



Vachell, of Coley, Reading.

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Reading.*

(Continued from Vol. III., page 10.)



T was in the last days of the reign of Henry VIII., on the 5th September, 1546, and on the eve of the many changes in the order of the Church which the reign of Edward VI. was to inaugurate, that Thomas Vachell, the third of these names, mentioned in the previous portion of our memoir, was married in St. Mary's Church, Reading, the Parish Church of the Vachell family, to Catherine Reade; and a few years later, in 1553, he succeeded to the Coley estate by the terms of his father's will previously quoted. His wife belonged to a family which exists to the present day in its ancient holding, easily traceable in direct descent to the stock of which she came, and which is noticeable at many points of its history. In place of residence it has continued stationary, and at the present time Mr. Herbert Vincent Reade is the owner of the Ipsden estate, near Wallingford, which was purchased by Sir William Reade, grandfather of the lady who became the wife of Thomas Vachell, of Coley. The earlier home of the family had been at Beedon, in Berks; but in 1539, on the dissolution of the Abbey at Abingdon and the dispersal of its property, the family acquired by purchase the estate of Barton, near Abingdon, with the palatial residence of the Abbot, then re-named as Barton Court, and at the same time the Manors of Ipsden Huntercombe and Ipsden Bassett, in Oxfordshire. It was from Barton Court, as a daughter of the house, that Thomas Vachell took Catherine Reade, and Ipsden became her dowry. Her father, Thomas Reade, son and heir of Sir William Reade, had married Anne, daughter of Sir William Hoo, of the Hoo, in Herts, and through this family Mrs. Vachell was connected with Queen Anne Boleyn. The history of the family of Reade has received treatment by several writers; and it is, we believe, to receive still another from General

John Meredith Read, an eminent representative of the American branch of the ancient name with an elided "e." Many of its members have therefore acquired public notice ; but none have brought a wider distinction to the family, and none have brought it into closer touch with the interest and sympathies of the present generation than the late Charles Reade, dramatist, novelist and journalist, who was himself born at Ipsden House, and who throughout his distinguished life prized very highly his ancient and honourable lineage.¹ The only issue of the marriage of Thomas Vachell and Catherine Reade was a daughter, Anne, baptised at St. Mary's, Reading, 20th December, 1549, and buried there sixteen years later, 31st December, 1565.

The salient feature of this Thomas Vachell's life, so far as we have material for computing it, is his "recusancy," the crime of which those were adjudged in the reign of Queen Elizabeth who out of loyalty to the Pope could not reconcile it with their conscience to accept the oath of Royal Supremacy. Their condition, as shewn in a neighbouring family, Perkins of Ufton, Berks, has been well described by Miss Sharp in her charming "*History of Ufton Court*"; and what is said there of the Perkins family is probably in all its general features applicable to the case of their friends and neighbour, Thomas Vachell, of Coley. Severe Acts were passed against recusants in the reign of Elizabeth and her successor; and on 7th March, 1588, Thomas Vachell felt the full weight of this severity in the forfeiture of all his goods and chattels, and two-thirds of his estates and tenements to the Queen, because that for the previous "sixteen years he had absented himself from his Parish Church, as well as from other Churches and Chapels." No doubt the milder pressure of frequent fines for recusancy had been applied to the conscience of Thomas Vachell even before this wholesale forfeiture; and from proceedings in the Exchequer Court we have knowledge of a later despoiling of such goods as he may have rescued from Coley and placed for safer custody with his friends at Ufton Court. From this source we learn that a party, headed by Sir Francis Knollys, a prominent person in Reading at that time, and including also George Blande, gent., Edward Duffield, Ellice and an informer, Toby Gaylor, left Reading on 16th July, 1599, at night-time, for Ufton Court, and upon their own authority proceeded to search this

1. See "*Memoir of Charles Reade*," by Charles L. Reade and Rev. Compton Reade, 1887.

mansion for the treasure of recusants which they believed to be concealed there. They were not disappointed ; and amongst much other treasure which they found and removed were "the goods and treasure of Thomas Vachell, Esq.," amounting to £1,484 in gold, £8 in silver, plate valued at £200, and gold chains worth £100 and 100 marks.² It is some satisfaction to know that in the later years of the old man's life, according to an order made by the Court of Exchequer in 1603, both the property forfeited to the Queen and the treasure illegally seized by Sir Francis Knollys were given out of "pity for the distressed case of the said Thomas Vachell, whereof he has made petition to us," to his nephew and heir, "our trusty and well beloved subject Sir Thomas Vachell, Knt. "; and we may hope that the nephew, so enriched by his uncle's suffering for conscience sake, appreciably relieved his distress.

Harassed by fines, deprived of his property, and bereaved of his only child, Thomas Vachell had for some forty years previous to his death left Coley and resided on his wife's dower at Ipsden. There he lived to a great age, even to the decay of his senses and memory, cared for by his widowed sister Anne Montague, and unhappily in this weakened condition giving occasion for subsequent proceedings at law, in which his heir charges the sister with undue influence, the retention of a will, and the appropriation of goods, deeds, plate, &c., belonging to himself.³ He died at Ipsden 3rd May, 1610, and was buried at St. Mary's, Reading, on May 10th, administration of his property⁴ being subsequently granted to his nephew and successor, Sir Thomas Vachell, Knt.

Sir Thomas Vachell, who succeeded in his own right to the Coley estate in 1610, was the eldest nephew of the foregoing Thomas Vachell, being the son of his next brother, Walter, of Sulhampstead Bannister. He was born about 1560 ; was "dubbed" a Knight at the Charter House, then a ducal mansion belonging to the Howards, 11th May, 1603 ; and by his position and wealth brought an accession of importance to the family. There was not in his case the obstacle of "recusancy" ; he was "trusted and well-beloved" of his Sovereign ; and in consequence was able to hold the Coley estate with other lands belonging to the family as well as to increase it by

2. Public Record Office : Patent Roll, 1 James I., part 18, No. 35, 25th May, 1603.

3. Public Record Office : Chancery proceedings, 26th Nov., 1612 ; and Chancery depositions 721, 11 James I., Sir Thomas Vachell v. John Oakley and others.

4. P.C.C., Bancroft, 196.

his own purchase. A roll 5ft. in length preserved in the Public Record Office⁵ records the licence granted to him by the Crown for succession to his uncle's lands and tenements in Burghfield, Shinfield, Tilehurst, Reading, Sulhampstead Abbot, Sulhampstead Bannister and Mapledurham ; in 1611 he acquired a messuage in Burghfield called Buttons, by the term of his brother John's will ; in 1628 he is possessed of a moiety of the manor of Helay in Swaldale, co. York⁶ ; and in 1633 he is engaged in a law suit with John Phipps, of Swallowfield, Esqr., over the purchase for £1,550 of lands in the parish of Shinfield.⁷ He was thrice married ; first to an heiress, Alice Brooke ; then to Sarah, daughter of Sir William Lane, of Horton, co. Northampton ; and lastly when he was about 48 years old, on 23rd September, 1616, at the Church of St. Laurence in Reading, to Lettice, daughter of his neighbour Sir Francis Knollys, who at that time resided in the Abbey and was possessed of large property in Reading, some of which is held to the present day by his descendants. His third wife, probably much younger than himself, became after his death the wife of the celebrated John Hampden, and lived for many years of a second widowhood. By none of these marriages was there any issue ; and it is possible to see from the documentary evidence signs of the natural solicitude with which a wealthy and childless man would contemplate the future disposition of his property. He first disentailed it about the year 1608,⁸ according to a note endorsed upon one of the pedigrees,⁹ obtaining this freedom by payment of a sum of money to his brother Francis, the next heir ; and then began to apply himself to more direct methods of settlement. This is no place for the display of sentiment ; legal documents in their own blunt way must tell their story ; and in one of them, the same which mentions the disentanglement, it is related how Sir Thomas pressed his cousin Thomas, the eldest son of his uncle Francis, to marry, "hoping to have some continuance of his name and family," but the cousin "did then forbear to entertain it." It is only right to say that he was subsequently married twice ; but on this occasion disappointed of him, Sir Thomas urged the same upon his nephew Tanfield, "promising to settle divers of his lands upon him and his heirs if he would do

5. Patent Roll, 9 James I., pt. 30, No. 18.

6. P.R.O. : Bills and Answers, Charles I.

7. P.R.O. : Bills and Answers, Charles I.

8. P.R.O. : Bills and Answers, 6th July, 1640.

9. Rawlinson MS., B83, fo. 84b, Bodl. Libr.

so," and Tanfield, with a better grace, "within some few months after did marry Anne, a widow, and daughter of Mr. Cox, a city merchant," Sir Thomas settling the promised lands upon him, and among them Friars Moore. A little later than this Thomas "did incline to marry," and "there being then dwelling in the house of Sir Thomas Vachell a certain Margaret Meverell, daughter of Otwell Meverell, doctor of physic," he married her. Sir Thomas gave them £1,000 upon their marriage day and settled upon them the Manor of Upton. There were thus two claimants for Sir Thomas' favour; and probably he divided his property by settlement between them, assigning Friars Moor and other lands to Tanfield, who describes himself in his will as "of Reading," but reserving Coley and its lands for his cousin Thomas and his heirs. The will of Sir Thomas as between the two claimants for favour only confirms previous settlements. About this time Sir Thomas entered into an arrangement with the Vestry of his parish curiously illustrative of the way in which, contrary to all principle, "privilege" came to be granted to money or position to "appropriate" sittings in the House of God. It is recorded at length in the Churchwardens' accounts of St. Mary's, Reading.¹⁰ On the north side of St. Mary's Church were the remains of what had probably been in the previous century a chantry chapel opening out of the Church. It is described in 1617, the period of the arrangement, as

"A place, howse or ile sometymes used for a schoolehouse, seeminge to have beene formerlie used to the said Church as part thereof which for many years now last past hath bene and yett ys very ruynous and in great decaye and now will be very chargable to repayre; and yett to be made parte of the Church againe, were ytt not for the greatnesse of the charge which the parish cannott nor maye not undergoe, would be very conveynient, comly and gracefull. It is therefore allowed that to Sir Thomas Vachell, Knight, one of that parish and then present, to whome a great esteate of inheritance is descended within that parish, that he shall have it att his proper charge to make and maynteyne ytt for ornament to the Church and for seates for hym and his family, and therein to erect and sett a tombe or seemely monument in memory of his unckle and ancestor from whom a greate part of his estate yemediately descended, and likewise to make and maynteyne in or under the said ile a place for buriall for the said Sir Thomas Vachell and his posterity . . . at a yearly charge of 20s. for the private, sole, and appropriate use of hym and his heyres for ever."

The accompanying illustration, made from an old model of the Church, shows this "Vachell aisle," as it has been called until recent times. Its vault, the burying place of many generations of Vachell, and even of subsequent owners of the Coley estate, was laid open at

10. On the eve of publication, by F. N. A. Garry, M.A.



THE VACHELL AISLE.



THE VACHELL ALMSHOUSE.

the restoration of the Church in 1862, and in it were seen to lie 17 leaden coffins, made in the shape of the human body, with the name-plates as clear as on the day when they were made. The newspaper writer records his notice of one dated 1636.¹¹ It is very probable that as no burial is known to have taken place in that year, the last figure should have been read as 8, and that the coffin was that of the Knight himself. A few years before his death, 31st May, 1631, Sir Thomas was appointed¹² to report upon the mis-managed legacy of £8,350 made by John Kendrick in 1624 to the town of Reading; and perhaps arising out of opinions formed and the needs of the poor investigated on this occasion, he himself founded the almshouses in 1634 for six poor men, which remained in Castle Street until 1872, and of which an illustration is here given. The almshouse consisted of a range of brick tenements under one roof, with a common room in the middle, where one of the six was to read prayers for his brethren morning and evening out of the Book of Common Prayer. Lands in Shinfield, called Great and Little Garston, were charged by the Knight with an annuity of £40 for the maintenance of the house, which they continue to provide at the present day for the support of the inmates in the re-built almshouses.¹³ At the age of 70¹⁴ Sir Thomas died, and was buried on 20th July, 1638, in St. Mary's Church. According to the custom at the death of wealthy men, what was known as the "Great" or "Solemn" Funeral, a re-celebration with great pomp of the previous burial, but without the actual body of the deceased, somewhat similar to our modern "Memorial Service," was enacted on the 30th day of the next month. The order of the proceedings has been preserved,¹⁵ and notes in detail the procession from Coley to the Church in the following manner:—"The proceeding of the funeral of the Right Worshipful Sir Thomas Vachell, Knt., from his house at Cooly to the Parish Church of St. Marye's in the toune of Reading, the 30th of August, 1638.

Two Conductors.

Twenty poore men in gownes.

Mr. Thistlethwaite, the Standard.

Servants to Strangers.

11. *Reading Mercury*, 12th October, 1872.

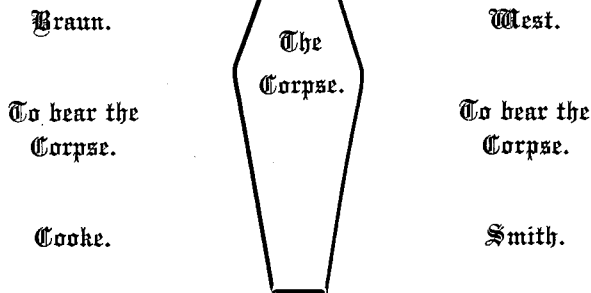
12. P.R.O.: State Papers, Domestic, 1631.

13. Report of Charity Commissioners, 1838, vol. 32, parts 1 and 28.

14. P.R.O.: Chancery proceedings, 5th May, 1640.

15. Rawlinson MS., B138 folio 30, Bodl. Libr.

Sir Thomas Bunberg's man and Mr. Temple's man.
 Mrs. Cox her servants.
 Mrs. Hamon's man and Mr. Chistletwaite's man.
 Mr. Tibbs' two men.
 Mr. John Vachell's men.
 Sir John Ebelyn's 2 men.
 Sir Francis Knowles', junior, 2 men.
 Sir Francis Knowles', senior, 2 men.
 Mr. Tanfelde Vachell's men, 2 & 2.
 Servants to the Defunct, 2 & 2.
 Gentlemen in Cloakes, 2 & 2.
 Mr. Walleis & Mr. Long.
 Mr. Nicholas Bowdon & Cliff.
 Mr. Durham & Mr. Horsepoole.
 Mr. Temple & Mr. Bunberg, Preacher.
 Mr. Thomas Vachell, the Penon.
 Mr. Blew mantle, Helme & Creast.
 Mr. Lancaster, Sworde & Targett.
 Mr. Yorke, the Coate of Armes.



The Cheife mourner.
 Mr. Tanfield Vachell,
 assisted by
 Sir Francis Knowles.
 Sir John Ebelyn.
 Mr. Francis Vachell.
 Mr. Richard Tibb.
 Thomas Felwes, to usher the ladies.
 Ladies & Gentlemen that are mourners.
 The Mayor of the Towne of Reading and his brethren.

VACHELL PEDIGREE (continued from last number).

(continued.)
A
 Thomas Vachell, of Coley, M.P. for Reading 1556, 1557; died at Ipsden 3 May, 1610; bur. at St. Mary's, Reading 8 May, 1610. Recusant.

Anne; bapt. at St. Mary's, Reading 20 Dec., 1549; bur. at St. Mary's, Reading 31 Dec., 1565.

(continued.)
B
 Walter Vachell, of Sulhampstead Bannister; d. circa 1612.
 Elizabeth, dr. of Sir Robert Lee, of Bucks.

Sir Thomas Vachell, Knt. = 1. Alice, dr. and coheiress of Coley, born c. 1560; bur. at St. Mary's, Reading 20 July, 1638. Will P.C.C. 1638.
 2. Sarah, dr. of Sir William Lane, Knt. of Horton, co. Northampton. No issue.
 3. Lettice, dr. of Sir Francis Knollys, of Reading Abbey; mar. at St. Laurence's, Reading 23 Sept., 1616; died as widow of John Hampden, at Coley; bur. at Great Hampden 29 March, 1666. No issue. Will P.C.C.

Knightley, 15 yrs. old 1623; died s.p. circa 1635.
 Sarah, died s.p.
 Elizabeth, mar. Long; bur. at St. Mary's, Reading 18 July, 1702.
 Lettice, m. John Okeham; bur. at Tilehurst 30 Jan., 1655.

Francis Vachell, of Tilehurst; b. 1562; died 1653 Will P.C.C.
 M. (1) Issue
 (2) Jane Gardner, widow of Aldermaston, 1628. (Berks Reg. of Marriage bonds.) Issue Bridget, bapt. at Tilehurst, 6 Oct. 1633.

Nicholas Vachell, of Warfield, and Binfield, called John. (Bills and Answers 23 June, 1640 P.R.O.) d. 1640. Will, Berks Wills, in Principal Registry; mar. Mary Vincent. Issue

Bridget mar. Bernard Cliffe of Oxford.

Tanfield Vachell, of Coley, M.P. 1641. High Sheriff of Berks 1643; bur. at St. Mary's, Reading 1 June 1658. Will P.C.C. 1658; Mar. (1) Anne dr. of Richard (or Robert) Cockes, of London; (2) Rebecca dr. of Sir William Leman, Bart., M.P. for Herts, 1645. No issue.

Thomas died s.p.
 Elizabeth mar. Alex. Thistlewayte of Wilts.
 Eliza mar. George Lambert of Warfield, Berks.

(continued.)
C
 Francis Vachell, of Bucks. = Anne, dr. of Robert Tanfield, of Gayton, co. Northampton.

Thomas Vachell = 2. Anne
 = 1. Margaret, dr. of Otwell Meverel (P.R.O. Chancery cases. 26 Jan. 1640).

John. Henry. Anthony, Will, P.C.C. 1626. Elizabeth.

Thomas Vachell, of Coley and New Windsor, born 1644; bur. at St. Mary's Reading, 11 May, 1683. Will, P.C.C.
 Anne, dr. of William Tailleur als. Danvill, Surveyor of Works at Windsor Castle.
 Lettice mar. Thomas Denton.

Tanfield Vachell = Dorothy Bretton (to be continued.)
 Thomas, bur. at St. Mary's, Reading, 18 Aug., 1670.
 William, bapt. at St. Mary's, Reading, 26 Jan., 1671.
 Elizabeth, bapt. at St. Mary's, Reading, 31 Aug., 1676; bur. there 31 Jan., 1709. Will, P.C.C.
 Frances, bapt. at St. Mary's, Reading, 14 Aug., 1674, mar. Christopher Lyon-crown.
 Anne, M . . . Desfontaines.

The substance of his will,¹⁶ proved 5th October, 1638, is as follows :—

"In the Name of God, Amen. The last will of mee Sir Thomas Vachell of Coley, co. Berks, made this 7th Jan., 1634. . . . My bodie to bee buried in ye Ile by mee builte in St. Marie's Church in Readinge. As touching my Mannors and landes my will is that the same shall remaine and bee to such of my name, blond and kindred to whom I have formerly assured the same. . . . As touching my personal estate, a true inventorie bee made of all my plate, hanginges, Bedding, lynnens, brasse, pewter &c. in the house wherein I dwell att Coley; and I doe give unto Dame Lettice Vachell, my loving wife for her life all the said hangings &c. and three partes out of four of my plate . . . which shall remain after her decease to such of my name and kindred as shall and ought to have my said dwelling house; and the fourth parte of my plate I bequeath unto Tanfeild Vachell my nephew. I give to my wife one halfe of my milche kyne at Coley, my Coche and Coach horses, and the one halfe of all my corne and grayne in my barnes att Coley and all my hogges and poultry about my house at Coley. I give unto my neece Elizabeth Thistlethwaite daughter of my brother John Vachell and wife of Mr. Thistlethwaite £500 for her life and after to her childe, and if she have more than one then to be equally divided amongst them. I give to that daughter of my brother Francis Vachell which he had by his first wife and is now unmarried £100 towards her preferment in marriage. . . . I give to my nephew Barnard Cliffe of Weston £100. I give to the poore of Readinge £10. I bequeath to my servants Symen West, Thomas Nicholls, £6 apeece yearly; to John Bushnell £10; to John Nethercliffe £10; to John Swayne my Cooke £10; to Matthew Kent £10; to Margaret my wives Chambermaid £5; to my other servants half-year's wages. After my debts (&c.) are paid, the overplus to be employed in the purchase of lands of inheritance to be settled to such of my name (&c.) I ordaine Richard Libbe, of Hardwicke, co. Oxon, Esqre., and John Saunders, of Reading, Esqre., my exors. . . . My exors. shall erect a Tombe in the Ile of Saint Marie's Church for myself, my wife and my deceased uncle Thomas Vachell Esq. who lieth buried in St. Marie's Church in Reading.

THOMAS VACHELL.

Witnesses { THOMAS SMITH.
FRANCIS PHIPPES.
LEONARD WELBECKE.

It must have been not long after his death that his widow Lettice became the wife of John Hampden. It cannot be certainly said whether Coley, which belonged to her for life, became after their marriage their settled home. Probably it did not. It is probable that the Lord of Great Hampden made his home on his own estate; nor are there any local traditions attaching him to Reading beyond the fact of his commanding his "Greencoats" at the siege of that town and being present at its capitulation. But after 24th June, 1643, when he died from wounds received on Chalgrove Field a week earlier, Dame Lettice may have returned to her old home;

16. P.C.C., Lee 126.

and yet it can be hardly supposed that the widow of John Hampden was mistress of Coley house when, as was the case on 16th May of the following year, King Charles, her late husband's foe, made it his headquarters. She may have lived in a kind of out-lawry neither at Great Hampden nor at Coley until Reading passed into the holding of the Parliament, and she felt herself safe in returning to her mansion there; or the house mentioned in the previous paper as "Lady Vachell's" may during this time have provided her with a dwelling less pretentious and therefore more secure than Coley. It is certain that in 1665, when she made her will, she was residing at Coley, though at her death in the next year she was buried, 29th March, 1666, in accordance with her will, by the side of her late husband at Hampden. Her will¹⁷ in substance is as follows:—

I, Leticia Vachell, *alias* Hampden, of Coley, widdow. I bequeath my body to the earth . . . to be buried at Hampden by my deare Husband; to my sister Anne Temple £50; to my sister the lady Cecilia Knollys my ring with Foure dyamonds, which was given me for a Legacie by my Lady Pagett; to my niece Mrs. Margaret Hamond my Coach Horses, Coach Harness (&c.); unto my nephew Mr. Robert Hamond my sute of Hangings of Forrest worke which are in the Dineing Roome; unto my neece Mrs. Leticia Hamond, my God-daughter my tablett of Gold, Enameld and set with Rubyes and Ophalls, wherin is the picture of my Aunt the Countess of Leicester, my gold Fanne, coache, 16 chayres all of needleworke belonging to the dining Room and the Turkey Carpet (&c.); to my grand-child Mrs. Elizabeth Hamond my dyamond lockett; to my grand-child Mary Hamond my dyamond Ring, which was given me by her grand-father Hampden; to my grand-child Letitia Hamond my wedding Ring, £10 (&c.); to my neece Durham my olive-coloured Bed; to my faithful pastor Mr. Christopher Fowler £20; to Leticia Thistlethwaite my Table Dyamond Ring which I bought of her mother for £20; unto Francis Knollys my nephew I returne those 10 pictures left for him by his deceased Father; to John Bushnell my servant £25; and to Margaret his wife £25; (bequests to other servants); unto the Three Parishes in Reading £10 apiece to be distributed among the poore. I leave unto my dear sonne [her step-son] Richard Hampden, Esquire, whom I appoint my sole Exor. 25th Sept. 1665. 17th of Charles II.

LE VACHELL.

Witnesses { WILLIAM DURHAM.
MAT. POOLE.
THOMAS GERARD.

The subsequent succession to the Coley estate after the death of Sir Thomas Vachell and Dame Lettice, and its continuance in the family, will be treated in a later paper.

¹⁷. P.C.C., Mico, 90.

(To be continued.)