

DISCOVERY
OF THE
REMAINS OF JOHN, 17TH EARL OF ARUNDEL,
(*obit.* 1435).

BY THE VERY REV. CANON TIERNEY, F.R.S., F.S.A.,
IN A LETTER TO
WILLIAM DURRANT COOPER ESQ., F.S.A.

MY DEAR SIR,

I HAVE long wished to send to the Society an account of the opening of the tomb (hitherto regarded only as a cenotaph), and of the consequent discovery of the remains, of one of the most illustrious among the Earls of Arundel, and most renowned among the warriors of the fifteenth century. In addition, however, to some circumstances of a personal and unavoidable nature, a constant failure in obtaining information on certain interesting, and, I think, material points, connected with the subject, has compelled me, from time to time, to defer the execution of my design; and if, now at last, I venture to address the Society, through you, it is not because I have been more fortunate than hitherto in my researches, but because I think it advisable, while I can do it, to put such information as I possess in a durable form, and trust to health, and to the chances of future inquiries, for supplying what is here deficient.

There can be no doubt that, being indebted for our discovery to a Will, which I shall presently insert, we ought, if it be possible, to know something of the testator himself. That testator was Fulke Eyton. He was a gentleman; a younger brother of an ancient family, which derived its name from Eyton, of the Wildmoors, in Shropshire. Nicholas, the eldest brother, to whom various articles are bequeathed in the will, was the lord of that property: he was thrice invested with the shrievalty of the county, and is known to have served in Parliament, as knight of the shire, both in 1449 and 1450.

Roger, another brother mentioned in the will, and one of the first twelve aldermen of Shrewsbury, is well known to the readers of Blakeway's *Sheriffs of Shropshire*; and the testator himself, who speaks of his "horse," and his "harnes," and his page, "who came with him out of Normandye," was, in all probability, engaged in the Foreign wars of Henry VI. Of his personal history, however, I have been unable to recover anything certain. That he was, in some capacity, attached to the service of the Earl of Arundel, there is every reason to believe. Possibly he acted as one of that nobleman's esquires; and thus, when captivity and death at length arrested his lord's career, was either prompted by his own affection, or was commissioned by the family of the deceased hero, to perform that act of piety towards the captive remains, for the knowledge of which we are indebted to his Will. That Will, it should be observed, is dated from "Schrawardyne," a castle, belonging to the Earls of Arundel. It thus proves a close connection to have existed between Eyton and the Earl; and though it certainly does not afford the precise information which we could desire, it nevertheless goes far to suggest the motive of the testator, in the transaction which it fortunately records.¹—I now proceed to the more immediate object of this letter.

To the reader who is acquainted with the history left by Monstrelet, or with the not less interesting narratives of our native chroniclers, Fabyan and Hall, the exploits and the fame of John, Earl of Arundel, must long have been familiar. He was born in 1408, and had scarcely attained his twenty-second year, when we find him engaged in command at the siege of Compiègne, and assisting in the capture of that formidable heroine, whose prowess had already awakened the energies, and pointed to the redemption, of her country. Two years later (1432), he was summoned from the festivities of Henry's court at Paris, to meet Boussac, the Marshal of France, in arms. That general had seized Beauvais, and was preparing to overrun the neighbouring province of Normandy. Arundel, with a small force, appeared before the place, and having, by

¹ By the Fitzalans, in many of their earlier deeds, the Schrawardine Castle, mentioned above, was called "*Castel*

Isabel," probably from Isabella De Albini, one of the coheirs of Earl Hugh De Albini, and wife of John Fitzalan.

the stratagem of a feigned retreat, succeeded in decoying the enemy from the town, suddenly fell upon him from an ambuscade which he had prepared for his reception, and, at a single blow, annihilated the whole force of his opponent. The next two years were distinguished by a series of similar achievements. In Normandy he crushed the spirit of revolt, which was beginning to appear among the natives: in Maine he overran the country, and drove the enemy in all directions before him. His approach, even to the strongest fortresses, was but the signal of surrender. Town after town, and castle after castle, opened its gates to "*the English Achilles*;" and, in the course of one single summer (1433), the whole province was reduced to the dominion of the English.

But a career so brilliant was not destined to be of long continuance. In the spring of 1434, the French had surprised and taken the town of Rue, in Picardy; and Arundel, with a small body of eight hundred men, was despatched, for the purpose of dispossessing them. On his road, however, which lay through Normandy, he heard that Gerberoy, a strong castle, between Gournay and Beauvais, was in the hands of the enemy; and unwilling to leave a fortress, so tenanted, in his rear, he determined to storm it, before he continued his march. Unfortunately for the Earl, the French were too strong and too vigilant. Aware of his approach, they resolved to anticipate his design, and, instead of waiting for the assault, to attack the troops as they came up. The result may be easily conceived. When the main body of the English arrived, the vanguard was already in disorder; a general rout ensued; and the Earl, unable to rally his scattered force, was left almost alone, to contend against the whole power of the enemy. Yet, even so, from a hasty entrenchment thrown up in one corner of the field, he was, for some time, able to maintain the unequal contest. At length, however, "a culverin was procured from the castle to reduce him. The second shot shattered his leg, and brought him to the ground: from the ground he continued to cheer on his men; nor was it until worn out with fatigue, and overwhelmed by numbers, that himself and the few survivors of his little band were compelled to surrender. By his captors, the Earl was immediately removed to Beauvais, and placed under

surgical care: but his wound baffled the skill of his attendants, and, at the end of thirteen months, terminated his existence." He died on the 12th of June, 1435, and was buried in the church of the Grey Friars at Beauvais.¹

And here, with the grave which had closed over him at Beauvais, had likewise closed all that was hitherto known of him. His remains were believed to be still reposing in the Grey Friars: his monument in the chapel at Arundel was regarded only as a cenotaph, erected in the place which, by his will, he had appointed for his burial. "His death in France," so Dugdale believed and declared, "prevented his sepulture" in the place of his selection: nor should we, in all probability, have been ever undeceived, but for the accidental discovery of the will to which I have already alluded. For that discovery we are indebted to a descendant of the testator's family, the Rev. R. W. Eytton, who, in the course of his researches for his work on the *Antiquities of Shropshire*, found the will in the Prerogative Court of Canterbury; and as the document is, in many respects, of considerable interest, I will here insert it entire, before I proceed further:—

In Dei nomine Amen; and of oure Lady, and of alle the Holy Company of Heven, Amen. I, Fooke Eiton, Esquire, hole of body and of mynde, make my Testament in this wise. First, I bequeath my sowle to God, and to our Lady, and to alle the Company of Heven, and make myn Executors Sir Richard Eiton, Prest, my brother, Warden of the Colledge of Tong, and Sir Roger the vicar of Welyngton, and Isabella Englefield. First, I will that my body be laide in Tonge, by my Godfadre, Sir Fowke of Penbregre, withinne the Chapell of oure Lady: and, after that, I will that there be take of my best goods, for to say v thousand placebos and diriges, and v thousand masses; and for every dirige and masse iiii d: and I bequeth to the almshouse of Tonge xli of money, for the which money the said almesmen should be charged for to sey, atte my grave, De profundis, thei that canne, and, thei that can not, a Pater noster: and for my sowle and Thomas of Eiton my fadre, and Katherine my modere's sowles: and also thei shuld pay a prest to cast holy water on my grave. Also I bequeth to the Warden, and to the Prestes of the saide Colledge of Tonge, my best Basen and Eure of Silver; and the saide Warden and Prestes shall have in charge, every daie when thei wesch, to sei a Pater noster and Ave, and so to have me in perpetuall remembrance. Also I bequeth to the saide Collage a Bed, called a fedrebed, with the honging thereto of blew worstede: Wherefore the saide Warden and Prestes schuld be charged and bounden for to seie, withyn the same yere, xv Placebos and Diriges, and v masses of the Trinitee, and v of the Holy Gost, and v of oure Lady, and, while it pleasith him, to seie a masse of Requiem, every yere, on that same

¹ Monstrelet, vii. 202, *Johnes' Trans. Hist. of Arundel*, 292—302.

daye that I dide upon. Also I bequeth to a prest to synge v yere, as my Executor may accorde with him, for my fadre sowle, and my moderés, and myn. And I charge you that he be a clene man of his body. Also I bequeth to John Eiton alle myn horse and riding harnes, reservyd to me all my trapers and harnes of Goldsmythes werke: and I will that Luce, his wife,¹ have x. li; so that she kepe here a clene woman, and a good, till the daye of here mariage. I bequeth also to John the boy an horse, and xl. s.: and also to John de Labowley xl. s.: and to my page Herman xx. s.: for thei both come with me out of Normandye. Also I bequeth to the Chapell of oure Lady of Tonge my masse Boke, and my Chalice, and my blew vestiment of damaske, of my armes; and another vestiment to Wembrege, to pray for my fadre soule and my modere's. I bequeth also to John Eiton xx. li. to his mariage; and to Fowke Eiton, Roger Eiton son, other xx. li. of the summe the which Roger Eiton oweth me; and he to be alowed of alle that he paide me. Also I wille that the saide Roger yeve to every frere house of Schropbery a centayn of corne² for to pray certayn Eires (years) for my soule, after the disposition of myn Executours: and that if he woll nott, I charge you that ye lawfully sue him, till he doe hit. *Also I woll that my Lord of Arundell, that now is, aggre and compounde with you, my seide Executours, for the bon³ (bones) of my Lord John his brother, that I broughte oute of France; for the which cariage of bon³, and oute of the frenchemennys handes delyveraunce, he owith me a ml. marc and iiij c. and astere myn Executours byn compounded with, I woll that the bon³ ben buried in the Collage of Arundell, after his intent; and so I to be praide fore, in the Collage of Arundell and Almeshouse, perpetually.* Also I bequeth to Nicholas Eiton one of the goode fedre-beddis, and a chambre, and a bedde of lynne cloth, steyned with horses. I bequeth also to Isabelle Englefield another goode fedre bedd, and a paire of fustians, and a sparker of selke, the which myn armes beth ynne: and, after her deceesse, to yeve it to John Englefeld here sone. And, as towching the goodes to fulfillle my Testament, Sir William Lynsey, my prest, can telle you where thei ben, and more overplus. Wherefore, I charge you, as ye will answer afore God at the dreddfull day of Dome, and that ye fulfill and complete this my Testament here; and afore God, I geve you full power of all my goodes, so for to do; and wille that my brothers, Nicholas and Roger, have the oversight of the fulfilling of my Testament. In to the Witness of alle this, I have sett to the seigne of myn armes, and the seigne of myn devise. I-wreten atte Schwardyne, the viij day of Februarie, the yere of our Lorde a ml. ccclij^o.

Proved 12th of Dec. 1454, by Richard Eiton and Isabelle Englefield.

I have said that this will was discovered in the Prerogative Court of Canterbury. To decipher and transcribe it, Mr. Kingston, of the Tower, was, I believe, employed; and by that gentleman first, and immediately afterwards by my friend Sir Charles G. Young, Garter, my attention was called to the curious passage which I have printed in *italics*. This was in August, 1855. It was now evident that the body, which we supposed to be at Beauvais, had been removed to England:—but, was it

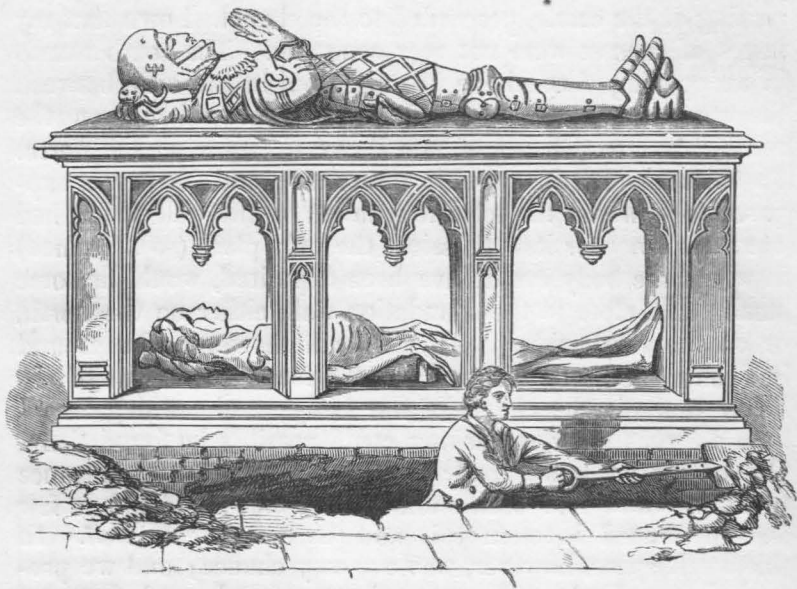
¹ That is, his betrothed wife.

² A hundred weight.

at Arundel? was the first question that presented itself to the mind. It had been delivered "out of the Frenchmen's hands;"—had it been redeemed out of those of Eyton or his executors? Had the brother of the deceased "compounded" for the ransom? and had the remains been really conveyed to their intended resting-place at Arundel? It was evident that only an examination of the spot could answer these questions; and accordingly, I resolved at once to solicit permission from the Duke of Norfolk for that purpose. The permission was readily granted; but delays, arising from various causes, occurred in the execution of the design; and thus, it was not until Monday, the 16th of November, 1857, that we could enter on the work. On that day, the Duke, accompanied by some of the junior members of his family, and several friends who were visiting at the castle, proceeded to the chapel. I own that my hopes of success were not very sanguine. The tomb stands in an opening, formed for its reception, in the wall between the two chapels,—the principal Collegiate Chapel on the south, and the Chapel of the Blessed Virgin on the north. Its sides, divided into arches, are open; and, as it was supposed to stand on the solid foundation of the wall which had been cut away for its admission, the only place (so it seemed) in which the body could have been deposited, would be some small vault, close to the foundation wall, either on the north, or on the south side.¹ On the north, however, the ground had long since been removed, for the formation of one of the larger vaults in the chapel of our Lady; and nothing, therefore, of what we were seeking could possibly be found there. On the south it was scarcely more promising; for the entrance to a new vault had been sunk on that side; and only a few feet intervened between this and the monument itself. In this small space, however, was our only chance; and we proceeded accordingly. The ground was opened; and, for some time, the appearances which presented themselves, seemed to promise success. But these soon vanished. At a depth of more than three feet it became evident that nothing was to be discovered there; and we were about to abandon the

¹ It is in this manner that the bodies of William, Earl of Arundel, and his Countess, on the south side of the larger chapel, are interred.

attempt in despair, when it suddenly occurred to me to sound what appeared to be the original foundation wall, on which the monument had been erected. The result was fortunate. At the second stroke of the pick-axe, the wall gave way; an opening, sufficiently large to admit an inspection of the interior, was effected; and we found that, instead of being the foundation of the old wall which had been removed, it was, in reality, a hollow piece of masonry, arched at the top, and forming, within, a chamber something more than two feet in height, by the same in width, and corresponding in length with that of the tomb above. Within this chamber lay the remains of which we were in search. As, with the single exception of a small portion of one of its sides, the coffin, which had inclosed



them, was entirely decayed and gone, the bones were at once exposed to view. They were perfectly sound, and evidently those of a man more than six feet in height. The larger and longer ones had retained their places tolerably well; but the skull, no doubt in the process of removal to England, had been shaken from its socket, and had rolled back to some distance from the rest. Not the least interesting feature in our

discovery, however, was the evidence presented to us of the identity of the remains. The Earl's death, as you will recollect, was the result of his wound. The limb had been shattered; and there can be no doubt that amputation would be resorted to. Now, among the remains, only the bone of one leg could be found.

We had thus successfully completed the object of our search. The opening, therefore, which had been made in the masonry, was closed; the earth was replaced; and John, Earl of Arundel, once more reposes undisturbed, in the spot which he himself selected for his interment.—I have only to add, that for the particulars, which I have given above, of Fulke Eyton's family, as well as for the copy of his will, I am indebted to the courtesy of the Rev. R. W. Eyton, with whose work on the *Antiquities of Shropshire*, all who take pleasure in such subjects, must undoubtedly be familiar.

Believe me, my dear Sir, yours very truly,

M. A. TIERNEY.

Arundel, June, 1860.