



Swallowfield and its Owners.

By Lady Russell.

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There is a monument to the memory of William and Mary Standen and their infant, Nicholas Love Standen, in Arborfield Church, two miles from Swallowfield. On it are the effigies of a man and woman in a recumbent position and a child at their feet, with a Latin inscription which states that Mary was "singulari castitate pietate, et in inopes beneficentia spectabilis." On the front and sides are various escutcheons. Edward Standen, the last heir male of this family, died in 1639, and was the lovesick swain alluded to in the curious old Ballad entitled "Molly Moggs." This Ballad, printed in Swift's "Miscellanies," is said to have been the joint composition of Gay and his boon companions while detained by the weather at the "Rose" Inn, Wokingham. Molly Moggs was the landlord's daughter, and her beauty was equalled only by her insensibility to the tender passion. Edward Standen sighed in vain, and his death, which occurred in 1730, at the age of 27, was attributed to her indifference. She died aged 67, a spinster.

1626. Samuel Backhouse was succeeded by his eldest son, John Backhouse, who was 42 years of age when he came into possession of Swallowfield, and had lived at Windsor during the lifetime of his father. He married in July, 1615, Flower, daughter of Thomas Henshaw, of London, Merchant Tailor and Silkman to King James I., by his wife Flower Gouldesborough, but had no issue. He got with his wife £4,000, and at her mother's death, in 1616, received £1,500 more.

In 1621 John Backhouse was one of the jury empannelled to try a very remarkable case. Abbott, Archbishop of Canterbury, going into Hampshire to consecrate a Chapel for Lord Zouche, at his house at Bramshill, went out hunting in the park on the 24th July. Aiming at a buck with his cross bow, the bolt glanced and killed

the keeper, Peter Hawkins. Upon this accident, by the Canon Law, the Archbishop was suspended from all ecclesiastical function, and by the Civil Law had incurred the forfeiture of all his goods and chattels to the King. His Majesty, however, as soon as he was informed of it, remarked that "an angel might have miscarried in that sort," and addressed to the Primate a consolatory letter written with his own hand, in which he assured him "that he would not add affliction to his sorrow, nor take one farthing from his chattels." Thus far all was well, but the Church was not so easily satisfied, and Williams, Bishop of Lincoln and Keeper of the Great Seal, wrote a letter in which he said "to leave *virum sanguineum*, or a man of blood, Primate and patriarch of all the King's Churches, is a thing that sounds very harsh in the canons of the Church." The King then found it necessary to nominate 10 Commissioners, five of whom were Bishops, to decide the cause. After many conferences this Synod could not come to any agreement, so the King settled the question by declaring the Primate capable of using all the authority of a Metropolitan in the same manner as if the homicide had never happened.

Sir Dudley Carleton, writing August 4th, 1621, thus alludes to the event: "Upon the fall of the fellow, who lived not half-an-hour, the Lord of Canterbury sent away to inform His Majesty, who returned a gracious answer; that such an accident might befall any man; that himself once had the ill luck to kill the keeper's horse under him, and that his Queen in like sort killed him the best brache (hound) he ever had, and therefore willed him not to discomfort himself. The keeper and he were both on horseback, and in a standing, as was reputed. It is given out his Lordship will provide for the widow and three children in competent manner, some say more—some less.* John Backhouse was present and one of the jury, to inquire, as the manner is, how he came by his death; and they gave up a strange kind of verdict, and found it done '*per infortuniam suâ propriâ culpâ*.'" The Archbishop keenly felt his situation, and during the rest of his life kept a monthly fast in memory of his misfortune. Yet, we are told, it always served his enemies, a pretext for slighting his authority. Laud and two other Bishops-elect who were awaiting consecration implored that they might not receive consecration at his hands, and he ultimately delegated the duty to the Bishop of London.

* The Archbishop settled £20 a year on the widow, which soon procured her another husband.

John Backhouse sat for Great Marlow in the first Parliament of Charles I., Thomas Cotton being the other Burgess. In 1626 he sat again with Sir William Hicks, and the following year with Sir Miles Hobart. He fought for the King, and we are told in his epitaph that he suffered imprisonment for his fidelity to his Royal Master. He was made a Knight of the Bath before 1632.

1632. There is a letter preserved in the Bodleian from Mr. Bernard Lee and Sir John Backhouse concerning the ownership and rating of some land, written from Worlam, April 29th, 1632. [Clarendon Papers, 303].

1642. And in the same Collection (No. 1793) is to be found the affidavit of Sir John Backhouse of the assessment of £40 as the twentieth part of his property at the time of the making of the ordinance of November 29th, 1642, for assessment.

There is also (No. 1877) a copy of the petition of Sir John Backhouse, Knight of the Bath, to the Committee of Sequestration, complaining that his property in Berkshire has been seized, though no proof of his delinquency or any definite accusation has been made against him.

1647-8. Lord Darnley has amongst other papers of the Backhouses at Cobham, "a Booke containing a Copie of the Deed of Draft from Sir John Backhouse and Codrington and others of the whole estate of Sir John Backhouse, dated 29th May, 1647, and "a Copie of Sir John Backhouse, his will in the same booke," dated 1648.

1649. He died on the 9th October, 1649, aged 65, and was buried at Swallowfield, where there is in the Russell Tribune a black and white marble monument, originally erected to his memory on the north wall of the Chancel, by his widow Flora. It has a long Latin inscription, of which the following is a translation: "Sacred to the memory of John Backhouse, of Swallowfield, of the most honourable Order [which is called the Bath] most worthy Knight sprung from an ancient family in the county of Lancaster. He awaits the glorious coming of his Lord in these ashes the revivers of a blest hereafter to be born again—a man imbued with no slight tincture of every sort of learning, highly skilled in languages, particularly in Greek, which with a surprising sagacity and talent he had seized and acquired as a grown-up man without anybody to instruct him, that he might listen intimately to the oracles of the Christian religion. The faith of the stream being suspected he penetrated to the clear springs of the fountains. The best sup-

port and ornament of literary men, with an easy suavity of manners and a conspicuous candour of disposition he endeared all who were related to him. And what thou may'st wonder at, traveller, in this condition of the State, and in most difficult times, neither injuries, imprisonment, flatterers, nor threats, drove him astray. He always adhered to the point of constancy, faith and conscience. Not unequal to public affairs, which he most discreetly conducted in a way to equal all fame. He so cherished the poor, he was so indulgent to his servants, he so sacredly respected his conjugal duty and his modest wife, that he was, though childless, truly the father of a family. With elegance, good cheer, and hospitality he was accustomed freely and soberly to entertain his friends. So warm a worshipper of the Deity that he shone a great example in this cold age. Since the pillar of his country, for so he was esteemed when living, is dead, all malice and impotent envy may subside. His most afflicted wife raised this monument to her excellent and ever-beloved husband, by whose side, after her death, she wishes, desires and intends to be placed."

Elias Ashmole, who was his friend, says in his "Berkshire" that there were on the marble gravestone lying over the body of Sir John several trophies, and that on the south wall of the chancel hung the achievements carried at his funeral, "A standard¹ of England with his crests and motto; a Penon² of his own coat; another of Backhouse impaling Henshaw; a third Backhouse quartering Saltheld (Salkeld) and impaling Henshaw; and on the east wall hung his Target,³ Coat of Arms and Crest, and near unto them a Guidon⁴ of the Order of the Bath." Of these achievements only the Coat of Arms and crest remain, and they are now in Swallowfield Church in the Russell Tribune. The Coat of Arms is ensigned with a Knight's helmet placed affronté with a visor or beaver, which is raised, shewing the lining within. Sir John's crest was an eagle displayed on a

¹ The Standard was an elongated flag, its length being according to the rank of its owner. The field composed of the livery colours only, the crest and motto of its owner being exhibited.

² The Pennon was a small narrow flag usually affixed to the end of a lance, from which, when in actual use, it depended; and the charges thereon were so emblazoned as to appear correctly when the lance was held in a horizontal position.

³ The Target was the shield, which was borne on the left arm.

⁴ The Guidon, or Gonfannon, was a banner bordered with fringe or twisted silk.

snake embowed, its tail nowed. His arms Or, a saltire ermine, and his motto "Sic Juvat."

Sir John's widow, Flower, survived him little over two years. Ashmole, in his Diary, says she died on the 12th August, 1652, and was buried at Swallowfield. There is a black marble slab on the north wall of the Russell Tribune, immediately below her husband's monument, with a Latin inscription on it, which says that "she was the only wife of John Backhouse, with whom she lived in wedlock forty years, modestly, affectionately, meekly, happily, unless that it was unfruitfully, after whom she remained, not lived, two years, and rendered her soul to God in the year of Salvation 1652, of her age 62."

In the Herald's Visitation of Berks, 1664, it is stated that this Flower, Lady Backhouse, "re-married Henry Smith, *alias* Neville, of Holt, in coun. Leicester, Esq." This, I think, is obviously an error, though it is repeated in most of the Backhouse pedigrees. Probably it was her neice Flower, the daughter of Nathaniel Henshaw, who made this marriage.

Sir John Backhouse dying without issue, and his two brothers Nicholas and Samuel having also died childless, he was succeeded by his youngest brother, William Backhouse, who was born at Swallowfield in 1593, so that he was 56 years old when he became its owner. Of all the persons bearing the name of Backhouse, this William was by far the most famous. He was sent to Oxford in the year 1610, in the 17th year of his age, when he became a commoner of Christ Church, but left it without a degree. There is extant a curious M.S. written to him about this date by John Blagrove, the celebrated astrologer and mathematician, who lived at Southcot, Reading, and had also a house at Swallowfield and land at Eversley.* It is not improbable that it was this and similar communications that induced William Backhouse to enter into the study of the Rosicrucian Philosophy. He became ultimately, to quote from Wood's *Athenæ Oxonienses*, "a most renowned Chymist and Rosicrucian, and a great encourager of those that studied chymistry and astrology."

1647. He awakened similar tastes in the mind of his friend, Elias Ashmole, who settled at Englefield in 1647, and soon after William Backhouse's succession to Swallowfield, they appear to have been in constant communication.

* These he left to Joseph Blagrove, of Reading, also an astrologer, who died in 1679.

1651. In Ashmole's Dairy there are numerous allusions to William Backhouse, of which I give the following, commencing in 1651: "April 3rd, Mr. William Backhouse, of Swallowfield, in county Berks, caused me to call him father henceforward. April 26th. My father Backhouse brought me acquainted with the Lord Ruthin who was a most ingenious person.† June 10th. Mr. Backhouse told me I must now needs be his son because he had communicated so many secrets to me. October 7th. My father Backhouse and I went to see Mr. Goodier, the great Botanist, at Petersfield.‡ February 10th. This morning my father Backhouse opened himself very freely touching the great secret. February 13th. My father Backhouse lying sick in Fleet Street, over against St. Dunstan's Church, and not knowing whether he should live or die, about 11 of the clock told me, in syllables, the true matter of the Philosopher's stone, which he bequeathed to me as a legacy." William Backhouse did, however, recover from this illness, and lived for nine years after.

1662. He died at Swallowfield, May 30th, 1662, aged 69, and was buried there on June 17th. Aubrey, in his "Miscellanies," says "William Backhouse had an ugly scab that grew on the middle of his forehead which had been there for years, and he could not be cured; it became so nauseous that he would see none but his intimate friends. In a journey having come to Peterboro', he dreamt there, that he was in a church and saw a hearse, and that one did bid him wet his scab with the drop of the marble. The next day he went to morning service, and afterwards going about the church, he saw the very hearse (which was of black say) for Queen Katharine, wife of Henry VIII., and the marble stone by. He found drop on the marble and there were some cavities, wherein he dipt his finger and wetted the scab: in seven days it was perfectly cured. This accurate and certain information I had from my worthy friend Elias Ashmole, Esq., who called Mr. Backhouse father, and had this account from his own mouth. "May Dew is a great dissolvent."

† Sir Thomas Ruthven of Freeland, created Baron Ruthven this year by Charles II., was a great chemist.

‡ Elias Ashmole had made a special study of Botany when living at Englefield, and became a great Botanist.

(To be continued.)