on which the greater portion must have been situated, were thickly wooded at that period. The possessions of the Earl of Morton, which, according to the same rate of

*Villeins were husbandry slaves, who were so bound to the land which they cultivated that they were bought and sold with it. They were called Villeins from their living in the Vil or Village, and were a grade above Servi, or Serfs, who were domestic slaves, living in the houses of their masters, who could sell or dispose of them at pleasure.

reckoning, would consist of 380 acres, must have occupied the middle portion of the parish, containing the sites of the present Church and Village. This conclusion is confirmed by the fact that his son was patron of the Advowson.

As Magno Brito possessed nearly the whole of Elstrop, further notice of him and his family will be given in the account of that manor and hamlet.

V. ROBERT, EARL OF MORTON.

This nobleman, whose connection with Drayton is important chiefly as being the founder, or the father of the founder, of its Church, was one of the most powerful chieftains that accompanied the Conqueror from Normandy. He was brother by the mother's side to William, and being one of his most efficient followers, as well as thus nearly related to him, he was soon rewarded with great honours and possessions in England. Soon after William had established himself on the throne, he conferred on the Earl the Castle and Honor of Berkhamstead, in direct violation of an oath which had been most courageously exacted of him by Frederic, the thirteenth Abbot of St. Alban's. He also created him Earl of Cornwall, and granted him no less than seven hundred and ninety-seven manors, "a domain," says Clutterbuck, "far exceeding in the provision made by him for any other of his most favoured subjects."

Advanced to such high dignity and extensive possessions by the Conqueror, the Earl remained faithful to his benefactor; but on his son, William Rufus, assuming the throne, he joined with his brother Odo, Earl of Kent, and Roger, his father-in-law, Earl of Shrewsbury, and many other powerful Barons, in support of Robert Curthose.

Robert Curthose had not only a prior claim to the throne, as the elder brother of William, but was far more esteemed by the Norman Barons, on account of his personal qualities. As a warrior, he was brave, powerful, and enterprising; as a friend, he was open, generous, and agreeable, though addicted to indolence and luxury.

His brother William was equally valiant, more energetic, and endowed with superior mental abilities, but he was cruel, avaricious, deceitful, and capable of committing



Church & Parsonage Drayton Beauchamp
as in Hooker's Incumbency 1585.

the most violent and treacherous acts to gratify his ambition. No wonder, therefore, that they who had known these two brothers from their childhood preferred Robert as their Sovereign. We cannot but admire the Earl of Morton for coming forward on behalf of Robert, his eldest and more amiable nephew. Nor would his aid and influence be by any means inconsiderable. He was uncle to both the aspirants to the Crown; a powerful Earl both in Normandy and England; he was brother to Odo, who, although a Bishop, had been invested by the Conqueror with the Earldom of Kent, and had become the most warlike, ambitious, and determined of the English Barons; he was son-in-law to the Earl of Shrewsbury, who had been the intimate friend and counsellor of the Conqueror; he was connected by the marriage of his daughters with other powerful Barons and distinguished warriors; and he himself possessed the means of raising among his vassals a numerous force. His nephews must, therefore, have regarded him as a desirable ally, and a formidable opponent.

While in arms against William he garrisoned his Castle of Pevensey in Sussex in the cause of Robert, and remained there, probably with the intention of enabling him to land and commence the contest with his brother.

William, alarmed at the number and influence of the nobility arrayed against him, endeavoured to win them over by promising to "ease them of their taxes, alleviate their laws, and give them free liberty of hunting." By these flattering promises he persuaded Roger, the powerful Earl of Shrewsbury, to abandon the cause of Duke Robert, and then immediately attacked Odo in his Castle at Rochester, who, being discomfited, fled to his brother at Pevensey. William then marching to Pevensey, besieged the Castle, and in six weeks compelled the garrison to surrender from the failure of provisions.

"This Earl," says Dugdale, "having had the standard of St. Michael carried before him in battle, as the words of his charter do import (under which it is to be presumed he had been prosperous), did, out of great devotion to God and the Blessed Virgin, for the health of his soul and the soul of his wife, as also for the soul of the most glorious King William (for those are his expressions), give the Monastery of St. Michael at the Mount in Cornwall,

unto the Monks of St. Michael de periculo Maris, in Normandy, and to their successors, in pure alms."

"When he departed this world," continues Dugdale, "I do not find: but if he lived after King William Rufus so fatally lost his life by the glance of an arrow in New Forest, from the bow of Walter Tyrrell, then was it unto him that this strange apparition happened which I shall here speak of: otherwise it must be to his son and successor, Earl William, the story whereof is as followeth:— In that very hour that the King received the fatal stroke, the Earl of Cornwall being hunting in a wood, distant from that place about two . . . , and left alone by his attendants, was accidentally met by a very great black goat, bearing the King all black and naked, and wounded through the midst of his breast. And adjuring the goat by the Holy Trinity to tell what that was he so carried, he answered, 'I am carrying your King to judgment, yea, that Tyrant William Rufus; for I am an evil spirit and the revenger of his malice, which he bore to the Church of God; and it was I that did cause this his slaughter; the Protomartyr of England, S. Alban, commanded me so to do, who complained to God of him for his grievous oppressions, in this Isle of Britain, which he first hal-lowed.' All which the Earl related soon afterwards to his followers."

Dugdale gives as his authority for this strange story, Matthew Paris, the learned Friar and Historian of St. Alban's.

This Earl was a munificent benefactor to the Abbey of Grestein in Normandy, founded by his father, Herlwyne de Conteville. He married Maud, daughter of Roger de Montgomery, Earl of Shrewsbury, by whom he had issue William, his successor, and three daughters, whose names are not known. The eldest was married to Andrew de Vitrei, the second to Guy de la Val, and the third to the Earl of Thoulouse, brother to Raymond, "who behaved himself so valiantly in the Jerusalem Expedition."

William, son of Robert Earl of Morton, on his father's death succeeded him in his titles and possessions. Being from his childhood, says Dugdale, a person of malicious and arrogant spirit, he envied the glory of King Henry I. Not content with the two Earldoms which his father enjoyed, he demanded from the King the Earldom of

Kent, which his uncle Odo had possessed, privately asserting that he would not put on his robe unless that inheritance were conceded to him. The King, whose dominions were at this time in an unsettled state, appears to have met his demand with some plausible answer, but on finding himself more firmly established on his throne, he not only denied his claim, but questioned his right to other property of which he had taken possession. Wishing, however, to appear just in the transaction, he gave him the benefit of a lawful inquiry into his claims. (Sentence being given against the Earl, he became enraged, left the kingdom in hot displeasure, and took up his residence in Normandy. Here his turbulent spirit burst forth in open rebellion and violence. He commenced an attack on the King's castles, but in this attempt failed to inflict any signal injury. He succeeded, however, in committing serious ravages on lands belonging to Richard, Earl of Chester, who at this time was but a child, and in the King's tutelage.

He now became an ally of his uncle Robert de Belesme, Earl of Shrewsbury, who had for some time been in open rebellion against Henry. This Robert de Belesme was the eldest son of Roger de Montgomery, Earl of Shrewsbury and Arundel. On the death of that nobleman his honours and possessions in Normandy devolved on his eldest son, his younger son succeeding to his English possessions. By the death of the younger brother, however, both eventually centered in Robert de Belesme. Being a man of exceedingly savage and turbulent disposition, he soon made himself hated and feared both by the King and the people of England. The King at length deprived him of all his English possessions, and banished him the kingdom; whereupon he retreated to Normandy, and there commenced a rebellion against Henry, in which, as we have seen, he was speedily joined by the Earl of Morton.

When the intelligence of this rebellion reached Henry, he seized upon the English possessions of the Earl of Morton also, razed his castles to the ground, and banished him the realm; and soon after went over to Normandy to quell the rebellion raised there by the two Earls.

Fearing the superior strength of the King, they applied in the autumn of 1105 to Robert Curthose, who, enraged

at being a second time supplanted in England by a younger brother, appears at all times eagerly to have joined in any revolt that offered him the prospect of retaliation. His influence and support were therefore readily afforded to the insurgents on this occasion.

The King, collecting some forces together, marched to Tenerchebray, a town belonging to the Earl of Morton, and raised works in order to besiege it; but the Earl, being a bold and courageous young man, attacked the King's forces with a troop of soldiers, and succeeded in rescuing his town.

No sooner did this become known to the King, than he returned and reinforced the siege with such additional strength as convinced the Earl of his inability permanently to relieve the place without powerful assistance. He therefore applied for aid to Duke Robert, the Earl of Shrewsbury, and several others, whom he induced to come forward to his help.

The Duke of Normandy collected all his forces, and formed an army as strong and well equipped as was in his power, of which Robert de Belesme, William Earl of Morton, Robert de Stotevil, and William de Ferrers assumed the chief command. The hostile forces now prepared for an encounter. On the side of the Duke, the Earl of Morton led the van, and Robert de Belesme commanded the rear. In the King's army, Ranulph de Bajorsis (an eminent Baron) commanded the van, and Robert, Earl of Mellent, the rear.

Thus arrayed, the armies met, and a desperate battle ensued. The Earl of Morton made a bold and vigorous onset on Ranulph, but could not break through his sturdy and well-ordered troops. The front on both sides fought bravely, and maintained their ground. The Earl of Morton, feeling his case desperate, fought with his utmost skill and energy, and had the rest of the army been equally well manned and commanded with similar skill and intrepidity, victory might have been on his side; but Helias, Earl of Maine, on the King's part, made an attack on the enemy's foot, which, being indifferently armed, were soon shattered and thrown into disorder. Robert de Belesme, perceiving this, fled with the rear; and the King's troops speedily obtained a complete and decisive victory. The Duke himself was taken prisoner,

and most of his principal adherents, except Robert de Belesme; who, with all his wanton cruelty, deceit, and treachery, appears to have been at heart a coward, and on this occasion, as on others, found safety in flight.

William, our Earl of Morton, was taken prisoner by the Bretons, from whose hands the King with difficulty recovered him. The King afterwards sent him to England: commanded him to be imprisoned for life; caused his eyes to be put out; and bestowed his Earldom of Morton on Stephen, afterwards King of England.

Thus this haughty and turbulent Earl, born to immense possessions and influence, a kinsman of the reigning Sovereign, and accustomed to the abundance and magnificence of a princely castle, was doomed to linger out his last years within the wretched walls of a dungeon, and in a state of miserable blindness.

His chief English castles were those of Berkhamstead in Hertfordshire, and Pevensey in Sussex. He also built the Castle of Montacute, in Somersetshire, so naming it from the sharpness of the hill on which it was erected. Near to it he founded a Priory, and amply endowing it constituted it a cell to the Abbey of Cluny, in Burgundy. He bestowed on the Abbey of Bec in Normandy, his Lordship of Preston in the Rape of Pevensey in Sussex. He conferred his property at Drayton Beauchamp, viz., one hide and a half of land and the advowson of the Church, on the Abbey of Grestein in Normandy.* This grant, however, was probably made after he had forfeited his English possessions, for the Abbey does not appear ever to have presented to the living. He was buried in the Abbey of Bermondsey, Southwark, but the date of his death is unknown, as also whether or not he was ever married.

THE BEAUCHAMP FAMILY.

It has already been stated that upon the outlawry of William, Earl of Morton, which occurred in A.D. 1104, the King seized all his English possessions. Probably, therefore, the Manor of Drayton remained in the Crown for about a century, for I meet with no other Lord till William de Beauchamp, who held it at the commencement of the thirteenth century.

* Dugdale's Monas, Vol. II. 982. a,

The Beauchamps of Drayton were, probably, descendants of the illustrious Earls of Warwick, but after a close and careful examination into the various branches of that noble family, I cannot satisfactorily trace their connection with any. I am, however, of opinion that they were of the Bedford branch, several members of which held other manors in this county, and frequently filled the office of Sheriff.

William de Beauchamp, or de Bello Campo, occurs as Patron of Drayton Rectory in 1221, and again in 1223, and in A.D. 1238.

He was succeeded by Ralph de Beauchamp, who was a minor in A.D. 1278, for in that year his guardian, the Bishop of London, presented to the Rectory. In A.D. 1306, Thomas Pogeys (called by Dr. Lipscomb, Logeys,) presented to the living, probably as Trustee to Alicia, widow or daughter of William de Beauchamp.

Alicia de Beauchamp died in A.D. 1312, seized of three parts of the Manor of Drayton Beauchamp.* She appears to have been the last of the name who held any possessions in the parish. Two generations only of this family, therefore, possessed the manor, and only a portion of the parish, although it received from them its present cognomen. Probably they were the first resident Lords who held *in capite*. The additional name was given either during the life of William de Beauchamp, its first Lord of this name, or immediately after his death. For when the Vicarage was consolidated with the Parsonage, in A.D. 1238, it is called Drayton Belchamp; and this is probably the earliest record in which it is so designated.