

OBSERVATIONS ON THE EARLS OF EU, AND SOME OF THEIR PRESUMED DESCENDANTS.

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I PROPOSE, in this brief paper, to bring together some facts, and to offer some speculations, that may serve to elucidate a very obscure period in genealogical history, namely, the first hundred and fifty years after the Conquest, and that may assist those who have occasion to investigate the genealogy of East Sussex; and furthermore, for that purpose, to give a pedigree of the Earls of Eu, compiled chiefly from the best authority on the early Noblesse of France, viz., *L'Art de Verifier les Dates*.

The two chief feudal tenants of the Earls of Eu in the rape of Hastings, were the St. Legers and Echinghams, who, from their large holdings, were doubtless near relatives of their feudal chiefs; and as the arms they bore, viz., a fret or fretty, were very prevalent in some form in that part of the county, and moreover were borne by the family of Maltravers,¹ who, in other counties, were under-tenants of the great Barons of the rape of Hastings, it may be fairly presumed that this bearing was that which was used by one, at least, of the early earls, and was assumed by scions of his family.² In the case of the three families just mentioned, there are no data to determine more particularly their affiliation; but there are coats containing fretty, borne by the families of Dene and Ore, which may be fairly traced to one of the early earls, and, with other cir-

¹ See a very full account of this family in the *Collectanea Topographica et Genealogica*, vol. vi. pp. 334-361.

² The fret would seem to have been the ensign of the earldom of Eu: it was borne by the Vernons, presumed descendants from the first race of the Earls of Eu.—(See pedigree *ad finem*.) Duke Robert of Normandy deprived the sons of Gilbert

Earl of Eu, of Brionne. William the Conqueror, on his marriage with the daughter of Baldwin Earl of Flanders, restored them Orbec and Bienfaite, and Mole and Sap; and, whilst Duke of Normandy, gave Vernon sur Seine and Brionne to his kinsman Guy of Burgundy, which again fell into his hands after the battle of Val-es-Dunes, 1047.—*Ord. Vit.* and *L'Art*, &c.

cumstances, appear to throw light on the descent of some manors and families.

Ralph de Dene, whose name occurs so often in previous volumes of our *Collections*, father of Ela de Sackville, sealed with the heraldic bearing fretty, the tincture of the charge and shield being ascertained from its blazonry in the windows of Withyham Church, and its occurrence in the quarterings of the family of Bysshe along with that of Marcy, who remarried Ela.¹ We might therefore suppose this Ralph a descendant of the Earls of Eu; and so most probably he was, in the female line; for, from the circumstance that the rest of his family, that is, the descendants of his father, bore three leopards' faces, it is pretty clear that the latter were his paternal arms, and, from that and other circumstances, it is scarcely doubtful that he was descended, in the male line, from Amfridus de Hastings, governor of the town which gave name to his family, in the time of the Conqueror, brother of Turstain de Gouiz (grandfather of Hugh Lupus, Earl of Chester), and progenitor of the families of Tilly, Hastings, Hastang, Despenser, &c., who bore indiscriminately leopards' faces and *fleurs-de-lis*.² But Mr. Lower's comprehensive paper on the Lords of Bodiam, in our last volume, has suggested to me an inquiry that seems to lead at once to the explanation of the use of the fretty coat by Ralph de Dene, and the origin of the family of De Bodiam.

The following are the notices under the name of "Osbern," from the Sussex Domesday:—

Osborn holds *Penherst* of the Earl of Eu.

Of the land of the villains of this manor (*Hou*, held by the earl in domain) Osbern holds two yokelands.

Osbern holds two roodlands of this district, viz., *Francwelle*, held by the Earl of Eu.

Osborn holds *Bexlei* (Bexhill) of the Earl of Eu. Under the Saxon Prince it was rated at twenty hides, and so it continues. Osbern has ten hides of the same district.

In this hundred (*Hailsaliede*) Hugh holds a manor from the earl. * * The same Osborn holds a roodland of the earl in *Beche*.

Osbern Fitz-Geoffrey holds five hides, in *Lestone*, of the earl.

In *Stochingham* Osborn has a cottager paying 12*d*. In *Achingewurde*

¹ See *Historical Notices of Withyham*, by the Hon. and Rev. Reginald Sackville West; and Berry's *Sussex Genealogies*, pedigree of Bysshe.

² See D'Anisy's *Récherches sur les Fa-*

milles de Domesday, p. 249; and Wiffen's *Memoirs of the House of Russell*, i. 119. On this origin of the family of Hastings, &c., I purpose, at a future period, to offer a paper for publication in these *Collections*.

Osborn has one plough in the demesne, a villain with one plough and two acres of meadow. In *Echenton*, Osborn has three villains with three ploughs. In *Waldene*, Osborn has a villain with five oxen.

Osborn Fitz-Geoffry holds half a hide in *Willedon* of the earl. In *Farle*, Osborn has a villain with one plough.

In *Hecton*, Osborn has two villains with a plough.

In Staple hundred :—

Osborn holds a hide and three roodlands, in *Bodeham*, of the manor of *Werste*.

Osborn holds two roodlands in *Waliland*.

Osborn holds *Basingeham* of the earl ; the value is 8s.

The following are held of the Earl of Moreton :—

Osborn holds four hides of the earl in *Telentone*; the value is 20s.

Osborn holds four hides of this territory, viz., *Willendone*.

Osborn holds *Dene* of the earl ; the value is 20s. Ralph holds eight hides of the earl in *Dene*.

From which it appears that Osbern holds Dene of the Earl of Moreton, one Ralph holding eight hides of land in [the manor of] Dene. Now, in the *Pipe Roll* of 1131, a Ralph de Dene occurs, and in the *Liber Niger* of 1166 the same name is met with, but evidently a different person, probably son of the former, the first, it may be, the Ralph of Domesday, or a son of that name. It would seem, therefore, that in 1131 the possession of Osbern had centered in Ralph, doubtless by marriage. Various hypotheses may now be indulged. The Osbern in the foregoing notices may fairly be presumed to be one and the same person, though sometimes the suffix of "Fitz-Geffry" is added, which, however, is of great assistance in assigning him his parentage. For, in the *Collection des Cartulaires de France*, edited by M. Guerard, in page 126 of vol. iii., containing the cartulary of the Abbey of St. Trinity, at Rouen, is a charter of Robert Earl of Ou, and Beatrix his wife, the witnesses to which, amongst others, were Geoffry, son of Osbern de Ou, and Ansfridus his brother. Here, if we have not the Osbern in question, we have probably a very near relative, at least a proof that Osbern and Geoffrey were family names of the Earls of Eu. If the Osbern, then, who held a hide and three roodlands in [the manor of] Bodiham, of the manor of Werste (Ewhurst), held by the earl in domain (nothing being said of the tenant of Bodiham itself, which was held by the earl, it would seem as a subinfeudation of Ewhurst), be the same as the Osbern who held Dene, either he must have left two or more coheireses, one of whom married Ralph de

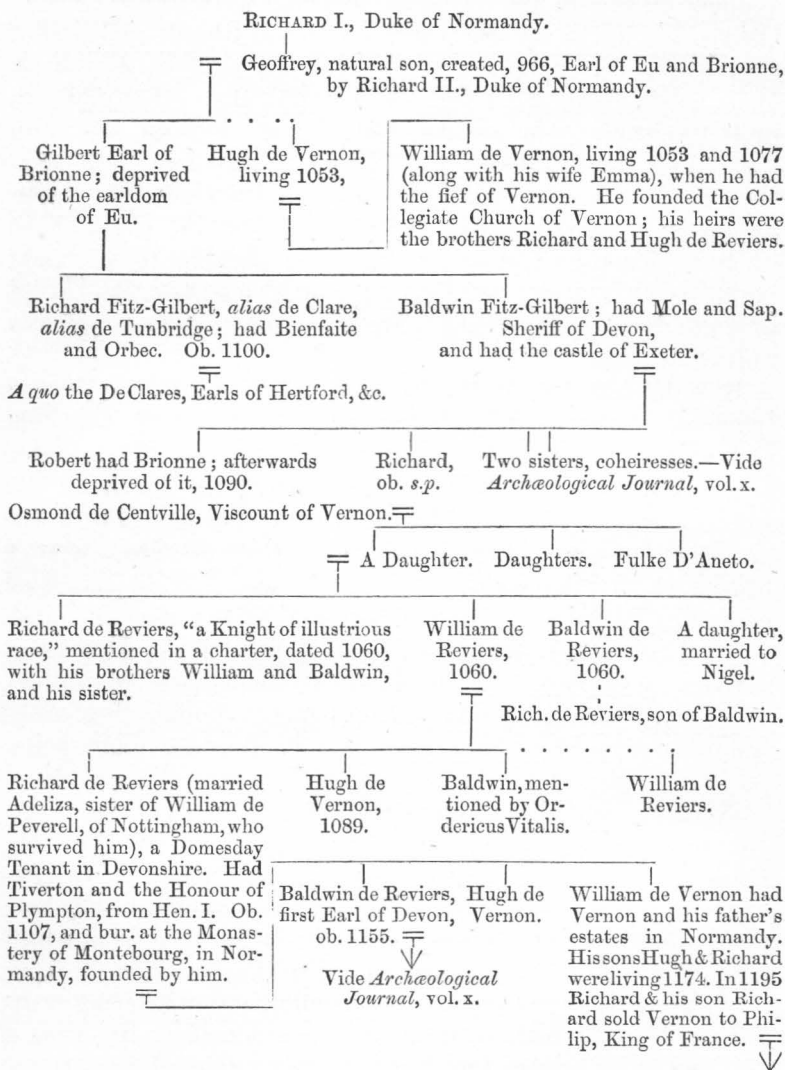
Dene, and another the next lord of Bodiham after Osborn (who we learn, not from Domesday, but from the *Chronicle of Battle Abbey*, was actually its lord at one time), although Mr. Lower assumes a son to be the next nameless lord; or, a son of Osborn left a heiress, who carried Dene to Ralph. On either supposition, the assumption of the fretty coat by Ralph de Dene will be accounted for. But a difficulty, yet unnoticed, presents itself. The monks, speaking of Osborn, call him Fitz-Hugh, not Fitz-Geoffrey. If their designation be correct, then there were two distinct Osborns, or the Domesday designation is erroneous. But neither one nor the other is so likely as that the *Chronicle*, written long after the time, should be incorrect in this particular; for monastic statements, except of contemporary occurrences, are well known to be frequently untrustworthy.

By a dateless deed in the *Catalogue of Battle Abbey Charters* (page 8), it appears that Henry Lord of Bodiham enfeoffed Robert de Ore of all his lands, called Ore, and Kemehethe, &c., in the parish of Battle. The arms of the family of Ore were a bend *fretty*; and this circumstance, along with the grant of land, may justify the belief that the Ores were a branch of the Bodiams. Among the witnesses to the deed cited, are Richard de Esburneham and Henry de Penehurst. Now, Penhurst, it will be seen, was one of the Domesday manors of Osborn, and the family so named was, doubtless, descended from him, though their arms, resembling those of the Ashburnhams, would appear (especially from the above juxtaposition of names) to denote a connection with that family.

Another heraldic circumstance may be mentioned that countenances the foregoing view: one of the coats of the family of De Dene is a *fess dancetté*; this, charged with bezants, is the coat of the later De Bodiams, which might have been obtained on marrying with a De Dene, who would have equally relinquished the paternal coat for the new bearing. In fact, till the practice arose of impaling and quartering arms, hereditary arms were so frequently abandoned for the arms of the wife, if an heiress, that it is generally supposed coat armour was not hereditary at an early period, but that the different bearings met with in the same family, showed an arbitrary and irregular adoption.

PEDIGREE OF THE EARLS OF EU.

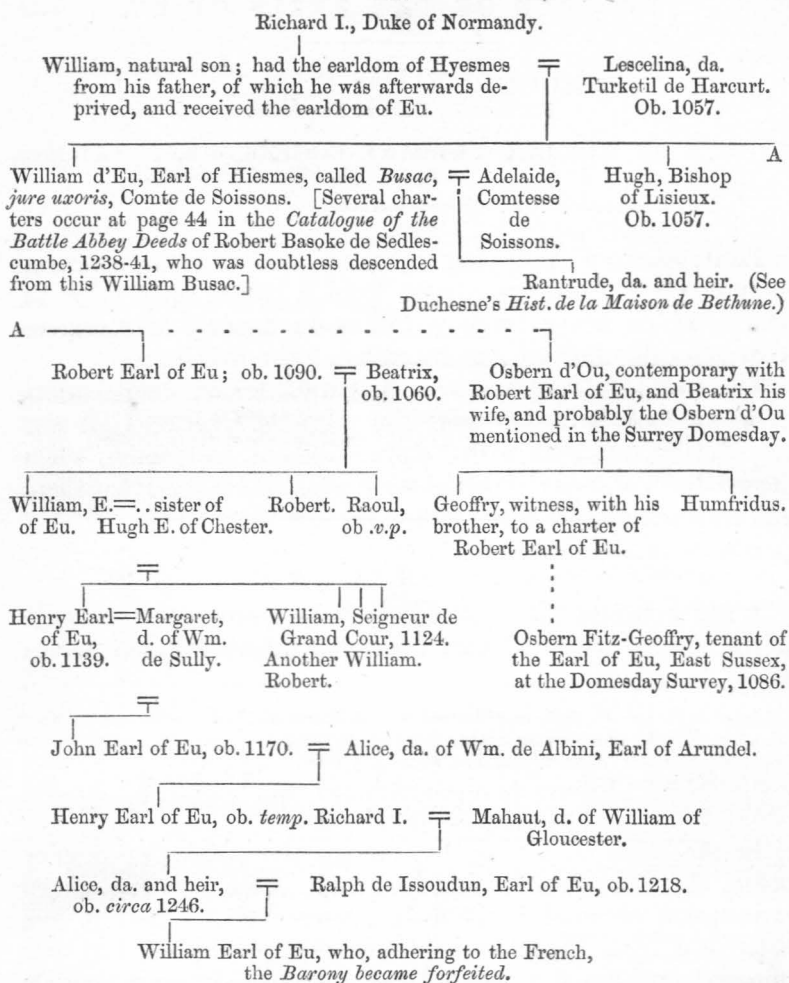
I.



** This Pedigree of the Vernons and Rivers's is compiled from Mr. Stapleton's *Rot. Scaccariæ Normanniæ* (ii. p. cclxxviii), whose researches correct the prevalent account of the origin of these families. The main error originated with Dugdale, who

has been followed by all subsequent genealogists. This was in erroneously identifying Richard de Reviars, father of Baldwin, first Earl of Devon, with Richard, son of Baldwin Fitz-Gilbert. Notwithstanding, there are a great many circumstances which

II.



indicate the *families* to be identical, or of common origin. Mr. Stapleton does not identify the William de Vernon of 1053 with the William de Reviere of 1060, but they were doubtless the same person. Four Vernons are mentioned in Domesday Book, who are supposed to be of this family. Their descent is given in Ormerod's *Cheshire*, vol. iii. Mr. Stapleton derives the Reviere from the vill of Reviere in the Bessin; but there was a fief called De la Reviere, in the Cotentin, whose owners bore a FRET. (*Mem. de la Soc. des Antiq. de Normandie*, xiv. 200.) The latter are mentioned as far back

as 940. The bearing of the Vernons of Vernon was the same. Such, too, was the ensign of the baronial family of Verdun (mentioned in Domesday). They were probably derived from the Counts or Viscounts of Verdun (vide *L'Art de Verifier les Dates*, xiii. 444), and, from heraldic reasons, it would seem the two families and places had a common origin; though both Verdun and Vernon are mentioned as early as the ninth century, and both in the next century at least, if not earlier, had distinct Counts and Viscounts.