

## OBSERVATIONS ON THE PARENTAGE OF GUN- DREDA, THE DAUGHTER OF WILLIAM DUKE OF NORMANDY, AND WIFE OF WILLIAM DE WARENNE.

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IN turning to page 149 of the "Yorkshire Archæological Journal" (Vol. iv.), to certain pages of "Notes and Queries" (5th S. iv., pp. 386, 476), and to "Murray's Handbook for Sussex" (under Lewes), one's attention is forcibly drawn to a question, which, it would have been imagined, ought long since to have been set at rest, viz., the parentage of Gundreda, as wife of William de Warenne (Guillaume de Varenne), 1st Earl of Surrey.

The writer in the otherwise ably written paper in the periodical first named, in enumerating the several Yorkshire Tenants in Domesday, runs counter to the opinion usually received until of late years, and quoting Ordericus Vitalis, assumes Gundreda to have been the sister of one Gherbod a Fleming. This relationship seems first to have been assigned to her by Dugdale on the same authority, and after him in more recent times by Mr. Stapleton, F.S.A., and a writer of merit, Mr. Freeman, author of the "Norman Conquest."

It seems inconceivable that Dugdale, from whom so many have gleaned their information, should have overlooked the Conqueror's charter giving to the monks of St. Pancras the manor of Walton, in Norfolk, and the Foundation Charter of Lewes Priory, still extant, which are incontestably clear, and of themselves sufficient to refute any doubt on this subject. As a question of

history, it is a matter of regret, and to ourselves of supreme astonishment, that the arguments which of late years have been set forth by the late Mr. Blaauw, to whom the merit is due of having so successfully controverted the attempt to cast a doubt on the parentage of Gundreda, as the Conqueror's daughter, should not long since have settled this disputed point. It only shews on what slight grounds a false position may be held, and its evil consequences propagated.

A solitary passage on the authority of this nearly contemporary historian, Ordericus Vitalis, extracted from his so-called "Ecclesiastical History," is forcibly insisted on, and thus from time to time revives the attempt to disprove the marriage of William de Warenne with a daughter of the Conqueror. The passage alluded to has been construed as an inference that Gundreda was simply the step-daughter of the Conqueror, namely, the daughter of Queen Matilda by a former husband, being therein recorded as the *Sister of Gherbod*, a Fleming, to whom the Conqueror had first granted the City and Earldom of Chester, although the assertion is supported by no other chronicler, and, notwithstanding that the work is of considerable length, is nowhere again repeated by him.

After recapitulating the lands and counties which the Conqueror had portioned out to certain of his Norman followers, Ordericus, in passing to the county of Surrey, which was granted to William of Warenne, observes as follows:—"et Guillelmo de Guarenna (Warenna) qui *Gundredam sororem Gherbodi* conjugem habebat, dedit Surregiam. Cestriam et comitatum ejus Gherbodo Flandrensi jamdudum rex dederat" (Ord. Vit. "Historia Eccles." Pars. ii., Lib. iv., c. xi.; Migne, "Patrologia," clxxxviii, pp. 331, 332). His reason for granting him the Earldom of Chester we believe to have made apparent in the sequel.

Now, with a view to refute the perversion of the real facts as respects Gundreda, we may observe that the question of her parentage is open to two entirely opposite considerations. First, as to the authority of Ordericus Vitalis as an authentic historian, if, as *primâ facie* it

would seem, he has used the word "soror" in its usually accepted sense, in which case, as will be evident, its employment is capable of refutation; and secondly, irrespective of any implied want of authenticity, whether Ordericus has not employed the word in the sense we are disposed to take it, which puts the question in a totally different light, as we will shew hereafter.

Mr. Blaauw observes in his paper in the "Archæologia" [xxxii., 108], in answer to Mr. Stapleton (who had undertaken to disprove the marriage of William de Warenne with a daughter of the Conqueror, on the ground of Gundreda being the Queen's daughter by a divorced husband, named Gherbod), that "on matters of the royal pedigree the acknowledged errors of Ordericus are so numerous as to deprive him of much authority;" that he wrote his Chronicle "when a very old man, with a confused memory of details;" that he has erred again "in making Matilda to survive the Conqueror," and again in stating the grant of the Earldom of Surrey to have been conferred in that monarch's time, whereas it was bestowed in that of his son Rufus.

The foundation charter of the Priory of Lewes, dedicated to St. Pancras, expressly states Gundreda to have been the *Queen's daughter*; the words of William de Warenne on the occasion of his founding that house, indubitably prove Queen Matilda to have been her mother, and can be taken in no other sense: they are, "pro salute dominæ meæ Matildis Reginæ; *matris uxoris mee.*" It is therefore self-evident from this fact, that Gherbod the Fleming must equally have been *Queen Matilda's son*, but although sufficient opportunity is afforded to Ordericus he *never once* mentions him as her *son*, neither does he in any part of his "History" represent the Queen to have been united to a previous husband, in fact no trace of such an assertion can be found in any other contemporary, or subsequent chronicler. He would certainly have intimated as much when saying that the Conqueror had given him the Earldom of Chester. Instead of—"Cestriam et comitatum ejus Gherbodo Flandrensi jamdudum rex dederat," his words would have been some-

what to this effect: Cestriam, &c. Gherbodo, *flio* videlicet *Mathildis postea Regina Anglorum* rex dederat.

As to the pretended marriage of (Queen) Matilda with Gherbod the Fleming, and her subsequent divorce, which Mr. Stapleton endeavours to maintain, Mr. Blaauw explains at some length how the confusion may have arisen [Archæol. xxxii, 120], and we have elsewhere given additional reasons in disproof of the supposition. Not one of the Norman chroniclers, he observes, with any exception, "has dropped the smallest hint of any husband or child, or consequently any such divorce on the part of Matilda previous to her marriage with the King." All authorities in fact concur in proving the reverse; they all allude to Duke William's affianced bride as a young unmarried girl, *puelle* (*puella*), and the only inference is that William of Normandy was *Gundreda's father*.

Sir H. Ellis, in his "Introduction to Domesday" (i. 507), observes:—"Gundreda was really a daughter of the Conqueror." William de Warenne's second charter of foundation granted to Lewes Priory in the reign of Rufus, states this fact distinctly:—"Volo ergo quod sciant qui sunt et qui futuri sunt, quod ego Willielmus de Warenna Surreiæ comes, donavi et confirmavi Deo et Sancto Pancratio, et monachis Cluniascensibus, quicumque in ipsâ ecclesiâ Sancti Pancratii Deo servient in perpetuum; donavi pro salute animæ meæ, et animæ *Gundredæ uxoris meæ*, et pro anima domini mei Willielmi regis, qui me in Anglicam terram adduxit, et per cujus licentiam monachos venire feci, et qui meam priorem donationem confirmavit, et pro salute dominæ meæ *Matildis reginæ, matris uxoris meæ*, et pro salute domini mei Willielmi regis, filii sui, post cujus adventum in Anglicam terram hanc cartam feci, et qui me comitem Surregiæ fecit." (Cott. MS. Vesp. F. XV.; Lappenberg, p. 216.)

Among the original benefactors of the Abbey of Lewes, Gundreda is named conjointly with her brother Henry I. of England. "In Norfolkia (among other possessions) Karletuna, quam dedit Matildis regina, *mater Henrici Regis et Gundredæ Comitissæ* (Ex libro Computorum, olim Prioratui (*sic*) de Lewes spectante. Dugdale).

Gundreda is also acknowledged by the Conqueror himself as his *daughter*. The charter by which the King gave the manor of Walton in Norfolk to the same Priory, distinctly styles her his *daughter*. He gives it, “pro anima domini et antecessoris mei Regis Edwardi . . . . et pro anima Gulielmi de Warena, et uxoris suæ *Gundredæ filie meæ* et hæredum suorum.” (Intro. Domesd. i. 507.)

Those who, relying on Ordericus Vitalis, seek to disprove this fact, insist that the words “*filie meæ*” in the Conqueror’s charter are an interpolation, but a minute inspection of the original MS. in the Cottonian Library (Vespas. F. iii. fo. 1), in no way warrants this belief; on the contrary, from the faded and obliterated state of the charter, the words “*filie meæ*” are simply interlined *in explanation of words which were originally written*, but which have disappeared from decay. The whole charter has faded, and has been rubbed with gall. Mr. Blaauw remarks on the words “*filie meæ*” thus:—“A close and repeated examination of this MS. by Weston Styleman Walford, Esq., and myself, have furnished very sufficient proof that the words of the original should be read thus:—‘Pro anima Gulielmi de Warena et uxoris sue Gondrade filie mee et heredum suorum,’ not ‘pro me et heredibus meis,’ as substituted by Mr. Stapleton (‘Archæol. Jour.,’ iii. 2) for the words ‘filie mee et heredum suorum’ (‘Archæologia,’ xxxii. 117”).

Again, in the Ledger Book of Lewes are these words:—“Iste (William de Warenne), primo non vocabatur nisi solummodo Willielmus de Warena, postea vero processu temporis a Willielmo Rege et Conquestore Angliæ, *cujus filiam desponsavit*, plurimum honoratus est.” (“Watson’s Memoirs,” i. 36.)

The different extracts thus cited establish Gundreda as *the Conqueror’s daughter* beyond reasonable doubt; indeed an impartial study of them can lead to no other conclusion. There still remain, however, a few additional arguments to be urged on the subject, which, we can scarcely hope, after the able and conclusive remarks of that regretted antiquary, Mr. Blaauw, will prove of

greater force in upsetting the hypothesis of Mr. Stapleton and his followers, which has received, as may be said, its *coup de grâce* at his hands.

There are many reasons to prove the fallacy of the hypothesis under consideration. The very wording of the well-known epitaph on Gundreda's tomb at Lewes is conclusive of her affinity to the Conqueror; "*Stirps Gundrada ducum*" clearly pointing to her illustrious descent from the *Dukes* of Normandy, her paternal ancestors; whilst the epitaph of Queen Matilda, at Caen, given by Vitalis (Ed. Prevost, iii. 192-3), leads to the same conclusion:

Egregie pulchri tegit hæc structura sepulcri  
Moribus insignem, germen *regale*, Mathildem,  
Dux Flandrita pater, huic exstitit Hadala mater,  
Francorum gentis Roberti filia regis,  
Et soror Henrici regali sede potiti,  
Regi magnifico Willelmo juncta marito, &c., &c.

"Germen *regale*, Mathildem," shewing HER *royal* not ducal descent, her mother having been the daughter of Robert, King of France, the son and nephew of kings, from other kings descended. "*Regali ex genere descendentem nomine Mathildem*," are the words also of William of Jumièges (lib. 7, c. xxi.).

A very material point in this controverted matter are the dates of the Conqueror's birth and marriage; and still more so those of the marriage and death of Gundreda.

Without adducing other proof, if reference be made to Thierry ("Histoire de la Conquête de l'Angleterre par les Normans") it is plain that the birth of William of Normandy may be fixed at about the year 1025 (or between 1024-1031).<sup>1</sup> Matilda was married to him, if we take the Roman de Rou of Wace chronologically, after he had fortified Ambrières, near Mayenne.<sup>2</sup> Pluquet [Ed. of

<sup>1</sup> According to William of Malmsbury, ninth year of his age, and his death bury, the Conqueror died in the fifty-ninth year of his age, and his death occurred in 1087.

<sup>2</sup> Par conseil de sa barunie,  
Prist une fame de haut lin,<sup>a</sup>  
En Flandre fille Balduin,  
Niece (*sic*) Robert li rei de France,  
Fille soe fille, Cunstance;  
A maint noble home fit parente  
Mahelt<sup>c</sup> out nom, mult bele e gente.

[“Roman de Rou,” Ed. Pluquet, ii., 58.]

a Lineage.

b Fille de sa fille.

c Mathilda

Wace's "Roman de Rou"], observes—"No Norman historian has thought proper to fix the date of this marriage, and we are constrained to seek it in the 'Chronicle of Tours.' Here we are told that the marriage was celebrated in 1053, the same year in which must be placed the revolt of William of Arques against his nephew, William of Normandy (the Conqueror in question). It seems that this projected marriage between the Duke and Matilda was an affair of long standing, inasmuch as it had been prohibited by the Council of Rheims in 1049; the Count of Flanders being enjoined not to bestow his daughter on the Duke, or the latter to take her to wife."

The reasons which the French editor of the "Roman de Rou" assigns for the incorrectness of the date (viz. 1053), although adduced in respect of Agatha, another daughter of the Conqueror, apply with equal force to Gundreda.

We know from Wace's Chronicle that the Conqueror called for, and mounted before the Battle of Hastings, his Spanish war horse:—

Sun boen cheval fist demander,  
Ne poeit l'en meillor trover;  
D'Espaigne li ont enveié  
Un Reis par mult grant amistié.

[“Roman de Rou,” ii. 193. Ed. Pluquet.]

as to which Pluquet makes this significant remark:—  
“It is possible that this horse was sent to the Duke by (Alphonso) the King of Galicia, to whom was betrothed (against her will) Agatha (or Adelaide), the same daughter who had been previously affianced to the Anglo-Saxon King Harold. Constant to her first love, this young princess implored the Almighty to take her to Himself rather than that she should become the wife of the Spanish monarch, and as we know, the prayer was so far heard that she died previous to the consummation of the event. This touching anecdote, recorded by Ordericus Vitalis (l. v., p. 579), leads one to conclude that the 'Chronicle of Tours' has assigned too late a date to the marriage of William and Matilda, in placing it in the year 1053. It is highly improbable that Harold would

have inspired so violent a passion in a young girl of *eleven years*, and we have already observed the more probable date of this marriage would have been in 1049."

We have additional reason for assigning the year 1049 as that of the marriage of Matilda with Duke William, which Pluquet places in the very year in which the Council of Rheims prohibited it. According to William de Jumèges (who was contemporary with the Conqueror, and dedicated to him his work), it was not until *after the marriage* that the fact of their near relationship was brought to the cognizance of the Pope. Seeing that if he pronounced a divorce between them, a probable war might ensue between Flanders and Normandy, the Pope wisely determined that Duke William and his consort should atone for their crime, and from it he absolved them, by their agreeing to found two separate monasteries. Accordingly the monastery of the Holy Trinity was founded by Matilda at Caen, whilst that of St. Etienne was founded by Duke William.

A similarity of reasoning applies to Gundreda. We are told that in 1070 (or rather between 1073 and 1077),<sup>3</sup> she and her husband went on a pilgrimage to Rome, as detailed by W. de Warenne himself in his second charter of foundation of Lewes Priory [MS. Cott. Vesp. F. xv; Mon. v, 1 *seq.*]. Assuming, therefore, the Conqueror and Matilda to have been married in 1053, (as in the case of Agatha) Gundreda would have been scarcely marriageable, unless she had been the first-born child. Her death may, from her epitaph, be safely placed in 1085, so that assuming that she died in her 35th year, as has been said, she might thus have been the offspring of a marriage in 1049, though scarcely of one in 1053.

That William of Normandy was Matilda's first and only husband is plain from the following facts. From Domesday [B vol. i., fo. 100] we know that Queen Matilda had conferred upon her the lands of the Saxon noble Brictric (Brihtrik or Bric'trich Mau), the son of Earl Algar.

<sup>3</sup> It was within those dates that the contest between Pope Gregory VII. (Hildebrand) and Henry IV., the Em-

peror of Germany, was going on, the main cause of their journey not being prosecuted.



[Intro. Domesd. i. 452.] Thierry mentions her name as the first inscribed on the partition roll of the territory of England, receiving as her portion this same Saxon's lands. It is recorded of her, that being in love with the young noble in question, when a representative at her father's court from King Edward (the Confessor), her advances to him were not reciprocated [Dug. Mon., i. 154; Wace's "Brut d'Angleterre," i. 73; Thierry's "Conquest of England," i. 428 (Hazlitt)], and that she thereupon resolved on marrying William of Normandy.

Malde de Flandres fu née  
 Meis de Escoce fu apelée,  
 Pur sa mère ke fu espusé  
 Al roi de Escoce ki l'out rové,  
 Laquelle jadis, quant fu *pucele*,  
 Ama un conte d'Engleterre,  
 Bric'trich Mau le oi nomer,  
 Après le rois ki fu riche her;  
 A lui la *pucele* envela messenger  
 Pur sa amur à lui procurer;  
 Meis Brictrich Maude refusa,  
 Dunt ele mult se coruça,  
 Hastivement mer passa  
 E à Willam Bastard se maria.

[MS. Cott. Vitellius A. x., fo. 129.]

The continuator of Wace, who wrote temp. H. III., and is the authority for this fact, has, however, been guilty of more than one anachronism, in confounding two subsequent Matildas, viz., the daughter of Malcolm, King of Scotland, and the daughter of Hen. I. of England, married to the Emperor of Germany.

It thus becomes clear, that Matilda of Flanders could not have been married at the time of this occurrence, neither were her affections set on William of Normandy, until after the Saxon's slight, in fact one was a consequence of the other; so that had her marriage with him been indefinitely postponed, on the grounds of its being within the forbidden degree of consanguinity (as some maintain), and the prohibition by the Council of Rheims, and thus not consummated for a considerable time, (although the very reverse is stated by William de Jumièges,

Lib. vii., c. 26), she, in the interim, would not have contracted marriage with another person (as alleged by Mr. Stapleton), or have been in addition the mother of three children, the improbability of which is otherwise sufficiently apparent. What are we further to understand by these words:—Laquelle jadis, quant fu “*pucelle*;” what by the same word “*puella*,” twice occurring in the “Chronicle of Tours,” with reference to Matilda and her marriage with William of Normandy; and again by the following in Benoit’s “Chronicle of the Dukes of Normandy”?—

Cist out une fille trop bele  
Maheut out nom jeune “*pucele*.”

[Harl. MS. 1717.]

On the other hand, with regard to the alleged brother Gherbod, is it reasonable to suppose that Ordericus Vitalis, whether his errors were many or few, who says of Matilda of Flanders that she derived her descent from the Kings of France and Emperors of Germany, intended to imply that she was the mother of this Gherbod the Fleming? We know that some of his assertions are unfounded; they have been corrected by Mr. Blaauw in his already quoted paper in the “Archæologia;” by Ellis, “Introduction to Domesday,” i. 506, 429, 502, 364; by Masseres, p. 217; they have been pointed out by Lappenberg; and by Watson (“Memoirs of Warren,” i.); but we are disposed in this case to consider that he meant otherwise, as we shall now proceed to shew, or else how comes it to pass that throughout his whole work, he never hints at any connection or supposed marriage with any one on the part of Matilda? Gherbod is never once mentioned as Queen Matilda’s *son*; sooner or later in his narrative of events it would not have escaped his notice, had such been the undoubted fact.

If there is any foundation whatever on the part of Ordericus in naming her “sister” to Gherbod, we would suggest that she was simply his *foster-sister*, for we see improbability stamped on the face of any other supposition. We arrive at this solution of the point in question, that “*soror Gherbodi*” has been used in the sense of

“*seur de lait*,” for these reasons. In old (and Norman) French “*seurer*” signifies to *wean from suck*; (*seurée*, weaned from suck; *qui est seuré*, that is *weaned*). We know apart from this, that “soror” is often used figuratively, but inasmuch as the old Norman French of Vitalis’s time would readily suggest “soror,” so are we convinced that the term is used by him without respect to consanguinity. A very singular application of the word in this same sense, may be found in the “Collection of Latin Inscriptions,” by Jo. Gaspar Orellius, published at Zürich in 1828, and in support of our hypothesis we lay considerable stress upon it:—

IULIA HELLAS | HYGIAE DOMINAE ET SORORI  
 BENEMERENTI | FECIT. QUAE VIXIT |  
 ANNOS XXXV.

Here we have combined *mistress* and *sister*; the one owing allegiance to the other, her superior in blood, though equal on the score of fosterage. We do not find, either in Ducange or elsewhere, any word, classical or mediæval, which would have suggested itself to Ordericus so applicable to represent *seur* (de lait) as the one he has used, unless he had said “*collectea*” (or *collactanea*), an expression corrupt even to him as a mediæval writer, and which with French uppermost in his mind, we can quite understand his rejecting for the purer word “soror.” The derivative word *sororiæ* may be also taken as indicating analogy in connection with the above words *seur*, (*soror*), *seurer*.

There is something in the very wording of the passage which implies this sense:—“*Sororem Gherbodi conjugem habebat.*” Gherbod must have been her *foster-brother*. In the early days of chivalry foster-brotherhood was one of its peculiarities, and the foster-sister or brother was socially more than the brother or sister by blood. That the family of Gherbod was one of more or less pretension, may be inferred from the instances of the name which can be quoted; and bearing this in mind, the relative position

of Gundreda to Gherbod becomes quite explainable. The rank of the wife of the avoué (or protector) of St. Bertin, would be quite in unison with that of a mother called upon to foster a child of Royal birth; whilst the subsequent elevation of Gherbod to the Earldom of Chester is in accordance altogether with the custom of those ages, and the spirit of foster-brotherhood; his promotion to honour, as Gundreda's foster-brother, being the natural consequence of such a position.

This simple view of the matter goes far also to explain the otherwise unintelligible and far-fetched story of a former "*divorced husband*," the burden of Mr. Stapleton's song, of which we confess, apart from the question of Royal and Ducal descent, we never could see the exact bearing, as applicable to Matilda, and the disproof of her affinity to Duke William; as under our hypothesis the "*divorced husband*" would thus have been simply a "*foster-father*."

A few instances of the use of the word "*foster*" will rather elucidate the peculiar applicability of the word, taken from the older writers:—

Chaucer says of some one:—"She was *fostered* in a nunnerie."

[The Reve's Tale.]

Again of another:—

"*Fostered* she was

With milk of Irish breast; her sire an Earl, her dame of Prince's blood."

[Surrey.]

Again, Bacon:—The Duke of Bretaine having been a host or a kind of parent or *foster father* to the king, in his tenderness of age and weakness of fortune, did look for aid this time from King Henry. [Bacon.]

In Ireland *Foster children* do love and are beloved by their *foster fathers*, and their sept, more than of their own natural parents and kindred.

[Davies.]

In the opinion of the Irish, *fostering* has always been a stronger alliance than blood.

[Davies on Ireland.]

My father was your father's client, I

His son's scarce less than *foster brother*.

[Byron's "Doge of Venice."]

There still remains in the Islands, though it is fast past away, the custom of *fosterage*, &c.

[Johnson, "A Journey in the Western Islands."]

In the foregoing we have thus adduced different unanswerable arguments in favour of the Royal Parentage

of Gundreda. That the occasional errors attributed to Ordericus should be able to be brought home to him is not a matter of much surprise, but in the main his authority, as a nearly contemporary historian, is trustworthy, his assertions generally supported by other chroniclers and historians, and on this one particular point, the parentage of Gundreda, he has not erred, *if* the above is the sense in which he intended the passage to be understood; and that he did so is evident, seeing that on the score of "*consanguinity*" all evidence goes otherwise to prove the expression totally unfounded, and (one may add) impossible.

Finally should others concur in the same view with ourselves, it will happily tend to reconcile the opposite opinions of modern writers, on this disputed subject.

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