

The Hobarts of Hales Hall.

COMMUNICATED BY

BRIG.-GENERAL BULWER.

THE Hobarts came originally from Suffolk. We find them settled at Monks Illeg in that county, 13th Richard II. (1389). One of their descendants, Thomas Hobart of Layham, in Suffolk, living in 1494, had two sons, the eldest of whom, William, married Anne, the daughter of Sir Philip Tilney, Knt., inherited the Layham estate, and was the ancestor of the senior line of the family, which flourished in Suffolk for some generations. The second son, James, was brought up to the law, in which profession he gained not only great repute, but also a considerable fortune. He was Lent Reader at Lincoln's Inn, 1478, Attorney-General to King Henry VII., 1487, a member of his Privy Council, and made a Knight of the Sword, 18th February, 1504, on the occasion of Prince Henry (afterwards Henry VIII.) being created Prince of Wales. Sir James Hobart bore arms: Sable, an estoile of six points or, between two flaunches ermine, a crescent for difference. *Crest*: A bull passant, per pale sable and gules bezantèe, in the nose a ring or, differenced as in the arms.

This is said to have been the crest of the Lyhart family, for Sir James Hobart married first, Margaret, niece of Walter Lyhart, Bishop of Norwich, and sister

and heir of John Lyhart, by whom he had two sons and two daughters, and was executor to Bishop Lyhart's will in 1472. He purchased Hales Hall, near Loddon, which he principally built, and where he resided, having also a house in Norwich and in London. He married, secondly, Margaret, widow of John Doreward and daughter of Peter Naunton of Letheringham, county Suffolk; and dying at Hales Hall, 23rd February, 1517, was buried in Norwich Cathedral, where also his second wife, who survived him, was buried in the following October. Sir James Hobart's will was proved 6th May, 1517. He was not only the first to bring his family into distinction, but he was also a public benefactor, inasmuch as he built the beautiful parish church at Loddon, where his first wife, Margaret Lyhart, is said by Weever to have been buried; he built a fair bridge over the Waveney, called St. Olave's or Tooley's bridge; he helped to rebuild the Council Chamber at the Guildhall, Norwich, in 1511, in which his portrait still hangs; and he largely contributed, when Recorder of Norwich, to the stone groined roof of the Cathedral. He was succeeded by his eldest son, Sir Walter Hobart, Knt., High Sheriff of Norfolk and Suffolk, 1535, who lived at Morley, where he was buried 1538.

The family continued to possess Hales Hall until 12th Charles I. (1636), when James, son of Anthony Hobart, sold it to one Henry Humberston. There are several entries of the Hobart family in the parish register of Loddon, and several memorials of them in the parish church.

The Hobarts were a numerous family, and settled in various parts of Norfolk and Suffolk; residing at Beeston near Norwich, Blickling, Cawston, Deopham, Guestwick, Holt, Intwood, Kelsale, Langley, Mendham, Metton, Morley, Outwell, Pickenham, Plumstead, Salle, Thwayte, Weybread, and Wroxham.

Miles Hobart, of Plumstead, bought the Manor of Thwayte, 1544; James, son of Roger Hobart, sold Morley, 1674, to Sir Joseph Paine, Knt.; Anthony, son of Edward Hobart, sold Mendham, 1722, to Thomas Bransby; James, son of Sir Miles Hobart, Knt., sold Plumstead; Hobart Astley sold the Manor of Weybread to Edward de Ligne; Robert Hobart, son of Thomas Hobart of Wroxham and Beeston, left his Beeston estate to Catherine Brown of Norwich, spinster, 1736.

In those days there were Recusants in the land; that is to say, in the reign of Queen Elizabeth, who ruled England with the gentle sway of a woman, but with the iron hand of a Tudor; and also in the reign of King James I., for we find the name of Hobart of frequent occurrence among the certificates annually presented to the Bishop of Norwich; on the Recusant Rolls in the State Paper Office; and in the Records of the Vicar-General of the Bishop of London. Among them are the following, viz.:—1597, 17th June, Anne, wife of Roger Hubbard, Gent.; 1598, 22nd Sept., Henry Hobart, Gent., admonished to conform at the Cathedral, by the Commissioners for “causes ecclesiastical”; 1599, 7th January, Henry Hobart, Gent., submits himself and conforms accordingly; 1602, 4th February, Mary, wife of James Hubbard, Gent., of St. Peter per Mountergate, Norwich, a Recusant; 1604, Frances, wife of James Hubbard of Hales Hall, Esq., and Prudence, Mary, and Audrey Hubbard, their daughters, Recusants; 1605, Frances, wife of James Hobart, Esq., late of Loddon; James Hubbard, Esq., Martha Hubbard, late of Morley, spinster, Recusants; 1609, 15th June, Mary, wife of John Hubbard, Gent., of the Cathedral Close, a Recusant; 1641, 23rd May, James Hobart of Hales Hall, Gent., who had been convicted of Recusancy, took the Sacrament in the parish church of St. Giles’-in-the-Fields.

Sir Henry Hobart, second son of Thomas Hobart of Plumstead, and great grandson of Sir James Hobart of Hales Hall, was one of the Governors of Lincoln's Inn, Serjeant-at-law, Attorney-General, M.P. for Norwich and Yarmouth, Knighted in 1603, created a Baronet in 1611, and Lord Chief Justice of the Common Pleas in 1613; purchased Intwood from the Gresham family in 1596, and Blickling from the Clere family in 1616. He married Dorothy, daughter of Sir Robert Bell of Beauprè, Lord Chief Baron of the Exchequer, and died 29th December, 1625, and was buried at Blickling, 4th January, 1626. His son, Sir John Hobart, Knt. and Baronet, finished the present noble house called Blickling Hall, 1628, and was succeeded by his nephew, Sir John Hobart, son of Miles Hobart of Intwood, who was called up, by writ, 11th December, 1657, to be a member of Cromwell's Upper House. This Sir John was twice married; first, to his cousin Philippa, daughter and coheir of Sir John Hobart, Knt. and Baronet; and secondly, to Mary, daughter of John Hampden, the patriot. He had the honour of entertaining His Majesty King Charles II., at Blickling, in 1671; an event which is thus recorded in the parish register:—"King Charles II. with Queen Catherine, James, Duke of York, the Dukes of Monmouth, Richmond, and Buckingham, with divers Lords, arrived at the Lord Hobart's, at Blickling Hall. The King, Queen, and the Dukes being entertained in the great dining-room, the others in the great parlour, from whence they went, the Queen to Norwich and the King to Oxnead."

In connection with this royal visit, Davy, in his Suffolk MSS., relates—"that among the portraits in the Parsonage House at Wrentham, at the death of the Rev. Wm. Barlee, in 1830, was the portrait of a young girl of very fair complexion and flaxen hair, and called

Lydia Hobart. She was said to have been very handsome; and upon the visit of King Charles II. to her father, at Blickling Hall, she was sent away to prevent her being seen by that monarch. She died, unmarried, at the age of eighteen." I have not been able to make out who this Lydia Hobart was, nor whether Sir John had a daughter of that name.

Sir John was succeeded by his son, Sir Henry Hobart, Baronet, who was knighted at Blickling, 1671, by King Charles II. He was Gentleman of the Horse to King William III., and present with him at the battle of the Boyne. He was said to have been a good-looking man, and one of the most accomplished swordsmen of his day, but for all that, he was killed in a duel, on Cawston Heath, by Oliver le Neve, who was short and plain in appearance, and notoriously a bad swordsman. A stone still marks the spot where he fell, 20th August, 1698. His son, Sir John Hobart, Baronet, was created Lord Hobart of Blickling, 28th May, 1728; and Earl of Buckinghamshire, 5th Sept., 1746.

There was a certain Sir Miles Hobart, M.P. for Great Marlow, who, at the Parliament which met 17th March, 1628, was distinguished for his opposition to the Court, and was among the members who, foreseeing the dissolution, forcibly held the Speaker in the chair, while they passed certain strong resolutions. On the dissolution of this Parliament, he was imprisoned for locking the doors of "the House" during the publication of these resolutions, but was discharged in 1631. Collins and Burke, in their *Peerages*; Blomefield, in his *History of Norfolk*; and other authorities, all make him out to be Miles, the third son of Sir Henry Hobart, the Lord Chief Justice; but it has been ascertained, beyond all dispute, that he was the son of Miles Hobart, clothworker, of London, descended from William Hobart, of Southwold. This Sir

Miles Hobart was knighted at Salisbury, 8th August, 1623, and killed by the overturning of his coach down Holborn Hill, 29th June, 1632.

On the other side of the question, in the troublous times of the Civil War, we find that William Hobart, second son of James Hobart, of Holt, was shot in Dereham Market Place, on the spot where the Obelisk now stands, for an attempt in favour of King Charles II., and was buried at Holt, 4th January, 1651.

I have now come to the close of my notes, having prepared just sufficient to enable the members to follow the fortunes of the Hobart family, commencing with Sir James, who was the first to settle in Norfolk, at Hales Hall, down to his descendant at Blickling, who was ennobled in 1728. Sufficient also, to show us that in the old times "the Law" was the chief road to fame and fortune; and we also learn how in those times, as indeed in the present day, when a man, by his prudence and energy, made a fortune to benefit his family, his descendants, in a very short time, show their appreciation and gratitude by scattering it all to the winds. Look at Sir James Hobart: by his industry, learning, and forensic skill, he was enabled to purchase estates and many manors in Norfolk; all of which are given in Blomefield, and all of which, as far as I can make out, passed away from his family in the course of a few generations; his very home, as you now perceive, being a heap of ruins; and it was left to his great grandson, Sir Henry Hobart, Knight and Baronet, Lord Chief Justice of the Common Pleas, to bring, through "the Law," new wealth, honours, and distinctions, and to purchase fresh estates in Norfolk. And if you want an instance of a similar kind at the present day, you have only to look at the case of "Jubilee Benson."