

DE MONTALTO.

THE noble family whose name appears as the title of the present memoir, was intimately connected with two of the most interesting castles in Great Britain, and with one of its most picturesque and regal cities. Their histories are thus so closely interwoven, that it would be difficult to separate them, and more particularly towards the close of the life of one of these great Seneschals, when Hawarden castle and the city of Coventry, subjects of the ensuing remarks, passed by bequest from the De Montalto family into the possession of the Plantagenets.

Beyond all comparison or dispute the official Records of the Crown contain the most trustworthy evidence that can be referred to in every question of historical research. Monastic or municipal charters follow them in the scale of reliable authority. Should these be silent, the testimony of a monkish chronicler, or even of a mediæval tradition, will occasionally cast a ray, though one of uncertain light, over the dark view of past events, events which however they more commonly mystify than explain.

Therefore, whilst sketching an account of the De Montalto family and some of their possessions, and adducing statements from these various sources, the value of authentic information ought to be cautiously balanced, and the cold deductions of truth carefully weighed against the popular attractions offered by the more agreeable narrative of mediæval romance. Since it should be the first duty in pursuing investigations of this nature, to clear away without hesitation every statement resting on doubtful authority, and to lay bare the foundations, however trifling they may seem to be, yet still what are left, which deserve the confidence of an inquiring age.

The mere mention of the name of Coventry serves to carry away the mind to a series of events whose credibility has been disguised by dramatic fiction. Its mention evokes before us a motley spectacle of religious mysteries, moralities,

and miracle plays. Fancy leads us to behold the exhibition of a scriptural allegory represented at the cost of some of those trading companies or holy fraternities abounding in the city, and we seem to see and to follow the long pageant passing in tumultuous disorder through the narrow streets. We inwardly laugh at the burlesque, if we do not turn away from the unnatural admixture of what is impious and absurd. Or, dwelling on more serious and trustworthy subjects, we recount the numerous immunities Coventry has obtained from the days of the Confessor, even to the last of the Stuarts; or we pass in review the transactions of Parliaments that have become memorable chiefly through their unpolite¹ or opprobrious² titles. Coventry was the early seat of a Bishop, and it was, moreover, celebrated for a wealthy monastery founded by an Anglo-Saxon Earl. The fame of Godiva's benevolence (shall it be called according to the popular belief, the heroism of her self-devotion?) has invested the city with an undying air of romance. It will be the duty of an inquirer into these earlier events, to ascertain the grounds upon which such traditions rest, to break the poetical enchantment that has deluded her credulous admirers, and to protest, not only against the rude dismantling of her modesty, but against a ridiculous narrative that has violated the sacred dignity of history, degraded female purity, and converted a deed of charity, common enough at the period, into a fabulous act of indelicate compassion.

The value due to all these circumstances will require examination, and they are also an essential introduction to the subsequent connection of Coventry with the De Montalto family.

It has been stated by Florence of Worcester,³ a writer of research and fidelity, that Leofric, Earl of Chester, and Godiva his wife, founded and built at Coventry a monastery before the year 1057, endowing it so liberally with land, with various ecclesiastical ornaments, precious stones, and with gold and silver, that it was unequalled in riches throughout England. This event happened so very near the time

¹ 38 Hen. VI., 1459. Parliamentum Diabolicum, the Devil's or Mad Parliament.

² Parliamentum indoctorum, or the

Illiterate Parliament, held 7 Hen. IV., 1406.

³ Flor. Wigorn. Chron. sub anno 1057, Monumenta Hist. Brit., p. 603.

when this historian flourished, if, indeed, it did not occur in his lifetime, seeing he died in 1118, that the circumstance would be fresh in his recollection.

Henry, Archdeacon of Huntingdon,⁴ who succeeds in chronological order, after an interval of nearly a century, would be less likely to write a truthful statement, and he gives to Godiva the entire credit of this foundation, so soon had the first account of its history become corrupted. There can be no doubt that it was mainly the work of Earl Leofric's munificence, though, as Vitalis seems to infer, it was subsequently much enriched by the valuable gifts presented to it by the Countess herself. Even from so slight a perversion as this may have originated the story that has since conferred upon her so ambiguous a reputation; the current tradition being, that she rode in a state of nudity through the streets, to induce her husband to confer greater immunities upon his vassals, as well as to lighten the burden of their taxation.

This doubtful story is first circulated in the history attributed to Matthew of Westminster, a writer who borrows his facts from Florence of Worcester, William of Malmesbury, Henry of Huntingdon, and other less trustworthy sources; none of the writers, however, now named take any notice of such an improbable circumstance. Henry Knyghton, Archdeacon of Leicester, who terminates his chronicle with the death of Richard II., gives no original matter before the very end of the reign of Edward I., and he, therefore, could only have copied from report his own account of Godiva's exhibition, since it had not previously been written among the common annals. Nor would John of Bromton, Abbot of Jervaux, the third in order who mentions it, be capable of resting his version of the story on any earlier or reliable authority. By comparing their respective narratives, it will be perceived how slavishly these monkish chroniclers repeat the assertions of each other, a propensity that has descended to subsequent writers of history.⁵

⁴ Hen. Huntind., lib. vi. p. 608.

⁵ Amongst recent illustrations of this incautiousness, a stronger one can scarcely be adduced than the imputation of blood-thirstiness and cruelty that has been attempted to be affixed upon the gentle nature of a martyred son of one of England's noblest families. The malevolent spirit of Archdeacon Eachard first propagated the calumny that William Lord

Russell interfered with the remission of Lord Strafford's sentence, by expressing a doubt whether Charles had the power of dispensing with that part of it which related to hanging and quartering after he was beheaded. And thus the stain of rancour, arising from some malicious rumour of party writers of the day, "who wrote for bread to keep them from fasting," has been echoed by Ralph, Hume,

The fable, however, as it has descended to us, must have been invented between the time when Matthew of Westminster and Roger de Hoveden wrote. It is not mentioned by any writer before 1307, and must have been the creation of the latter end of the thirteenth century. In substance it is as follows. The original accounts, one of which is closely copied from the other, will be worth comparing in the notes.⁶

Blackstone, Dalrymple, even Mr. Fox, Lingard, Hallam, and Campbell, without dispassionately inquiring into the truth of such an unjustifiable charge. If writers of such authority as they, are satisfied in putting history so loosely together, it is not surprising that a monk of Jervaux should repeat the falsehoods written by a credulous brother. It is a satisfaction and a solace to turn from such materials and glean a solitary fact, that is really true, from a charter, a fine roll, or an official record, after the trouble of sifting the statements of such faithless guides.

⁶ Ad jugem quoque instanciam uxoris suæ urbem suam Coventrensem ab omni tolneto præterquam deequis liberam fecit; quod impetrandum uxor ejus Comitissa Godgiva quodam mane per medium urbis nuda, sed comis tecta, equitavit.—Hen. de Knyghton de Eventibus Angliæ, lib. i. c. xii.—Scriptores Decem, pp. 233-4.

Hæc autem Comitissa religiose villam Conventrensem a gravi servitute ac turpi liberare affectans, sæpius Comitem virum suum magnis precibus rogavit, ut Sanctæ Trinitatis sanctæque genetricis Dei intuitu villam a prædicta absolveret servitute. Cumque Comes illam increparet quod rem sibi damnosam inaniter postularet, prohibuit constanter, ne ipsum super hac re de cætero conveniret. Illa contrario, pertinacia muliebri ducta, virum indesinenter de petitione præmissa exasperans, tale responsum extorsit ab eo. Ascende (inquit) equum tuum nuda, et transi per mercatum villæ, ab initio usque ad finem, populo congregato, et cum redieris, quod postulas, impetrabis. Cui Comitissa respondens, ait, et si hoc facere voluero, licentiam mihi dabis? Ad quam Comes, dabo, inquit. Tunc Godiva Comitissa Deo dilecta, die quadam, ut prædictum est, nuda equum ascendens crines capitis et tricas dissolvens, corpus suum totum præter crura candidissima inde velavit, et itinere completo, a nemine visa, ad virum gaudens hoc pro miraculo habentem, reversa est. Comes vero Leofricus, Con-

ventrensem a præfata servitute liberans civitatem, chartam suam inde factam sigilli sui munimine roboravit.—Flores Histor. Matth. Westm. sub anno 1057.

De dicta quoque Godiva Comitissa quæ ecclesiam de Stowe sub promontorio Lincolnæ, et multas alias construxerat, legitur, quod dum ipsa Coventreiam a gravi servitute et importabili tolneto liberare affectasset, Leofricum Comitem virum suum sollicitavit, ut Sanctæ Trinitatis Deique genetricis Mariæ intuitu villam a prædicta solveret servitute. Prohibuit Comes ne de cætero rem sibi dampnosam inaniter postularet. Illa nichilominus virum indesinenter de petitione præmissa exasperans tale responsum ab eo demum extorsit. Ascende, inquit, equum tuum et nuda a villæ initio usque ad finem populo congregato equites, et sic postulata cum redieris, impetrabis. Tunc Godiva Deo dilecta equum nuda ascendens, ac capitis crines et tricas dissolvens, totum corpus præter crura inde velavit. Itinere completo, a nemine visa ad virum gaudens est reversa, unde Leofricus Coventreiam a servitute et malis custumis et exactionibus liberavit, et cartam suam inde confectam sigilli sui munimine roboravit, de quo adhuc isti pauperes mercatores ad villam accedentes plenarie sunt experti.—Chron. John. Bromton Abbatis Jorvalensis, p. 949.

Following this passage, there is an account of the extraordinary miracle which happened whilst Leofric was at mass with Edward the Confessor, on which occasion the Saviour in form of a child appeared to them in the elevation of the sacrament, blessing first the King and the Earl, the former of whom, however, being perversely blind, required the supernatural appearance to be shown to him before he could perceive it. This absurd legend (and I only mention it to show the ignorance or the profanity that weakens the testimony of these early writers, as to the credibility of what is actually true) was abridged by Bromton from the Anglo-French life of the Confessor, written about 1245. See Bromton,

The Lady Godiva, having an extraordinary affection for the city of Coventry, often besought her husband, Earl Leofric, that he would relieve the inhabitants from a heavy burden he had imposed on them, until at length, wearied by her importunity, he said to her that if she would consent to ride naked from one end of the town to the other, amid the assembled people, he would comply with her wishes. She thereupon immediately asked whether he would in reality permit her, and receiving an affirmative answer, on an appointed day she mounted her horse, covered only by her flowing hair, which enwrapped her entire body except the legs, and having accomplished this her heroic immolation, she obtained from her lord the release of their geld and services.

It is added, though all the chroniclers are unpardonably silent as to this fact, which is in strict accordance with other portions of the narrative, and no one would wish to mutilate it, that an order went forth that all the people should shut themselves up within their houses during the time she rode through the city; but that one 'low churl,' a tailor, who peered abroad, was instantly struck with blindness, as a penalty for his curiosity. The historians of the middle ages have provokingly passed over this incident in silence, though it must rest on equal authority with the others, since the wretched creature has even been memorialised by a wooden effigy at the spot where his prurient curiosity betrayed him. A demi-figure, wearing a cocked hat, probably the uncouth decoration as the figure-head of some ancient vessel, removed to the niche of a conspicuous corner, declares the fate of Peeping Tom to passers beneath, thus forming as true a portion of the story as its other accompaniments, perhaps a more convincing one, according to the aphorism, that "seeing is believing."

Now it is a sufficient contradiction of this foolish tale to produce Earl Leofric's own deed of endowment, which is so full of benevolence and privileges, that there was no necessity for the chronicler to limit them at the risk of impairing Lady Godiva's discretion. This Charter,⁷ running much after the usual spirit of such grants, states that Leofric,

p. 949, and *Lives of the Confessor*, published recently under direction of the Master of the Rolls, pp. 12, 124-5, 169, 371. The 37th page in the Cambridge

MS. of this 'Estoire de Seint Ædward le Rei,' represents the event.

⁷ Angl. Sax. Cod. Diplom. Edit. Kemble.—Tom iv. p. 273.

Earl of Chester, by the advice and permission of King Edward the Confessor and Pope Alexander, caused a church at Coventry to be dedicated to the honour of God and the Holy Mary his Mother, and St. Peter the Apostle, and St. Osburga the Virgin, and All Saints. And he accordingly bestows on it for the use of divine service, and for the maintenance and clothing of the abbot and monks, twenty-four villages, with a moiety of the city where it is founded. These possessions were settled on the monastery with sac and sok, and tol and them, and liberty, and all such customs as had ever been held of the king at the best : and moreover, the abbot was to be amenable to the king alone. This ample charter was subscribed by the Confessor, Eadsî Archbishop of Canterbury, and by several other persons of importance, all witnesses of the transaction.

Perhaps, it may be remarked, from the fact of these privileges being conferred on an ecclesiastical body, that they would therefore not include within their scope the other inhabitants of the city, and certainly as far as the Earl's own tenants were concerned, this charter does not offer any recognition of privileges in their favour. Yet there cannot exist any reasonable doubt that the devout spirit which prompted these institutions, would look with equal consideration upon the depressed condition of Leofric's other dependants. Indeed, it is most unnatural to conceive that a nobleman so deeply influenced by a sense of religious duty, would so far disregard the equally sacred claims of humanity as to exercise oppression over his own vassals, and regard them as unworthy of his merciful concern. Whilst Earl Leofric made these ample offerings upon the altar of God, he could scarcely feel insensible to the claims of suffering indigence, nor could he allow Godiva to act upon an impulse so repulsive to the modest feelings of her sex. Nor, indeed, if such an exhibition had ever in reality happened, and that "one low churl" who "peeped," had received his darkened fate, and if "the Powers above" had "cancelled a sense misused," or if the people had serious grievances, would it have been necessary for Ralph, Earl of Chester, in granting the following charter, to have so distinctly recognised the privileges conferred by his father and predecessors. The original is preserved amongst the muniments in the city of Coventry ; a deed in the finest preservation, with the Earl's

seal in green wax appended, Both this and the succeeding charter are given at length, as they have not hitherto been printed.

Radulphus, Comes Cestriæ, omnibus baronibus, et constabulariis, et ballivis, et ministris, et hominibus, et amicis suis Francis et Anglis, tam presentibus quam futuris, salutem. Sciatis me burgensibus meis de Coventre concessisse et dedisse, et hâc cartâ meâ confirmasse, omnia quæ in presenti carta scripta sunt, videlicet, ut bene, et honorifice, et quiete in libero burgajio teneant prædicti burgenses et heredes sui de me et de hæredibus meis, sicut unquam in tempore patris mei vel aliorum antecessorum meorum melius et firmiter et liberius tenuerunt: omnes autem libertates et bonas leges illis concedo, quas burgenses Lincolnia meliores et liberiores habent. Prohibeo et defendo constabulariis meis, ne eos aliqua causa in castellum ad placitum ducant; sed portmot suum libere habeant, in quo omnia placita ad me et ad illos pertinentia juste tractentur. Quemlibet autem ex semetipsis pro me eligant, qui sub me super eos justiciarius sit, qui leges et consuetudines sciât, et eos meo consilio in omnibus rationabiliter, omni causa remota, custodiat, et mihi jura mea fideliter faciat. Si forte aliquis in misericordiam inciderit, curiatus sit rationabiliter per ballivum meum et fideles burgenses curiæ. Quoscunque autem mercatores secum ad villæ emendationem adduxerint precipio in pacem habeant, et nullus injuste eos in curiam mittat. Si vero aliquis extraneus mercator aliquod inconveniens in villa fecerit, in portmot coram justiciario supradicto sive curia illud dirigat. His testibus, Rogero constabulario Cestriæ, Roberto Seneschallo de Mohaut, Radulfo de Meisnilwarin, Petro Rondur, Symon Thulcher, Thoma dispensario, Joello de Louving', Willielmo Marescallo, Joel Bereng', Phillippo de Horrebi, Rogero de Almuille, Rogero de Busserville, Willielmo Priori, Willielmo de Byrdesol, Warino de Vernun (?), et multis aliis, apud Coventre.

There seem reasonable grounds for attributing this charter to Ranulph de Gernons, the second of that name, Earl of Chester, who died in 1153, both from its being witnessed by Robert Seneschal de Mohaut who, under the other title of Robertus Dapifer de Montealto, was, according to Mr. Ormerod, alive in this year, and farmer of the lands of the Palatinate from 1159 to 1162, and also because this same

Earl Ranulph de Gernons made additional grants to the monks of Coventry for the benefit of his soul, and of the souls of his parents and ancestors ;⁸ thus, apparently, evidencing an unbroken feeling of good will towards the citizens from the days of the Confessor to the reign of King Stephen, and consequently discountenancing the idea, that the inhabitants had cause to complain of any arbitrary tax or exactions, the whole tenor of these grants showing, in fact, indulgence and liberality.

In unison with the spirit of this charter of the Earl of Chester was the succeeding one. Both of them are in the finest state of preservation. It is always desirable to secure an original document by printing it, and also by giving it in an extended form, which makes it readily intelligible. When records are printed with their contractions, few take the trouble to read them.

Henricus, Dei gratia Rex Angliæ, et Dux Normanniæ et Aquitaniæ, et Comes Andegavensis, Archiepiscopis, Episcopis, Abbatibus, Comitibus, Baronibus, Justiciariis, Vice-comitibus, et omnibus ministris et fidelibus suis totius Angliæ, salutem. Sciatis me concessisse, et presenti carta mea confirmasse Burgensibus de Coventre omnes libertates et liberam consuetudines, quas Ranulphus Comes Cestriæ

⁸ The pedigree runs thus :—

Leofric—Godiva.

Algar.

Hugh E. of Chester, died 1101.

Richard E. of Chester, died 1119.

Ranulph E. of Chester (de Meschines, or Bricasard), died 1129.

Ranulph E. of Chester (de Gernons), died 1153; made grants to monks of Coventry.

Hugh E. of Chester (Kevelioc), died 1181.

Ranulph E. of Chester (Blundevil), died 1231, leaving four sisters, namely,—

Maud, m. E. of Angus, died before her brother Ranulph.

Mabel m. E. of Arundel.

Agnes m. E. of Derby.

Hawise m. E. of Winchester.

Hugh, the second son of Mabel, succeeded to Coventry; and, having married Isabella, d. of William E. Warren, died 1243, leaving his inheritance to be divided among his four sisters.—Mabel, Cecilia, Isabella, and Nicola.

Robert de Montalto married Cecilia; and, in consequence of this union, obtained Castle Rising, Coventry, Hawarden, &c. &c.—See Dugdale, Baronage, vol. i. pp. 40—121.

rationabiliter eis concessit, et carta sua confirmavit; scilicet, ut ipsi burgenses bene, et in pace, et honorifice, in libero burgajio teneant, sicut unquam in tempore patris præfati Comitis, vel aliorum antecessorum suorum, melius et firmitus tenuerunt, et habeant omnes leges et consuetudines, quas cives Lincolnæ meliores et liberiores habeant. Et ne Constabularii prædicti Comitis eos aliqua causa in castellum ad placitum ducant, sed Portmannemot suum libere habeant, in quo omnia placita ad ipsum Comitem et ad illos pertinentia juste tractentur. Quemlibet autem ex semetipsis pro Comite eligant, qui sub Comite super eos justiciarius sit, et qui leges et consuetudines suas sciat, et eos consilio Comitis in omnibus rationabiliter, omni causa remota, custodiat, et ipsi Comiti jura sua fideliter faciat. Et, si forte aliquis in forisfacturam Comitis inciderit, pro xii. denariis quietus sit; si vero xii. nummos testimonio vicinorum suorum dare non possit, eorundem consideratione ita admensuretur quod persolvere valeat. Et prædicta cum aliis quietationibus, et quod non ipsi burgenses præfato Comiti nec suis aliquod in corrodio vel in alio accommodent, nisi ea conditione quod de redditione catalli sui tuti sint. Quosunque autem mercatores secum ad villæ emendacionem adduxerint, pacem habeant, et nullus eis injuriam faciet, vel injuste eos in curiam mittat. Si vero aliquis externus mercator aliquod inconueniens in villa fecerit, in Portmannemot coram justiciario supradicto sive curia illud emendet; et illi, qui in villam venturi sunt, ex illa die, qua in villa edificare cœperint, per biennium de omnibus quieti sint. Quare volo et firmiter precipio quod prænominati burgenses de Coventre omnes prædictas libertates et liberas consuetudines habeant et teneant, bene, et in pace, libere, et honorifice, sicut carta supradicti Comitis Ranulfi rationabiliter testatur. Teste Ranulfo de Glanvilla, Rogero le Bigot, Roberto filio Bernardi, Ricardo de Luci, Patricio de Chaurchis, Ranulfo de Ged-dington. Apud Merlebergam.⁹

It will be observed, that this Charter, granted by King Henry II., refers to that of the Earl of Chester, and the privileges conferred by his father and ancestors, which would carry us to immunities enjoyed by the men of Coventry at a

⁹ I take this opportunity of expressing my thanks to Henry Browett, Esq., the late mayor, and Charles Draper, Esq.,

the present mayor of Coventry, for the facilities obligingly afforded me in examining the Municipal Archives.

very remote period, probably that of Earl Leofric. If, however, there exists any doubt regarding so early a connexion as this, we are more fortunate in being able to fix an actual date to the royal charter itself, which the Great Roll of the Pipe mentions as having been given in the year 1182, the men of Coventry having then paid for it the sum of twenty marks.¹

At this precise time, "the Earl's Half" of Coventry, as it was termed, belonged to Ranulphus de Blundevil, Earl of Chester. He possessed it from 1181 to his death, in 1231, when Coventry, with Chester, fell to the share of Mabel, the second of his four sisters, who married William de Albini, Earl of Arundel. These possessions then devolved upon Hugh, the second son, who married Isabella, daughter of William Earl Warren. This Hugh dying in 1243, his inheritance was divided among his four sisters, and, by another singular coincidence, Cecilia, the second, brought by her marriage, Coventry and Castle Rising to Robert de Montalto.

The liberties of Coventry were seized in 1163, in consequence of Hugh, Earl of Chester, having, in conjunction with his tenants, been an active participator in the rebellion against the king. The Crown, however, restored the franchises in 1181, on receiving a fine of twenty marks. These privileges consisted in their having a confirmation of Earl Ranulf's Charter. By that they held their possessions in free burgage with the same immunities as the burgesses of Lincoln. They were entitled to hold a portmote court for pleas of every kind concerning themselves. They were empowered to elect from their own community a judge, who was skilful in the laws and customs. To these and a few other privileges the Crown added, that whosoever should come to inhabit there, from the day of his beginning to build for two years following, he should be free from all payments whatsoever. At the period when Henry II. granted this charter, the inhabitants at large were the burgesses, and the privileges were conferred without any corporate restrictions upon their heirs; the existence of municipal corporations, and the abuses of admitting honorary burgesses not arising before

¹ *Homines de Covintre reddant computum de xx. marcis pro habenda confirmatione Regis de Libertatibus suis.*—*Magn. Rot. Pip.* 28 Hen. II.

Here it may be worth noticing that

these privileges of Lincoln were copied from those at Northampton, the citizens paying a fine for the purpose.—6 Ric. I. (*Pipe Roll.*)

26th Edward I., when burgesses were first returned to sit in Parliament.

The possessions of Coventry became a fruitful source of litigation at an early period. The division of the Earl's half and the prior's half caused disputes which are scarcely ended at the present day. It will not be edifying to enter into questions which distracted the peace of the Church and city alike, and therefore only a few facts shall be mentioned, such merely as fall within the general scope of the present memoir. To place them before the reader in the most concise form, it will be sufficient to state that Earl Leofric, at the foundation of the priory, gave various villages and a moiety of Coventry itself to the monks, without any reservation of rents or services. When these possessions fell to Roger de Montalto by right of his marriage with Cecilia, the second daughter of the Earl of Arundel, they made, in a deed without date, a joint grant to William the prior, of all their right and claim in the whole manor, with the exception of Cheylesmore and certain accustomed military services, on condition of receiving an annual payment of 100*l.* from the prior and convent, and ten marcs from the nuns at Polesworth. It appears by a fine (34 Hen. III.) that a yearly rent of 107*l.* was reserved to be paid by the prior. It also appears by a fine (1 Edw. III.) between Robert de Montalto, Emma his wife, and Henry de Cliffe, that the manor of Cheylesmore, with the appurtenances in Coventry and the services of the prior, were conveyed to the said Henry de Cliffe, who rendered them again to Robert de Montalto, who subsequently conveyed them, in default of having male issue, to Queen Isabella for the term of her natural life, and after her decease to John of Eltham, the king's brother, and in default of heirs, to the king and his heirs.

To settle the disputes between the prior and the city of Coventry relating to the said grant of Roger and Emma de Montalto to the former, Queen Isabella released 10*l.* of the same rent, which was subsequently demanded as the fee farm to be paid into the Exchequer, as parcel of the duchy of Cornwall.²

² There is some perplexity in accounting for the alteration in the amount of the fee farm rent, which may be thus explained: The sum fixed in the first instance was 107*l.* The demands upon

the Prior were 98*l.* 6*s.* 8*d.*—re-leased for enlarging the Friars' mines, 40*s.*, and ten marcs to the nuns of Polesworth makes up the sum. This sum was paid by the priors as one moiety of their

By a tripartite indenture,³ formerly amongst the documents in the treasury of the corporation, written in French, and under the seals of Queen Isabella, the prior and convent, and the mayor and commonalty of Coventry, it appears that the mayor and commonalty paid a consideration for their franchises, and agreed to a fee farm rent of 50*l.* per annum (20 Edw. III.).

Thus, out of the grant made by Roger de Montalto to the prior, there sprung a suit respecting the payments to be made to him by the monastery, which became more complicated by the possessions at Coventry being subsequently bequeathed by the Montalt family to Queen Isabella, with remainder first to John of Eltham, afterwards Earl of Cornwall, brother of Edward III., and then to her husband Edward II., and his heirs for ever. Similar controversies were continued; when, however, Edward, the Black Prince, was created Earl of Cornwall, his father settled the reversion of the manor of Cheylesmore upon him after the death of his mother, entailing it, as it was then conceived, as an inalienable appanage of the duchy.⁴

No doubt this intimate connexion with royalty procured many immunities for the city of Coventry. Its long array of charters shows the favour in which the inhabitants were held. Successive reigns saw the burgesses invested with increased privileges. But the grant of Montalt to the priory had laid the foundation of such civic controversy and strife, that it was only appeased by acts of legislation centuries afterwards.

In consequence of the peculiarity of the grant by Roger de Montalto to the prior, even after the broils of citizens and the encroachments of churchmen had with their jealousies and angry passions passed away, fresh suits and protracted legal disputes sprung from these ancient pretensions. It was no longer a contest betwixt the duchy and the monks of St. Benedict, but a civil war carried on between the corpo-

foundation, the other moiety of purchase.

³ The tripartite Indenture, of which only a copy remains, decided the bounds of that part of the city of Coventry called the Earl's half, and consequently defined the Prior's part. The part called the Earl's part was divided at the posts

or pillars set next to the cross of the Hospital of St. John, which prior's part is now Bishop Street Leet, and all the remnant without is the Earl's part. After the dissolution of monasteries, the corporation purchased the Prior's half.

⁴ George IV. sold the manor of Cheylesmore to the Marquis of Hertford.

ration and the residents in those hamlets formerly granted to the Church by Earl Leofric, which were constituted by the charter of 30 Henry VI. (1451) a part of the "county" of Coventry.

By this charter, which the king states in its preamble he gives out of the special affection which he bore to the city of Coventry, it is declared that the several hamlets, which were then within the county of Warwick, should be one entire county of itself, wholly separated from the county of Warwick for ever, to be distinctly and separately called the county of the city of Coventry.

Such a local division gave rise to perpetual quarrels, which continued even after the passing of the Municipal Act of 1835. Nor was it until 1842 that the controversy about this equivocal privilege was settled.

In returning to the personal history of De Montalto, it appears that Robert, the seventh and last of that name, was the junior grandson of the Robert who married Cecilia, daughter and co-heir of William, third Earl of Arundel. He was born about 1270 and died in 1330, living through the whole of the reigns of Edward I. and Edward II.

It is this Robert, the last of the race, to whom our attention will now be turned.

On the death of his brother, in 1297, he succeeded to the chief part of the family possessions, was immediately summoned to perform the usual military and parliamentary services; amongst other duties, taking part in the important discussions in the Parliament held at Lincoln, in the 29th of Edward I., when the presumptuous claims of Boniface VIIIth to the sovereignty of Scotland were disposed of; and, in fact, occupying one of the most prominent positions as a Baron of the realm in all the important affairs of the period. To this Parliament he was called under the style and title of Dominus de Hawardyn, in consequence of holding that demesne.⁵

The Montalts were hereditary seneschals of Chester through seven descents, having originally derived their name (Domini de Moaldis) as early as the middle of the twelfth century, from the lordship of Mold. It is more

⁵ Their descent, as well as many important facts connected with their history, is ably given in Mr. Ormerod's

privately printed volume, entitled, *Miscellanea Palatina*.

than probable that at this place they originally resided ; but for greater security they were subsequently induced to choose the strongly entrenched fortifications of Hawarden. It was on this majestic eminence that the last of the family erected the buildings which even still, in their ruins, overawe the surrounding plains of Cheshire, Denbighshire, and Flint. This fortress is no less conspicuous throughout a great extent of country, than remarkable for its architectural character. It is a building unlike others of the time, and therefore merits a short description.

The site, as has already been stated, is very commanding. There seems good reason for supposing it to have been a stronghold of the aborigines, the strength and nature of the circumvallations that wind round the hill on which Montalt built his castle, offering a protection which was too advantageous to be neglected. These earthworks are not so vast as those at Old Sarum, or those at Old Oswestry, which are much nearer, but they evidently belong to as remote a period, and are very similar to them. It was in the centre, and on the summit of these great earthworks, that the last Seneschal of the family fixed his castle; a situation in all respects worthy of his choice. Nature dictated the form it assumed, and the circular keep, still in great part existing, shows the success attending such a conception. It is of a most unusual form, perhaps unique; for during the reign of Edward II. it was not the practice to erect a keep, and, therefore, this at Hawarden must be considered the latest specimen.

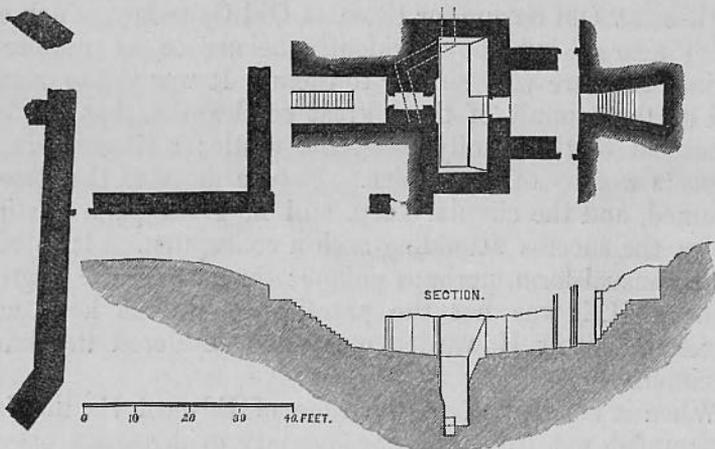
When it is assigned to the time of Edward II., the date is assumed, not from any documentary evidence we possess respecting it, but because the mouldings of the chief entrance plainly show that it belongs to the middle of his reign. Flint had been built thirty years before Robert de Montalto raised the walls of this singular circular keep. We say, raised the walls, as he probably used the foundations of a Norman castle; and in proof of this there exists sufficient evidence on the Welsh Rolls, which record that before the great Edward had conquered the Principality, the castle of Hawarden was besieged and burnt by the Welsh in 1282.⁶ Roger

⁶ Rex dilecto et fidei suo Rogero de Mortuo Mari Salutem. Accepimus quod quidam malefactores Walenses, propria salutis immemores, noctanter usque ad

castrum nostrum de Hawardyn cum equis et armis accedentes, dilectum et fidelem nostrum Rogerum de Clifford et familiares suos secum in eodem Castro

de Clifford, who held it for the king, was carried away as prisoner, and such destruction of the Castle of Hawarden followed, that Roger de Mortimer was appointed to redress these outrages. Roger, the brother of Robert de Montalto, had married De Clifford's daughter; but having no issue, on his death in 1297, the possession fell to Robert his heir, and it was undoubtedly this Robert, the last of his line, who re-erected the castle.

The building is in the form of a pentagon, with a circular keep, reached by many steps, at the western angle. All its proportions and details are of the second Edwardian period; for example, the swell chamfers, and shouldered headings to its windows, doors, and passages. A small chapel exists in the chief floor (E.) of the keep, constructed in the thickness of the wall on the north-east side. A portion of the great hall



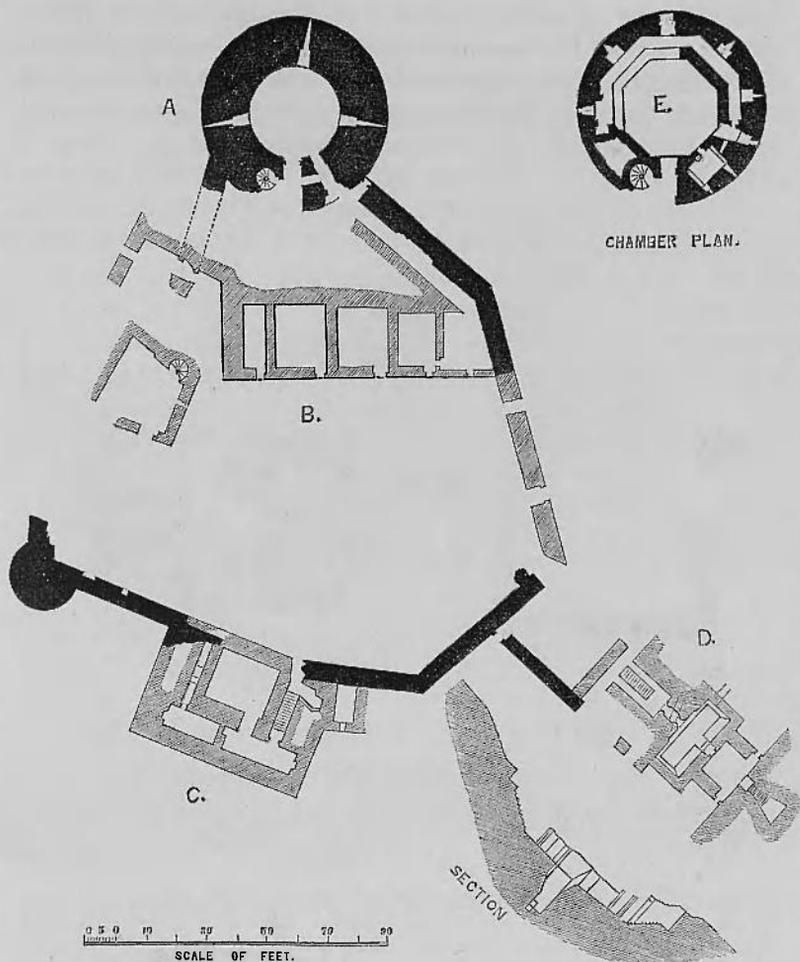
Plan of the outworks on north-east side of Hawarden Castle.

(C.) remains, and there are other buildings (D.) without the *enceinte*, of a character so unusual that it has proved

existentes insultum fecerunt, et quosdam ex ipsis interfecerunt, et domos castrum illius combusserunt, et præfatum Rogerum ceperunt et secum abduxerunt, et captum tenent, et insuper fautores sui conscii malitiæ prædictæ ad castrum nostrum de Flynt felonice accesserunt et quasdam domos ibidem ut potuerunt incendebant, et quosdam ex hominibus nostris ibidem inventos interficiebant, et in partibus illis deprædationes, homicidia,

incendia, et alia enormia perpetrabant contra pacem nostram. Nos, de fidelitate, circumspectione, et industria vestris expertis ad plenum confidentes, constituimus vos capitaneum nostrum in partibus illis ad hujusmodi malefactores insequendos et capiendos, prout conservationi pacis nostræ magis videritis expedire, &c. 25 die Martii.—Welsh Roll 10 Edw. I. m. 10.

WEST.

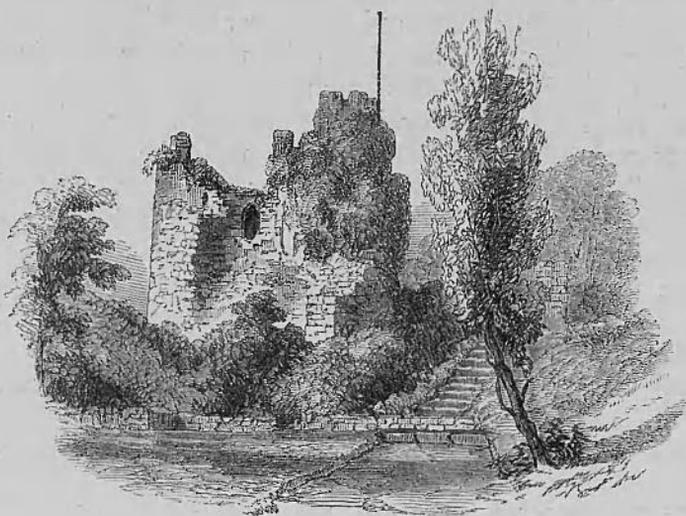


GROUND PLAN OF HAWARDEN CASTLE, FLINTSHIRE.

FROM A SURVEY MADE BY MR. JAMES HARRISON, OF CHESTER, 1857.

- A. The Keep. B. Offices. c. The Hall. D. Chambers, use unknown.
E. Upper story of the Keep. The Chapel is on the north-east side.

impracticable satisfactorily to ascertain their intention. It was during a visit to these remains, when the Archaeological Institute met at Chester, that the opportunity was afforded of hearing various conjectures that were made by some of the members as to the use of these curious buildings.⁷ It was discussed on the spot whether they were sewers, garderobes, cisterns, or places of confinement; and the evidence in favour of each was negatively balanced; so that, in fact, even



Hawarden Castle, showing the remains of the Keep.

antiquarian speculation left the question unsolved, and this pyrgological enigma still continues a perplexity to exercise the ingenuity of future inquirers.⁸

⁷ Mr. Harrison, who has carefully examined these remains with the practical eye of the architect, is of opinion that these buildings may have formed a postern-gate of great security against surprise. The wide pit-fall in the middle of the work appears to have been traversed by a draw-bridge, and it was provided with means for filling it with water. The termination of the buildings towards the outer works with a flight of steps might have formed, as he supposed, the basement of a turret, communicating with some of the works which may have occupied the mound beyond, towards the north-east. No traces, however, of any superstructure are to be found, nor any appearance of a continuation of the steps

or passage, which terminates in a singular dove-tail shaped landing, the wall at the extremity being perfect to the height of 6 feet 4 inches from the floor of the landing-place, as shown in the section. Mr. Harrison observes that this supposed postern appears to be of precisely the same date as the keep, and one of the doorways still exists with the shouldered head, similar to those seen in that part of the building, as before described.

⁸ The plan of Hawarden Castle, given in Pennant's *Tour in Wales*, 1773, vol. i. may be referred to for comparison with the plan accompanying this memoir. It gives the surrounding earthworks and some portions of the buildings which are no longer to be discerned.

A few paces over the softest verdure that fairy footsteps ever trod, bring us amid the shade of ancient oaks to the handsome residence of Montalt's later successor in this noble inheritance, who, though not invested with the office of Seneschal of the Palatinate, represents the Crown as Lord Lieutenant of Flintshire. The Institute may justly feel gratified that such an historic memorial should belong to one of its most valued and zealous members. Long may he continue to possess, as he will undoubtedly, affectionately preserve, a feudal castle so picturesque and sublime.⁹

A few words more, and the chief remaining facts in the history of the last Montalt's life are placed before the reader. He married Emma, the widow of Richard Fitz-John, and was amongst the few summoned to meet the "she-wolf of France" as a bride, on her landing at Dover. With his wife,¹ they were the first persons named to attend at her coronation; and it was, perhaps, owing to this early intercourse that a friendship subsequently arose which led him to leave to the queen the demesnes inherited from his ancestors, namely, Castle Rising, where Isabella afterwards passed twenty-seven years of her worthless existence, the city of Coventry, and the Castle of Hawarden.

CHARLES HENRY HARTSHORNE.

⁹ The Institute is indebted to the kindness of Sir Stephen Glynne for the plan of Hawarden Castle, which accompanies this memoir. By his direction, an accurate survey was undertaken, and this plan prepared by Mr. James Harrison, of Chester, on the occasion of the meeting of the Society in that city.

¹ Robert de Montalto, who died in 1329, was buried in the Priory of Should-

ham, Norfolk, and Emma, his wife, was buried in the nave of Stradset church, in that county. When Blomefield wrote his History, an inscription still remained to her memory in these words,—
Ici · gist · dame · Emma · de · Mounaut ·
femme · de · deux · Barons · Dieu · par ·
sa · pitie · avez · merci · de · sa · ame · —
Blomefield's Norfolk, vol. iv. p. 176.