

ART. XII.—*The Mesne Manor of Thornflat.*—By W. JACKSON,
F.S.A.

Read at Egremont, August 30th, 1881.

THE information with regard to the Manor of Drigg, given in Nicolson and Burn's History of Cumberland, is most meagre and unsatisfactory. It seems to have been parcelled out at an early period; one portion of it, by purchase of Sir William Pennington from Sir Nicholas Curwen early in the seventeenth century, came into possession of the Muncaster family, and so remains. The Mesne Manor of Thornflat is held under that portion of the Manor of Drigg, as that in turn is held under the Barony of Egremont. It consists of about 120 acres, rather more than 100 of which is the Lords Demesne; $15\frac{1}{4}$ is a customary tenement, at an annual rent of 7s., and a fine at death of lord and tenant or alienation of £7; and another of about $3\frac{1}{2}$ acres, paying on similar occasions 2s. and £2. Surely this is a good specimen of the feudal system in microcosm; and it might be said of the lord of this province, as it has been by Beranger of the Roi d' Yvetôt:—

Qu'il faisait ses quatre repas
 Dans son palais de chaume,
 Et sur un âne pas à pas
 Parcourait son royaume;
 Joyeux simple et croyant le bien,
 Pour toute garde il n'avait rien
 Qu' un chien
 Quel bon petit roi c'était la.

But William Thomson, although he was placed in a position somewhat similar to the petty King of Beranger's song, was by no means a man of frivolous character. The little information we have of him is indirect, and acquired entirely from a note-book, from which, by the kindness of
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his descendants, who still own this interesting property, I am allowed to make extracts. It is a record of his doings as an active Justice of the Peace from October 27th, 1656, to some time in the year 1659, and contains a list of 90 marriages performed by him between November 14th, 1656, and December 14th, 1657. Between the former date and August 10th, 1658, he issued about 120 warrants, and over 130 recognizances were entered into before him. He was, I suspect, a lawyer; scarcely, I should think, a royalist; for I am inclined to believe, apart from the respect in which he was probably held, that the way he was resorted to by all classes for any of the services which it was his duty to render, arose mainly from the fact that the various gentlemen who under ordinary circumstances would have been in the commission of the peace were too much attached to the royal cause to be trusted in that capacity, and hence that his dwelling at Thornflat was the centre to which lovers resorted to tie the indissoluble knot; others to apply for warrants; and again that others were reluctantly compelled to appear before him to be bound over to keep the peace, or to appear on other occasions for a region extending from Dalton on the south to Ennerdale on the north. I have mentioned him as officiating at marriages; and it is perhaps necessary to explain that by an Act passed August 14th, 1653, "Registers" were to be appointed for every parish, to whom were to be delivered twenty-one days before such intended marriage, the names of the respective parties, where each party to be married lived, the names, surnames, additions, and places of abode of the parties to be married, and of their parents, guardians, and overseers, all which the said Registrar should publish three Lord's Days then next following at the close of the morning exercises in the public meeting places, or, if the parties desired it, in the Market-place next to the said church and chapel, on three market-days in three several weeks next following between the hours of eleven and two, which

which done, the Registrar should make a certificate thereof, without which the persons thereafter authorised should not proceed in such marriage. That such persons intending to be married should come before some Justices of the Peace of the same county, city, or town, with such certificate ;” then follows the form of words to be repeated by the man and woman, closely resembling that used by the Society of Friends. The ancient Registers were placed in the hands of these so-called “Registers,” into which, or in continuation of which, they were to make entries of all marriages, &c., births and burials, a duty which I am afraid in many instances they performed in a slovenly and most unsatisfactory manner. As a rule, the couples desiring to be joined together presented themselves at Thornflat, and on more than one occasion more than a single couple came for that purpose ; sometimes Mr. Thomson seems to have attended at the house of one or other of the contracting parties, and, puritan though he might be, he must have joined in the festivities which could not fail to be associated with the happy occasion. On November 9, 1657, he performed no less than five marriages of couples all belonging to Saint Bees, and I think at that place, though the entry says only “performed before me,” and does not say where. The form of entry in the book varies, for the writer ceases to enter the names of the witnesses, but never omits to state what “Register” certifies. The following is a specimen entry of the complete form, and is the first in the book:—

“The 15th day of November, 1656, was Robert Russell and Mary Besbrowne, of Whitehaven, marryed before me at Thornflatt, in the presence of John Brockbancke, Willm Troughton, and Richard Thomson, John Wennington’s certificate dated the 12th of this month.”

Mr. Thomson, with a due regard to the importance of the Act he was authorised to perform, prefixes to his list of marriages a copy of the register’s certificate, to be presented to him authorising him to marry:—

“These

“These are to certifie those whom it may concern, that the intended marriage between A. B., of the parish of D. w'thin the county of E., of the one part, and E. J., of the pish of L., in the sayd county, of the other part, have been by me 3 several Lord's dayes together last past published in the pish church of D. aforesaid, according to the late Act of Pleament in that case provided. And noe exception have been taken against the same. Given under my hand the 19th of May, 1657. W. P., parish register.”

The form of justice's certificate was : —

“I, W. T., one of the justices of the peace wthin the county of C., doe certify that this 3 of July, 1657, J. S. of the parish of E., and T. R., of the parish of D., both wthin the said county, were at T. duly marryed before me according to the late Act of Parliament. Witnesse my hand and seale the day and yeare above sayd. Witnesses of sayd marryages, W. T., C. D., and E. F.”

As anything like a complete list of the “Registers” may be irrecoverable from any other sources, I append the names and respective parishes of the “Parish Registers,” upon whose certificates William Thomson acted between Oct. 27th, 1656 and December 14th, 1657 : —

Whicham, John Wennington and John Muncaster; Haile, John Vickars and William Wilson; Dalton, George Postlethwaite; Ponsoby, Barnard Swainson; Saint Bees, Henry Bigrigg; Irton, Alexander Hayton and John Eilbeck; Gosforth, Henry Ben; Whitbeck, John Muncaster; Broughton, John Parker; Egremont, Thomas Pearson; Drigg, William Parke; Bootle, Edmund Coats; Wastdale, Nicholson Dixon and John Parker; Millom, John Wennington; Ulpha, John Wennington; St. Bridgett's, John Vickars; Muncaster, Henry Willson and Thomas Wilson; Inerdale, John Frear; Grissmere, John Benson; Corney, William Jackson; Arlecdon, Thomas Wood; Lamplugh, Pickering Hewer.

The warrants are, naturally, for similar assaults or peccadilloes as such documents are issued for at the present day : —

“Annas Hunter, November 14, 1656, pays 2s. for one against Richard, her husband, for peace.”

Another form of family quarrel is recorded as follows :—

“Feb. 12, Joseph Hodgson, of Weddicar, for peace against Joseph Steel, his son-in-law.”

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A third warrant, issued April 20th, 1657, is for a more serious offence:—

“Hugh Hodgean, of Whitesham, against Edmond Myres, George Canny, and Thomas Taylour of Thwaites, for the breaking of his house, and taking £20 in moneys and other goods forth of the same the 16th of this instant, April.”

On June 31, 1657, John Moore, of Irton, gets a warrant against his

“Printice, John Tyson, for departing from his services.”

On the other hand,

“May 7, Henry Boyradell obtains a warrant against his master, Joseph Bebie, for immoderately beating him.”

Another entry of a more serious nature, on July 15th of the same year:—

“Anthony Fox and Ralfe Kitchen, of Millom, Joseph com-
plained that the said persons did, at Thwaites, within his Constable-
wick, riotously assault and beat him with staffes, pitchforks, and
other weapons, against the peace of his highness the Lord Protector,
and is bound in £20 to prosecute his said information at the next
sessions.”

I observe (not without satisfaction, for it says something for progress,) that assaults were more common among what we call the “superior classes” then than now. John Bird, of Egremont, “clark,” gets a warrant of peace on May 31st, 1659, against Isack Antrobus, John Thomson, Henry Walker, and Nicholas Bragg, and it appears that the much decried system of cross summonses flourished so long ago as in these good old times, for on June 2nd, Isak Antrobus gets a warrant of peace against John Bird; members of the Latus, of the Curwen, of the Skelton, Senhouse, and other old families have, time and time, to answer for minor brutalities. The following are specimens of the recognisances entered into:—

“Jenat Hambleton, of Middlecoulderton, widdow, in £40, to prosecute Richard Chappelhow, of Whitehaven, for the supposed stealing of her gray mare.”

“Anthony

“Anthony Asbourner, High Corney, with Anthony Jackson and John Asbourner, in £40, for behaviour lykwise for Elsa, his wife, and Anthony, his son, he towards Richard Singleton.”

Upon the whole the fines seem higher, comparatively, than in similar cases at the present day. Many of the miscellaneous entries are of interest. The first two notes indicate that there were restrictions on travelling at that disturbed period:—

“John Myres pays one shilling for a pass to travel to London on April 20, 1657; and on May 10, Joseph Nicholson obtains one to go to the Isle of Man.”

Passing on to another subject:—

“Joseph Herbert was convict the 10th day of March, 1657, before me by the oath of Will Ffilbeck, for the swearing of five ppane oaths on the same day, viz., three of them by God, one by his troth, and one by his soule.”

Similar entries occur by “God’s hart,” “God’s blood,” and “God’s wounds,” all pointing to the prereformation origin of the oaths. The fine in each instance was 2d. per oath. A more lengthy and solemn entry, at any rate so far as judicial form is concerned, occurs on April 6th, 1657:—

“Be it remembered that Richard Hodgkin, of Drigg, within the county of Cumberland, came before me, William Thomson, one of the justices of the peace of this county, and did acknowledge himself to be owing unto the Lord Protector and his successors the sume of rolb of lawfull money of England, of his lands and tenements, goods and chattells, to be levied by way of Recognizances upon condition that if this said Richard Hodgkin doe at any time hereafter play upon his vyall or any other instrument out of his own house, and thereon but for the recreation of himself and his family that then his recognizance to be void, or else to stande and continue in force.”

“In December, 1656, were 24 persons of the parish of Drigg convicted before me for carding severall lord’s dayes, and execution made according to the acte in that case made.”

Muncaster and other parishes were no better than Drigg, for:—

“September 14th, 1657, were 12 of Muncaster and other parishes convict before me for drinking in Ulpha on the Lord’s day, and execution made by stocking them all.”

Why

Why the record of marriages ceases as it does, December 14th, 1657, so long before the other entries terminate, or why they cease at the particular time they do, I cannot explain; probably the latter may be accounted for by the uncertain state into which everything fell, owing to the death of Cromwell, on the 3rd of September, 1658.

Thanks to the kindness of the Rev. Kenneth Mackenzie Pugh, I ascertain from the Drigg Register that "William Thomson, of Thornflat, was buried on the 3rd day of April, 1670."