

Exsuperius.

By REV. W. MAPLES, M.A.



XUPERIUS HARRISON—this Christian name, seen in a deed of transfer of property under date December 2nd, 1881, excited my curiosity and attention to the name. By this deed a house was handed over to the rector and wardens of Fenny Bentley as a residence for the head-teacher of the village school, so long as that teacher is “a communicant member of the Church of England and the Bible and Church Catechism are taught in the school.” The Rev. Jeremiah Barnes, of Bentley Cottage, was the author of that proviso, and Exuperius Harrison was his gardener, and signed the deed as witness.

Again searching the old registers of my parish, Fenny Bentley, I discovered that in the first half of the eighteenth century it was a local Gretna Green; during more than fifty years only four couples belonging to the parish were married in their own church, but many from all parts of Derbyshire and the adjoining counties came and were married there. In fact, throughout the whole country at that period people seemed to think it wrong not to run away and get married on the sly. The Hardwick Marriage Act of 1754 came none too soon, though its conditions were somewhat too stringent; clandestine marriages were properly checked by its provisions.

Searching the register then for this period, I came across an entry: “1715 (*i.e.*, 171 $\frac{5}{8}$), February 17th. Married Exuperius Browne, of Brampton, mason, and Elizabeth Gallimore, of Ashbourne.” I was thus confirmed in my desire to track the name Exsuperius to its origin, and following the clues has given me much pleasure and amusement. First

I enquired among the older folk as to who remembered the gardener at the cottage, and I found some who could speak of their old acquaintance, "Ex." Harrison, for so was his name shortened in common use. Asking where he got so extraordinary a name from, I was told it came from Mugginton, where to this day the name appears on a brass in the church; and as to the origin of his name, this was the account. Before "Ex." Harrison's birth, his mother, attending the service there one Sunday afternoon, was so tickled by the funny name she saw before her, that she determined within herself, "If this child of mine proves to be a boy, that and none other shall be his name; I will call him Exuperius." A boy was born, and he became Exuperius Harrison. My curiosity led me one Friday to walk over to Mugginton to see this brass, and when in the village I had a chat with the schoolmaster and called at the rectory for the church key. Ten days after I was away from home burying an old friend, when a stranger called at the rectory in the evening. As I was absent, he introduced himself to my daughter: "I am a policeman in plain clothes sent over by my superintendent to enquire whether the rector of Fenny Bentley had been over to Mugginton, and when, for the church had been entered and the alms-box broken open." The girl at the rectory, he explained, said that the last man who had had the church key was a middle-aged man, who had manifestly seen better days; whilst the schoolmaster told how he had introduced himself to him as rector of Fenny Bentley, and spoke of the presumed object of his visit. On my return this policeman's visit caused me no small amusement, first from the compliment of being middle-aged, as I was then seventy-two, and next for the girl's discernment, inasmuch as I shortly before had sacrificed a large share of clerical income on retiring on the ground of advancing years to a smaller parish. To give the sequel of this Mugginton visit before returning to the name Exsuperius, happily (!) for me it turned out that the breaking into the church had taken place the week after I had been there. Another church a few miles away

was also broken into about the same time. Business also took me to this church during the following autumn, with a lady as my companion. The parish clerk began to tell her of the burglary, and pointed to the window that had been smashed. I interjected: "Don't you know I did it?" He was startled, and I went on: "You believe the same man did this that broke into Mugginton?" "Certainly, sir." So I told him of the policeman's visit, and he had a hearty laugh.

Here I may add that Exuperius Harrison's brother-in-law visited Bentley church in the summer of 1912. He told me he had named a son after his uncle, but that he had buried him whilst still a young man four years before at Colwyn Bay in North Wales.

As to my other discovery of the name in the Bentley marriage register, the Rev. E. C. Mackenzie has kindly searched his Brompton registers, but fails to find the name therein. He has, however, unearthed the Family Bible of the father of our bridegroom, containing this entry: "The day and time that Exsuperius Browne took his wife the 14 day of the 2 month, 1675." (She probably was a Cundey.) The next entry is: "Exuperius Brown Bourn ye 18th of ye 10 m., 1685." The latter was therefore thirty years old when he married Elizabeth Gallimore, of Ashbourne, at Bentley, as recorded above.

And now let us return to our investigation.

In 1729, says Lysons,¹ during some alterations in Risley Park, workmen turned up an antique basso-relievo silver dish of Roman workmanship, 20 inches long, 15 inches broad, and 7½ inches high, standing on a square base, around which an inscription in Roman capitals was rudely cut with a pointed instrument. A similar dish having about the same time been discovered in Northumberland, the double discovery came to the ears of Dr. Stukeley, the great antiquary of the period. He pursued this Risley dish into Cheshire, and found that, being all black when dug up, the finders had broken it up and shared the metal, being unaware that it was silver.

¹ Lysons' *Derbyshire*, p. ccvii.

Anne, Lady Aston, daughter and co-heir of Sir Henry Willoughby, lady of the manor and the proprietor of Risley Park, had collected some of the fragments, from which a drawing was made, and Dr. Stukeley wrote a paper in description of this silver dish, which he read to the London Society of Antiquaries on April 8th, 1736. This paper was separately printed, and appended to it is a full-sized print of the dish, taken from the drawing, the engraving being made by Mr. Van der Gucht. In view of this plate having been presented to a church, we may note that hunting scenes appear, and a temple, within which is a figure, which Stukeley supposed to represent Pan. As Stukeley read the inscription on the base, it ran: "Exsuperius episcopus ecclesiæ Bogiensi dedit." As to this reading we shall see there is grave doubt. "Rudely cut with a pointed instrument" are Stukeley's words as to its elaboration. Not knowing of the existence of a copy of this paper within the county, I visited the British Museum and read the copy there with much enlightenment. All seemed so clear as Stukeley tells. In 1421 the Duke of Clarence, brother of our Henry V., was in Tourraine in command of an English force, and he was posted in the church and churchyard of Great Bouge. On the other side of a little stream running into the Loire was Little Bouge, whose church and churchyard were likewise held by the French, commanded by the Duc d'Alençon, and at some distance was a contingent of Scotch. A battle ensued at the bridge over the stream between the opposing forces, which ended disastrously for the English, seeing that in the conflict their leader, the Duke of Clarence, was killed. This is Stukeley's recital of the death of Clarence in 1421 at Beaugé in Tourraine. (Beaugé, we may mention, is about 120 miles, as the crow flies, from Bayeux, 300 miles from Toulouse; this we mention in view of what follows.) Stukeley assumes that the dish found at Risley was loot from Beaugé, being a gift to one of the churches of Bouge, which he identifies with Beaugé, from a bishop named Exsuperius. He also identifies the donor with an Exsuperius whom he supposes to

have been bishop at one time of Bayeux, and at another of Toulouse, in the beginning of the fifth century. But (and there is great virtue in this but) bound up with the museum copy of Stukeley's paper is, in MSS., a French criticism of his theory. Imagination, we allow, is a necessary equipment for the antiquarian, for he must build up theories to account for and connect his facts, so much is in the realms of the unknown; but imagination must not run riot and play havoc with probabilities. The facts surrounding any discovery in the antiquarian world must be calmly viewed and all allowed for. Now the Frenchman attacks Stukeley's identification of Beaugé and Bouge, for certain reasons which, with other adverse thoughts, we will recount. He asserts that there is not, nor ever was, a village in France called Bouge,¹ and so the fairy tale of a battle at Bouge falls to the ground. It took place at Beaugé, not Bouge; and with regard to Stukeley's reading "Bogiensi" in the inscription on the base of the dish discovered at Risley, he calls attention to Stukeley's allowance that the inscription is rudely scratched, so that it is permissible to suggest another reading, for he will not allow that by laws of Latin composition there could be any connection between the name Beaugé and the form Bogiensi. Nor is there any need to roll into one Exsuperius, Bishop of Bayeux, and Exsuperius, Bishop of Toulouse; the name was a sufficiently common one in Roman Gaul. There are no less than seven of the name mentioned in the *Dictionary of Christian Biography*, in which book these two bishops are treated of as separate personalities. Beaugé was within the diocese of neither of these men, and the distances (respectively 120 miles and 300 miles from Beaugé of Bayeux and Toulouse) render it most improbable that the bishop of either should have presented a

¹ Possibly the Frenchman's denial of the existence at any time of a place in France called Bouge is too absolute. There probably was such a place about the period in question, either in France or England, inasmuch as Bouge appears as a surname in a pedigree of the family of Bradbourne, of Hough, just before the reign of Henry V. as that pedigree is given on page 281, vol. xxxv., of the *Journal of the Derbyshire Archaeological Society*. Locally the "l" is dropped in pronouncing the word Boulge, near Woodbridge, co. Suffolk.

valuable silver dish to any church at Beaugé. Thus far the reasons against identifications and in criticism of the reading Bogiensi in the inscription.

But now alter one letter, and for a roughly scratched "O" read "A," according to the version given by Lysons, where the inscription runs: "Exsuperius episcopus ecclesiæ Bagiensis dedit." Bagiensis would be a normal form of a Latin adjective, meaning "of Bayeux." Exsuperius was the first Bishop of Bayeux in 405, whilst in 1417 Henry V., in his French campaign, besieged, took, and sacked Bayeux. The treasured gift of her first bishop was a portion of the treasure removed from its cathedral when the city was thus taken and sacked.

But supposing we assume that this correction is much more probable (as the French commentator suggests) than Stukeley's surmises, we must then ask the further question, How this silver dish found its way from Bayeux, in Normandy, to Risley, in Derbyshire, to be dug up there in 1729?

Now we know that there was in the army of Henry V. in the Agincourt campaign a body of men from Derbyshire and Staffordshire. This is proved by the shrouded monument in Fenny Bentley church to the memory of Thomas Beresford. As a youth he lived at his paternal home by the side of the Dove near Beresford Dale. With his father, brothers, and their retainers he fought at Agincourt. The final pentameter of the epitaph tells this. Speaking of Thomas Beresford's prowess as a soldier, it asserts: "Francia testatur, Curia testis Agen." We ask, then, whether in this Derbyshire force thus shown to be with Henry V. there was any representative of Risley to be found? A junior branch of the Willoughbys of Willoughby, co. Notts., at that period were lords of the manor of Risley. Were any members of that family present, then, in Normandy? Sir N. Harris Nicolas appends to his *History of the Battle of Agincourt* a copy of the roll containing the names of the chief men in the English army with Henry V. To the names of two we would call attention. On page 80 there occurs the

entry, "Thomas, S^r de Willoughby"; on page 84 the surname recurs, "William, Sire de Willoughby." There were junior members of the Beresford family, with their head, as was the usual custom. Who, then, followed these Willoughbys to the wars? A Willoughby acquired Risley, *temp.* Edward III., by marriage with the heiress of Morteyne. Hugh, the youngest son of this marriage, settled at Risley, and the family remained there until that branch became extinct in 1625, when Henry Willoughby, made a baronet in 1611, died without a male heir, and it is not improbable that some member of the Risley branch may have been with the head of the family in Normandy, not only at Agincourt in 1415, but also in 1417, when Henry V. besieged, took, and sacked Bayeux. There is no mention of the name Beresford in Sir N. Harris Nicolas' *History of the Battle of Agincourt*, yet the Beresfords were men of consideration; and we know from the Bentley tomb that a younger son, Thomas, who afterwards settled at Newton Grange and Fenny Bentley, was at Agincourt, so the head of the Willoughby family may have required the attendance of squires and other junior members of the stock to render military service to their King. This, I allow, is only a supposition, but facts stand out. A silver dish, once the gift of Exsuperius, its bishop in the fifth century, to his church (in all probability) of Bayeux, looted (with like probability) when Bayeux was sacked by the English in 1417 after the siege by Henry V., was dug up at Risley, in Derbyshire, in 1729. Willoughbys were at the battle of Agincourt; Willoughbys were owners of Risley then, and I would suggest that a Willoughby entered the church at Bayeux during the sack, he saw the dish, and (Achan-like) yielded to the temptation. So entrancing a bit of loot as this antique basso-relievo was too much for him; he seized it, even though belonging to a church, and on his return home brought it with him to Risley. Then either misfortunes arose in his family and superstitious fears arose—"Plate stolen from a church brings with it ill-luck"—(Spelman would have agreed with him there)—or old age crept on and conscience

began to suggest "A theft from God," or maybe it was hidden at the time of the Civil War. Anyway, the dish must be got rid of, and so it was buried, to be dug up again in 1729, when alterations were being made in the Manor House of Risley. Stukeley, I believe on insufficient data, gives one account of the origin of this dish and its transport into Derbyshire. I offer another as more likely to be correct. I do not dogmatise, for on certain points I crave more light. But, in conclusion, I would observe that one thing is clear about this name Exsuperius. It did not come into this county as the result of the finding of the dish in 1729; the name was here already. It occurs, as will be noted in the list of places where it has been found, in 1580, in 1600, in 1601, in 1627, in 1675, in 1685, and in 1716, as probably elsewhere and at other times. It has been suggested that some of the instances of its occurrence are doubtful, because of the vagaries of its spelling, but those who know the eccentricities of English orthography up to a recent date will not be moved to more than a passing doubt when they find so uncommon a Christian name appearing under various guises: Exsuperius, Exuperius, Exupie, Xpor, Exer, or the like.

The following is a list of the occurrences of the name traced by the writer up to July, 1913:—

I.—ASHBOURNE (see Brampton and Fenny Bentley).

1711.—November. Sarah, daughter of Exuperius Brown, mason, was baptised.

1744.—Headstone: "Interred here the body of Exuperius Brown, who departed this life July ye xxi., MDCCXLiⁱⁱⁱⁱ."

174⁸/₉.—Ex., son of John Brown, of A., baptised.

17⁴/₅0.—Ex. Brown, Doro. Eyeby, both of A., married by licence.

1751⁰.—Hannah, daughter of Ex. Brown, buried 27th March.

1752.—Ex., son of Ex. Brown, baptised April 1st.

1756.—Thomas, son of Ex. Brown, baptised June 9th.

2.—BRAMPTON.

1675.—Family Bible. "The day and tim that Exsuperius Brown took his wife the 14 day of the 2 month, 1675."

1685.—"Ex. Brown, bourn ye 18th of ye 10 m., 1685."

3.—CHELMORTON.

1774.—August 20th. Baptised Ex., son of Peter Ollerenshaw.

1817.—November 20th. Buried Ex., son of Ex. Ollerenshaw, aged 14.

1849.—July 14th. Buried Ex. Ollerenshaw, of Chel-morton, aged 74.

4.—COLWYN BAY.

1908.—Ex. Edge buried (nephew of Ex. Harrison, of Fenny Bentley).

5.—DERBY.

1580.—St. Werburgh. Married, May 14th, Exer. Peeter and . . . Swaynson.

1742.—(See Westminster and Mugginton.)

1769.—January 23rd. Married, Ex. Brown and Mary Haslast, by banns.

6.—DUFFIELD.

1600.—Monument: Exupie, third son of Anthony Bradshawgh by his first wife, Grisild Blackwall.

162 $\frac{6}{7}$.—January 7th. Married, Ex. Rayner and Jane Tayler.

7.—FENNY BENTLEY.

171 $\frac{5}{6}$.—February 17th. Married, Ex. Brown of Brampton, mason, and Elizabeth Gallimore, of Ashbourne. (See Ashbourne and Brampton.)

1881.—Ex. Harrison, gardener to Rev. Jeremiah Barnes.

8.—FINDERN. (See Rugby.)

9.—MONIASH.

1753.—Ex., son of Rev. Robert Lomas, baptised.

10.—MUGGINTON.

1768.—Brass. “In memory of Ex. Turnor and Ann, his wife. He departed this life July 22nd, 1768, aged 74,” etc. (See Stafford and Westminster.)

11.—RUGBY.

1913.—Ex. Haynes, born at Burton-on-Trent; brought up at Findern in house of his grandfather, Ex. Haynes; landlord of Rising Sun, at Willington; living at Rugby with widowed daughter, Mrs. Duncan, July 14th.

12.—SANDIACRE.

1601.—June 14. Married, Xpor Burgon and Elen Bryren.

13.—STAFFORD.

1908.—Died, Ex. Weston Turnor, pupil at Rugeley Grammar School under Rev. — Bonney, 1840. (See Mugginton and Westminster.)

14.—WESTMINSTER.

1742.—School Register. Ex. Turnor, son of William Turnor, of Derby, an Attorney-at-Law; Fellow Commoner of St. John's College, Cambridge, March 3rd, 1742 $\frac{2}{3}$; admitted at Inner Temple, April 7th, 1742; called to the Bar, June 24th, 1748.

15.—WILLINGTON. (See Rugby.)