

Original Document.

GRANT BY EDWARD III. TO SIR JOHN AVENEL OF £1000
FOR THE CAPTURE OF SIR ROLLAND DE DINANT
LE FILZ, A BRETON KNIGHT. Dated 4 July, 21 of his
Reign. (1347.)

(Communicated by JOSEPH BAIN, F.S.A. Scot.)

"Edwardus Dei gracia Rex Anglie et Francie, Dominus Hibernie, Omnibus &c. Sciatis quod cum dilectus et fidelis noster Johannes Avenel, Rollandum de Dynaunt le filz, militem de Britannia, adversario nostro Francie adherentem, per ipsum Johannem nuper de guerra captum, in manus nostras reddiderat tanquam nobis captivatum, Nos ad bonum servicium et gestum laudibilem ipsius Johannis in hac parte consideracionem habentes, volentes igitur provide ipsum prout convenit respicere, gracie concessimus pro nobis et heredibus nostris eidem Johanni in remuneracionem sui servicii antedictæ Mille libras de dono nostro, percipiendas sibi heredibus seu executoribus suis infra tres annos, videlicet, in Festo Sancti Michaelis anno Domini millesimo trescentesimo quadragésimo octavo, Ducentas et quinquaginta marcas, et in Festo Pasche proximo sequenti Ducentas et quinquaginta marcas" [and so forth at Michaelmas and Easter till fully paid] "de exitibus subsidii lanarum coriorum et pellium lanutarum infra regnum nostrum Anglie nobis concessi in portu Londoniensi in quorumcunque manus dictum subsidium deveniri, volentes quod tallie de dicta summa Mille librarum statim cum per ipsum Johannem vel attornatos suos petite fuerint ad receptum Scaccarii nostri leventur et eidem Johanni vel eius in hac parte attornatis liberentur. In cuius rei testimonium has litteras nostras fieri fecimus patentes Teste me ipso juxta Calesium vicesimo quarto die Julii Anno regni nostri Anglie vicesimo primo, regni vero nostre Francie octavo.

Per ipsum Regem.¹

A broad tag with a fragment of the Great Seal is appended.

The indorsements shew that by the 27th May, 1354,² the gallant receiver of this munificent gift had got full payment. Epitomized from the Latin, the document is to the effect that Edward (III.) of England grants to John Avenel, who had taken captive sir Rolland de Dynant the son, a Breton knight, and given him up to the King as the latter's prisoner, the large sum of £1000 as a reward. The amount to be paid half yearly within three years at Easter and Michaelmas by instalments of 250 marks from the issues of the subsidy of wool, hides and fleeces granted to the King in the Port of London. The gift was made in the camp before Calais on 24th July, 1347, a period when the King was in the height of his renown. He had won the great battle of Cressy the year before, and now Calais, which had been resolutely defended for eleven months, was about to fall into his hands, to remain for two centuries an appanage of the English crown, eventually the cherished relic of its great continental possessions.

We know neither the county nor the immediate connections of Sir John Avenel, whom the King thus honoured. And we might have

¹ Exchequer T. R. Miscellanea in the Public Record Office, No. 77.

² Seven years, however, instead of the three in the document, had elapsed.

known as little about his Breton captive but for the following interesting document which fell by chance under the writer's notice. It has been preserved by a painstaking Essex antiquary, James Strangeman, and his coadjutor, Sir Richard St George, Norroy King at Arms in the time of Elizabeth and James I, in their volume entitled "Genealogical Collections" (Brit. Mus. Addl. MSS., No. 5937, Plut. clxxxii, D.) It occurs in fol. 94 to this effect:—

"Nos Rolland de Dynaun chivaler sire de Montenfant faisons a savoir a touz a queuz il apertent comme monsieur Johan de Hardersell chivaler Angloys soit nostre prisoner pris en leal guerre qe noz est oblissons Rolland nostre filz et a li donons pouair a quitter le dit monsieur Johan de tutz maners de sermens a noz faitz et a autres a de la recoverer [c]est a savoir en delivrant le persone et lestate du dit Rolland nostre filz et saunz rempair envers Monsieur Johan Davauell chivaler Dangleter a qui le dit Rolland est prisoner A° 1347."

Appended is a sketch of the seal of the original, which seems to have borne four lozenges in fesse and three roundels in chief.

Sir Rolland de Dinant, knight, Lord of Montenfant, having taken prisoner Sir John de Hardersell, an English knight, gives him these letters patent in order, if possible, to arrange the deliverance of his own son Rolland, who, as already seen, had been taken by sir John Avenel, or, as he calls him, Davenel. Sir Rolland the father gives his son power to free sir John de Hardersell of all obligations, oaths, &c., undertaken for his ransom, which, it may be inferred, he was to employ in liberating the younger Breton knight from sir John Avenel. The expression "saunz rempair" *i.e.* without recourse, probably meant that if Hardersell did not pay the son's ransom to Avenel or if the latter did not or could not liberate the son, the father would still be bound by his knightly honour. This is a little obscure however. Avenel did well in the affair, if he got the prisoner's ransom in addition to the King's gift. The whole is a curious example of the business-like way in which the battles of that age were conducted. If a combatant was known to be a man of means, his life was pretty safe, when no personal animosity existed between him and his captors; if, however, he was slender in his possessions, he stood a chance of being left to the mercy of the "rascalry" who hung on the skirts of a mediæval army.¹

"Montenfant" is doubtless the chateau of Montafiant, the ruins of which are still visible, according to the guide books, on a scarped hill about twelve kilometres north-east of Dinan in Brittany. It is said to have passed from the house of Dinan to those of Laval and Tournemine, and its mural enceinte, almost entire, is described as triangular and situated on a Roman camp. It is not unlikely a place of some consequence, even in that land of castles, some of which, as Fougeres, Vitre, or Josselin, one would like to see described by the hand of Mr. G. T. Clark.

¹ The Avenels came in the train of the Conqueror, and in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries were a great and powerful family. They sprang from Sartilly and Les Biards in the Cotentin. They appear at an early date in Nottingham and Northamptonshires. Their chief possessions, however, were on the Scottish

border, where they were Lords of Eskdale and considerable benefactors to Melrose Abbey, their charters to which are very curious in their reservations of sporting rights. This real connection of the family with Melrose has received additional illustration from Sir Walter Scott in "The Monastery."