

DRAYTON BEAUCHAMP.

MANORIAL HISTORY—(*Continued.*)

We may "correct, erroneous oft",
The Clock of history, facts and events
Timing more punctual, unrecorded facts
Recovering, and mis-stated setting right."

COWPER.

SIR RALPH DE WEDON.

After the death of Alicia de Beauchamp, the Manor and Advowson of Drayton reverted to the King, who granted them to Sir Ralph de "Wedon.

The family of Wedon appears to have possessed lands from a very early date in this and the neighbouring counties of Bedford, Hertford, and Northampton. The father of Sir Ralph de Wedon, whose name likewise was Ralph, held the Manors of Marsworth, Wedon, Amer-sham, and a third of Chesham, besides possessions in other counties. To these Sir Ralph de Wedon succeeded in A.D. 1301, on the death of his father.* In the year 1308, being then only an Esquire, he was honoured by a command from King Edward the Second, to attend the coronation of himself and Isabella his Queen, which it was intended to celebrate with great splendour and magnificence, on the Sunday next after the approaching feast of S. Valentine.†

Strange and serious changes in the course of twenty years occurred in the circumstances of this King and Queen. But Sir Ralph de Wedon still retained his Sovereign's favour, and had in the meantime received the honour of knighthood. Now, also, he received from the King another mark of the unaltered confidence he reposed in him. The Queen, with Prince Edward, her eldest son, the Earl of Kent, brother to the King, and the notorious Mortimer, and several other powerful noblemen, had conspired to dethrone the weak and unfortunate Edward; and, now, in open rebellion- against him, were at the head of a numerous and well equipped army. Plunged into a state of extreme anxiety and

* Cal, Inquis, P, Mortem. † Rymer's Foedera, vol. iii., 59,

alarm, Edward endeavoured to collect forces from every part of the kingdom. In each county he granted to some principal adherent, on whom he could most depend, a Commission to call out and array the military of their respective localities, with the utmost possible dispatch. He conferred this office, for Buckinghamshire, on his "beloved and faithful Ralph de Wedon."* He authorised and commanded him to raise within the county two hundred troops, selecting them from the most valiant and powerful men-at-arms, from the Hobelers,† and other military persons; and having caused all, both cavalry and infantry, to be duly equipped, to conduct them to the Royal presence.

To render the Commission more effective and peremptory, he authorised the said Ralph de Wedon to promise rewards to those who readily obeyed the summons, and to apprehend and imprison all whom he should find obstinate or rebellious.

It is doubtful whether Sir Ralph de Wedon ever executed the Commission. It is dated September 28th, 1326, at which period the King's cause had become almost hopeless, and before the Commission could have been carried into effect, must have been utterly so. By this time Edward himself had sought refuge in flight, and London and the adjacent counties had yielded to the Queen's faction. A cold-blooded revenge against her opponents now commenced. All who had faithfully adhered to the King were deemed worthy of some punishment. Some were wantonly butchered by the infuriated mob; others were executed, even with the Queen's sanction, in the most cruel and revolting manner. Those most leniently treated were deprived of their possessions. Ralph de Wedon was deprived of his own possessions and those of Elizabeth his wife,‡ a sufficiently significant indication that he did not readily join the conquering party.

* Rymer's Foedera, vol. iv., 235.

† The Hobelers were a kind of light cavalry, mounted on inferior horses, called Hobbies — from whence comes the modern term Hobby-Horse. They never charged an enemy with the regular cavalry, but as their horses were lighter, and their armour less ponderous than those of the cavalry, they were chiefly employed to reconnoitre or to attack convoys. In regular engagements they fought on foot as archers or cross-bow men.

‡ Cal, InqP. Mortem, v, clause, 2do. Edw. III., m. 25.

But whether his fidelity to the dethroned Sovereign cost him his life is uncertain. If so, his possessions must have been restored to his son, as Drayton Manor was held by a Sir Ralph de Wedon, in 1349.* It is far more probable, therefore, that he was pardoned, and received back his possessions, though under a different tenure. They had originally been granted by Edward II., to Ralph de Wedon and his heirs. Now, by whatever Ralph de Wedon they were held, he had only a life interest in them, after which they were to revert to the Crown. In this county, Sir Ralph de Wedon possessed the Manors of Wedon on the Hill; of Wedon, *juxta* Aylesbury; of Marsworth; of Wingrave, of Saunderton, of Drayton Beauchamp and Elstrop; besides lands in Amersham and Burnham.†

Neither Lysons nor Dr. Lipscomb mentions Sir Ralph de Wedon, as Lord of Drayton Manor, although he is so styled in several public records, and possessed a larger portion of the parish than any preceding proprietor.

SIR JOHN DE COBHAM.

The possessions of Sir Ralph de Wedon, at Drayton Beauchamp, and other places, were granted by Edward III. to Sir John, afterwards Lord Cobham, who was the son of Sir Ralph, and grandson of Henry de Cobham of Rundell, in Kent. ‡

Sir Ralph de Cobham, the father of our Sir John, was in 1324 engaged in the French wars, being in the retinue of John, Earl of Warenne and Surrey, who, for his good services, conferred upon him the Manor and Village of Thetford, in Norfolk, to hold for his life.§ The King afterwards granted the same to Ralph de Cobham and his heirs male for ever; and in the same year summoned him to Parliament amongst the Barons. ||

Sir Ralph de Cobham married Mary, daughter to Lord Ros or Roos. Her first husband was William de Braose, Lord of Brembre and Gower, who died in 1290. She then married secondly, Thomas de Brotherton, fifth son to Edward I. He received this cognomen from Brother-

* See his Presentation to the Rectory.

† Cal. Inq. P. Mortem, vol. iv., 437. ‡ Pat. R. 38 Edw. III.

§ Cal. Inq. ad quod Dam, page 29.

|| Rot, Orig. Abrev., vol. i., 283. Dugdale's Baronage, vol. ii., 67.

ton, a village in Yorkshire, where he was born in 1299. "The Quene," says Leland, "by chance laboring there, as she went on hunting." *

If the above dates be correct, Thomas de Brotherton was not born till nine years after his wife had been left a widow. He, however, dying before her in the year 1338, bequeathed to her a rich dowry, consisting of several Manors, together with the strong castle and the Manor of Strigoil in Wales, and the yearly rent of £6 1s. 1d., in Cratefield, in Sussex. From this husband, who was Earl of Norfolk, and Earl Marshal of England, she received the title of Countess of Norfolk; and, strange as it may appear, was permitted to hold the military office of Marshal of England till her death. She is often called Mary Marshall from this office, and this too, although soon after the decease of Thomas de Brotherton, she married Sir Ralph de Cobham. She also lost him in 1345, and became the third time a widow.† In this same year, probably in consequence of his death, she entered the Convent of Langley, in Norfolk.‡ There, however, she remained not more than a twelvemonth; for in the following year, having resumed her position in society, she was required to furnish for the King's service one hundred Welshmen from her Castle and Lands of Strigoil and Netherwent.§ In A.D. 1352, she was again charged on the same estates to provide twenty men-at-arms for the King's expedition into France. Having also considerable possessions in Ireland, she received, A.D. 1361, a royal letter of summons to attend a special council of Nobles and others possessing Irish property, to consult on the distracted state of that ever unsettled country. ||

In the same year she presented to the Rectory of Drayton, probably as the assignee of Sir John Cobham, who at this period was abroad. The next year, 1362, she died, seized of very extensive possessions, amongst which are mentioned the Manors of "*Helpesthorpe et Drayton Bechampe ut de baronia de Wolverton.*" ¶

A curious mistake has occurred respecting her retreat to the Abbey of Langley. She is generally supposed to

* Dugdale's Bar., vol. ii., 67. Leland's Itinerary, vol. i., fol. 105,

† Cal. Inq. P. Mortem, vol. i., 328.

‡ Dugdale's Bar, vol. ii., 64.

§ Rymer, vol. v., 509.

|| Rymer, vol. vi., 319. ¶ Cal. Inq. P. Mortem, vol. ii., 253.

have entered it prior to her marriage with Sir Ralph de Cobham. Clutterbuck, in his history of Hertfordshire, relates the circumstance in these words :— "In the 19th year of the reign of Edward the Third, she became a nun in the Abbey of Langley, in the county of Norfolk, but quitting that religious establishment," (or as Sir Henry Chauncy has it, "not liking that life,") "she married Sir Ralph Cobham, Knt., and died Anno 36 Edward the Third." *

Had the original records been consulted, the idea here expressed would not have been entertained. The mistake appears to have arisen from following the order in which Dugdale, in his life of Thomas de Brotherton, relates his notices of the Countess, which evidently are not given in chronological order.

In his account of the Cobham family, he expressly states that John, the son of Sir Ralph Cobham by his wife, the widow of Thomas de Brotherton, being of age, succeeded his father in 20th Edward III., which would be only one year after the Countess *entered* the Convent of Langley; from which, it is evident, Dugdale could not have supposed she married his father after she had quitted it.

By a *Post Mortem* inquisition, we find Sir Ralph Cobham died, as already stated, in the 19th Edward III., and as his widow retired to the Convent the same year, we may reasonably suppose her object was to pass there the period of mourning, and not with the intention of becoming a nun.

Still we have another difficulty to encounter. Thomas de Brotherton died Anno 12th, Edward III., which would be only eight years before Sir John Cobham was of age and succeeded his father. How, then, could he be the offspring of Sir Ralph Cobham's marriage with the widow of Thomas de Brotherton? Were this the case he could not have been more than seven years old in 20th Edward III.; but we have satisfactory evidence that, in this year, he made proof of his age, and succeeded to his father's possessions;† consequently he must have been born some years before the death of Thomas de Brotherton, and could not have been the son of his widow by a

* Clutterbuck's Herts, vol. ii., 512. † Cal. P. Mortem, vol. iv., 444.

subsequent husband. We must, therefore, conclude that he was Sir Ralph Cobham's son by a previous marriage. There is but one objection to this supposition: he is generally called in cotemporary records "the son of the Countess Marishall, or the Countess of Norfolk." But this mode of expression may have been adopted to distinguish him from a kinsman of the same name, or because of the exalted rank of his step-mother. She is frequently styled the widow, and sometimes the wife of Thomas de Brotherton, even after the death of her subsequent husband, Sir Ralph Cobham. In the escheat at her death, she is thus described:— "*Maria Comitissa Norfolc' uxor Thome de Brotherton Comit' Norfolc', Relicta Radi de Cobeham Militis.*" *

It is remarkable that this discrepancy between Sir John Cobham's age, and the period of his supposed mother's marriage with his father, has never before, that I am aware of, been noticed by any author who has given an account of these families.

In the year 1356, Sir John Cobham was in the train of the Black Prince, and accompanied him into France, shortly before the memorable battle of Poitiers. He had on that occasion the following troops under his command:—

1 Knight,
xxxii Esquires,
xxxvi Archers,
xix Welshmen, †

In the year 1359 he was still in France, and certain persons in England wishing to join his retinue, the King granted them letters of safe conduct for this purpose, dated September the first. These were as follows:—

John de Northwood, Knt.
John Fippain, Knt.
John Devenish.
Peter Albertyn.
Jacob de Barrowe.
John Atte Church. ‡

His retinue at this time must have been sufficiently

* Cal. Inq. P. Mortem, vol. ii., 253.

X From MS. in the Archives of the Cathedral Library, Canterbury.

‡ Rymer, vol. vi., 136.

numerous to rank him among the distinguished Commanders in this expedition.

Having passed many years in the train of the Black Prince, and having been a sharer in his various fortunes, he became devotedly attached to this highly talented, and, in many respects, virtuous young leader. An opportunity was soon afforded him for manifesting this attachment, when he gave the most generous proof of it. These lengthened and expensive campaigns, in a foreign land, had involved both the Prince and his father in the greatest pecuniary difficulties. At their commencement, the King had nearly exhausted the monetary resources of England. Besides the pay requisite for his own regular troops, many of his continental allies were mere mercenaries, who could only be depended on so long as their services were liberally rewarded. Foreseeing that an ample fund must be at his disposal for such an undertaking, he had no sooner determined on attempting it, than he exerted every effort to raise the requisite provision. "No measure was neglected by him," says a living author, "which could increase his treasure, however extraordinary and undignified. When all the supplies he could ask had been given by the general assembly of the people, he demanded of each county provisions of bacon, wheat, and oats; he borrowed wherever he could find any one to lend; and pawned his jewels and his crown itself, for gold to hire soldiers and to bribe allies. So completely did he drain the land of its specie, that money changed its relative value in England, and became enormously increased in price. Immediately previous to the expedition, an ox was commonly sold in London for 6s. 8d.; a fat sheep for 8d.; a goose for 2d., and six pigeons for 1d. The current price of wheat per quarter was 2s."*

If the value of money as here stated is compared with the rate of pay given by Edward to his troops, it will be seen how liberally he rewarded their services. The following account of their pay, at the siege of Calais, taken from the manuscript before alluded to,† will enable us to effect this comparison :—

"The Prince of Wales had by the day for his diet.. xx. sh.
" A Duke, not of the blood royal viii. sh. iii. d.

* James's Life of the Black Prince, vol. i., 73.

† In the Archives of Canterbury Cathedral.

" An Earl	vi. sh. viii. d.
" A Viscount	v. sh.
" A Baron	iiii. sh.
" A Knight	ii. sh.
" Ail Esquire	xviii. d.
" A Gentleman, for him and his Servant	ii. sh.
" Archers on foot	iii. d.
" Archers on horse	iiii. d.
" A Welshman on foot	ii. d.
" A Mariner	iii. d."

According to this statement the daily allowance of the Prince of Wales was equal to ten quarters of wheat. That of an Earl, to the price of an ox; a Baron's pay equivalent to two quarter's of wheat, and a Knight's to one. A Squire might dispose of two fat sheep and a goose per day; an Archer recruit himself daily on a joint of mutton, and even Welshmen, the lowest class of soldiers, might feast on goose and pigeon pie from their daily wages.

Edward having thus to remunerate his followers and allies, found the ample stores he had collected soon exhausted. And England, already nearly drained of its specie, could not supply the enormous sums still required after a ten years' campaign. All the money he could raise was expended almost exclusively in remunerating his foreign allies, so that he could only reward the distinguished services of his English followers by grants of lands. In time, however, this resource began to fail, and he and the Prince were plunged into the greatest difficulty. In this emergency it was that Sir John Cobham, from devoted attachment to the Prince, as he himself expressly states, most liberally surrendered to him and his Royal father the reversion of nearly all his possessions.* The form of this surrender was by "the livery of a ring of gold to the King at Thorne, near Sandwich, upon his passage into France."

Edward, having regranted them to Sir John Cobham for life, then granted the reversion of those possessions in Buckinghamshire, after the death of Sir John Cobham, to Thomas Cheyne, one of his own body-squires, for his good services, † Sir John Cobham surviving both his favourite Prince and Edward III., peti-

* Rot. Orig. Ab., vol. ii., 277. See also Dugdale's Baronage, vol. ii., 69.

† Rot. Pat. 38 Edw. III.

tioned Parliament, in the first year of Richard II., to fulfil his intention respecting the reversion of his possessions. The following is an abstract of his petition :—

"Sir John de Cobham, Knight, son of the Countess Marshall, sheweth, that whereas he for seizin gave to King Edward 3rd a ring of gold of the reversion of his Mannors of Wedon-hill, Pademore, Chederoldsenny, Hanshard, Holt, Weden in the Vale, Draiton Beauchampe, Messeworth, Sandresden, Holpesthorpe, Rolvesham, in the County of Bucks, Colsen in Norfolk, the good Manor of Adington in Berks, and Rowlson in the County of Leicester, to have all the premises after his decease to the King, and of his heirs of the Crown; he now prayeth that according to his intent, and for the discharge of the soul of the same King Edward, that the same may remain in the Crown.

"Whereupon the same Parliament, divers Lords and others, were examined openly, who approved the gift in form aforesaid, made to the King by delivery of a ring of gold in the name of seizin, the which by all the Justices was thought to be good, and the lands to pass thereby.

"Note—That the examination was by their oaths; and note, that the Justices and other learned of the King avowed such surrender by delivery of a ring to a common person to be good." *

Sir John Cobham died the same year in which he presented this petition, † but I have not been able to ascertain any particulars respecting his death, or the place of his interment. As this Sir John, Lord Cobham, is often confounded *with* a kinsman of the same name and title, his pedigree is here appended.

* Sir R. Cotton's Abridgment of the Records in the Tower, page 157.

† Cal, Inq. P, Mortem, vol, iii., 7 & 8.

