

Surrey Collections.

HISTORICAL ASSOCIATIONS CONNECTED WITH FARNHAM CASTLE.

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THE connection between the bishopric of Winchester and the spot on which Farnham Castle now stands dates almost from time immemorial. Before the incursions of the Danes had rendered this part of England unsafe for those who exercised the Christian religion, Ethelbald, king of the West Saxons, had granted Farnham to the bishop and congregation of the Church of Winton, about the year 860. Thirty years later we read of a battle fought here by King Alfred with the ravaging Danes, who doubtless found more plentiful booty in the thickly-populated counties of Surrey and Hampshire than in the east of England, where they had permanently established themselves.

What part the Bishop played, or how he fared during these troublous times, we cannot tell; but two centuries later, his possession of these lands is treated by Domesday as a recognised fact, and his revenues are accurately described:—

“The Bishop of Winchester holds Fernham. St Peter always held it. In the time of King Eadward (the Confessor) it was rated

for 60 hides (6,000 acres). That part of the manor which lies in Surrey is worth £55 (£3,300); when received £30 (£1,800). The Lordship of the Bishop £38 (£2,280), and of his men £9 (£540). Osborn de Ow holds of the bishop the Church of this Manor. It is worth £6 (£360), with one hide that lies in Hants."

In addition to these revenues, other considerable tracts of country seem to have been held by the Bishop, and granted by him to whom he would. Considering, then, the position of the see, and the influence possessed by those who successively held it, it is in some degree curious that no Bishop should have consulted his own dignity and the safety of his possessions by the erection of a castle for their protection.

This, however, under the stern rule of the Conqueror, would have been not only unnecessary, but dangerous; for to his high appreciation of law and order, William added no small jealousy of anything which implied a distrust in any class of his subjects of his power to protect them; and his successor, William Rufus, was too careful to select creatures of his own as Bishops to run the risk of the assertion by any of them of undue independence. Similarly, under Henry I., the unsettled relations of the King and the Archbishop made it to the advantage of both that those whom they presented to bishoprics should be supporters of their own, not possessing too much character and influence; and the tendency under all of these sovereigns was to check in their English subjects that individuality which had proved so fatal to their rule in Normandy.

Under Stephen, however, all this was changed. The see of Chichester had fallen into the hands of Henry of Blois, who added to the great power of the Church at this juncture a degree of character and ability which made his position quite exceptional. He saw in Farnham all that was necessary for the residence of a great prelate. Nearer to London than Winchester, in the centre of his property, with a commanding position, the

town supplied almost every requisite for his purpose. Great lawlessness was then prevalent, and Stephen was one of the first to set the followers of the King the example of providing for their own defence. A period of twenty years followed, without a parallel in the history of England. It was the only time during which the feudal baronage assumed that position of practical independence which it was always aiming at, and which it had frequently enjoyed abroad. The great barons seized upon the more important castles; the lesser ones built each for himself whatever he could. That Farnham at this time belonged to the more important class, may be inferred from the prominence of its owner, and that even in these difficult times there is no record of its changing hands. Nor is it to be inferred that the relationship of the Bishop to the King rendered his possessions in any degree more free from attack than those of other persons; on the contrary, the state of the country was such that the king and his relations were the object of more private attacks than the less distinguished barons, the worst features of continental feudalism being here revived.

A further tribute to the importance of the castle as it then stood was supplied half a century later, by its being mentioned as one of the strongholds of Louis the Dauphin, at the time of his invasion of England. The close of the reign of John, marked as it was by the revolt of the insurgent barons, the incursions of the Welsh on the West, and the seizure by Louis of London and the neighbourhood, with the greater part of the east of England, is a chapter of English history from which one lesson only could be drawn. No king could bear adequate sway in England so long as he was not master of the country; and until the system which made each baron a petty monarch could be revised, the prospects of good government were small.

William Marshall, to whom the task fell of grappling with the difficulties left at the death of John, set himself at once, although in a conciliatory spirit, to assert the

authority of the Crown. By degrees, when matters had been settled with the invaders, he was able to secure internal reform by the destruction of these castles, and the nation went back to the state of things under Henry II. Farnham shared the common fate; and though subsequently rebuilt during the same reign, it was naturally deprived of some of those defences which had before made it formidable.

More than four centuries consequently elapse before the castle is again heard of as a basis of military operations. In the interval great changes had taken place. The introduction of gunpowder in the fourteenth century put an end to the supremacy of great nobles by making their castles no longer a protection to them; and Farnham was no exception to the rule. It need not, however, be inferred that the historical interest of the place suffered by the change. Many circumstances combine to show that Farnham was something more than the appanage of the Bishop of Winchester. The old practice by which each castle had its constable, who was responsible for it to its owner, remained in force; and the appointment, coupled as it frequently was with the office of keeper of the parks surrounding the castle, seems to have been prized next only to those offices which the sovereign himself bestowed. From the reign of Edward III., when the bishop established a chantry in the castle, and granted to John Castre, chaplain, and his successor, being chaplains in the chapel of his castle at Farnham, one messuage and three acres of land in Farnham, and eight marks of yearly rent out of the bishop's manor of Farnham, the appointment to the offices of chaplain and constable regularly continued. As far as we can gather, the emoluments connected with the latter office were high, and the holder of them had probably some share in directing those grants of land which were made from time to time by the bishop.

The entries under the head of the Appointment of Constables are very numerous, and it is difficult to reconcile the fees received at different times. Thus,

from the Patent Roll, 14 Edw. II., 1321, we find that—

“The Bishop of Winchester granted to W^m Parcar in fee, custody of the Sergeantcy of his Hundreds of Farnham & Crundall, all the cablice & dead woods in the park aforesaid of Farnham, and certain cattle & hogs in parage in the park aforesaid, with other ample fees, for an annual rent of 80 herds which the king confirmed.”

1379. W^m of Wykeham appointed W^m of Wimbledon Constable, to keep, govern, and oversee the castle, together with the Manors, Lands, Liberties, Franchises, &c., attaching to it.

1460. Bishop Wainflete granted it to John White & Robert White with a salary of 2d. a day for each park or about £6 annually.

1541. Bishop Gardner grants the same to Thomas Wright & his son with a fee of £3. 0s. 10d. for the park and £1 for the water.

It is notable, that during this century, small as this remuneration may appear to us, even when multiplied so as to assimilate its value to that of our present money, in 1558 the office was held by Lord Viscount Montague, at a gross salary of £13, and subsequently, under Elizabeth, in 1593, by Lord Charles Howard, at a salary of less than £16; but it is apparent, that about this time the affairs of the Bishop of Winchester began greatly to interest the authorities at Court.

There is nothing which distinguishes the reign of Queen Elizabeth from that of our other sovereigns so much as the degree to which she was accustomed to interfere with the private affairs of her subjects. Lord Burleigh, as an historian has remarked, watched over England as a vigilant steward over his master's estate. Abundant proof of this is furnished by the public records of the reign in the relations of the Crown with the Bishop of Winchester.

Thus, in 1578, we find in a letter from Richard Drake to Sir William More, that the Bishop desires “licence for erecion of a skolle in Farnam, which licence Lord

Howard of Effingham will interest himself to obtain from her Majesty."

Again, in the following year, 1579, from the same collection of letters at Loseley,—we have a communication from Lord Burghley to Sir William More respecting the case of Robert Richardson, keeper of Farnham Castle in the late Bishop's time, who complains that he has been wrongfully deprived by Sir William of the keys and custody of the said castle (Sir William then being lieutenant of the shire). A postscript says, that Lord Burleigh having seen the patent of the late Bishop's grant to complainant, is disposed to think that the said Robert Richardson "ought to enjoy the sayd office of keeper of the castell." It is difficult to make out why this appointment should have been vested in any other but the Bishop, unless it be that by making one person in each shire responsible for such offices, a more direct communication with head-quarters might be maintained.

A still greater interference with the privileges of the bishop appears in a letter from Lord Burleigh to Sir Wm. More, dated June 22nd, 1580, in which he directs that hay and other commodities at Farnham, "being of the profits of the said episcopal possessions, and needful for the convenience of Mr. Wattson (the newly-appointed Bishop), be not sold in this year, as in the preceding year, for her Majesty's advantage." Synchronizing as this does with the period at which Elizabeth was most anxious to avoid calling her Parliament together, we have an instructive example of the means by which the expenditure of the year was met.

Throughout the whole of the sixteenth century, Farnham had been a halting-place of the Court in the royal progress. In 1516, Henry VIII. writes to Wolsey, "under our signet at Farnham, at 11 of the clock in the night," as to the request made by the Ambassadors for further aid to the Emperor. In Nicholl's "Progresses of Queen Elizabeth," her Majesty's intention to stay at Farnham is frequently mentioned, notably in 1583, and in 1591, when the "queene having dyned at Farnham,

came with a great traine to the Right Honourable the Lord Montagues at Cowdray, on Saterdaie, the 15 daie of August, about eight of the cloche at night." Again, we find in the Harleian Manuscripts at this period an entry to the effect that "the pope has laboured desperate persons to do violence to the queen;" to guard against which it is said that the Queen had better pass the summer at Farnham. We gather from these records that the Bishop was the entertainer on such occasions, and that he gave up the castle entirely to the royal suite. This is proved by two letters from John Watson, Bishop of Winchester, to Sir William More, in which he hopes through the latter's intercession to obtain Mrs. Morgan's house during the Queen's visit to Farnham; and he seems to have welcomed Sir William More's information in July, 1583, that "a staye is made of all progresses, especially of that into Sussex," of which he would have been the victim. The same letter is noteworthy as containing his opinion that "there has been some bad dealing at Dunkerk, otherwise it could not have been so soon lost after Mons^{rs}. departure."

The supervision which the lieutenant of the shire exercised over the Bishop does not appear to have interfered with their friendly relations; for Bishop Horne, in 1570, writes to desire that a publican at Byfleet should be punished for having dancing on a Sunday in time of Divine Service; and also that certain inhabitants of Witley should be examined as to crime imputed to Nicholas Woodies, who was reported to have said and affirmed, that women had no souls, or some such words. His next letter reminds Sir William that "you told me of some one skillful in trimming and stopping of teeth, if you can cause the same fellow to come unto me about that purpose, you shall greatly pleasure me."

We gather from these extracts that the Bishops or Winchester under Queen Elizabeth were singularly dependent on her representative in the shire; that they were frequently taxed by her Majesty, both for her private uses and for her reception; that the castle was superintended by a constable appointed by the lieutenant,

and, from a complaint in 1590, we find that they were exposed to constant expense in litigation in support of their privileges. These evils culminated in 1595, when the newly-appointed Bishop makes complaint of his revenues, and of the condition in which he found his castle. His letter of petition to Secretary Cecil, preserved in the State Papers, gives so fair an idea of the state of affairs at Farnham at that time, that it is worth quoting at length :—

“I understand that I shall not content Her Majesty unless I yield some satisfaction for Sir Francis Carew. I am content, although it be greatly to my discredit, and the prejudice of my successors, thus to overcharge my bishopric that no profit shall come to me or them for so many years save a dry & seck rent, both for Her Highness’ satisfaction and also for the clearing of my Lord your father and yourself, who are thought too far to favour me, to condescend to a thousand pounds to Sir Francis, to be raised by a lease to be made to Her Majesty, and from her to such as I shall appoint I beseech you will be a means Her Highness will pardon me for more, and that I stand thus resolutely in the defence of my bishopric, whereto both in duty & conscience I am bound I am bold to send you some reasons for my speedy restitution. Your honour, to be commended,

“22 March, 1595.

W. WINTON.”

As reasons for his restitution, after mentioning that his diocese was filled with “bad men, backward in religion,” recusants, Jesuits, and such like, he proceeds further to state that—

“The Houses of the Bishopric go mightily to decay, some being ready to fall because none hath cared to repair in the vacation (of the see two years), so that the charges of reparation will light heavy on the present Bishop; the executors of his predecessors laying the fault of the ruins upon the time of the vacation, for the repairing whereof this season must be taken, or else that which will now be amended for a thousand pounds, or 1,000 marks, will not be done with four or five thousand pounds.”

Among "some particular reasons to which many more might be added, but for avoiding tediousness," he adds, that "some of the towers of Farnham Castle are already fallen, and if they be not shortly repaired, they will endanger the whole house."

Another entry is interesting as relating to the water-supply of the castle :—

"There is a water-course at Farnham conducting water into the castle broken in divers places to the great annoyance of divers persons through whose grounds the same passeth, which will not be amended without great charge if orders be not forthwith given therein."

No record exists as to how these difficulties were met ; but in 1601 the Queen held her last court at Farnham, at the time when the Irish expedition was going on, as we find from a letter of Lord Admiral Nottingham to Secretary Cecil. That the revenues of the see were at this time considered inadequate is proved by an appendix to the petition quoted above, in which the Bishop proves, with great exactitude, that out of a gross revenue of £2,793. 4s. 7 $\frac{1}{4}$ d. and half a farthing, his net receipts amounted only to £518. 11s. 5 $\frac{3}{4}$ d. and half a farthing, while ten years later we find a patent to Sir George More, of Loseley, and Sir Robert More, Knights, for an annual rent of £106. 6s. 10d., to be paid out of the issues of the county of Surrey, in consideration of their relinquishment of all their interest in the office of Constable of the Castle and Keeper of the Parks ; which leads us to infer that the annual value of the office of constable was nearly one-fourth of that of the bishopric. It is curious that the gross receipts in the 22nd year of Henry VIII., 1531, just before the destruction of the monasteries, amounted to £4,415. 16s. 5d. So that a decrease must have taken place in the next half century.

The history of Farnham during the Civil Wars is interesting, although the castle itself was perhaps more a depôt than a stronghold. Soldiers had been billeted there for a long time, and the discontent was so great

that the Lords of the Council had called upon Sir George More to suppress it.

At the beginning of the war, Farnham was held for the King, but Sir John Denham, its governor, probably thinking it untenable, left it in 1642, and joined the King at Oxford. Sir William Waller possessed himself of it, and blew it up in the same year on behalf of the Parliament. But this injury did not prevent its being held again as a stronghold, and it was garrisoned and re-fortified by Waller. A battle was very nearly fought in the park, but the enemy retired after losing some men and horses by the fire from the ordnance of the castle; and it was not till some days after that Sir William Waller being reinforced by the Londoners, marched his forces to Alton, and defeated the Royalists under Lord Crawford, taking 800 or 900 prisoners, whom he lodged in Farnham Church and Castle.

George Wither, the poet, who subsequently became governor of the castle, lost it to the enemy through the negligence, as he asserts, of Sir Richard Onslow, who gave him no orders, ammunition, or support.

During the whole of the troubles Farnham was the scene of great disorder. Petitions were forwarded by Robert Hyde, keeper of the great park at Farnham, to the Parliament, complaining that sundry persons, to the number of 100, had on the last Sunday and fast-day riotously entered the park, and driven away 200 deer at least, besides pulling down the pales and killing divers cattle, and had threatened petitioner with death, who told them it were more fitting they should be at church according to the order of the Parliament, saying, they cared not what Parliament did or said. Petitioner prays they may be apprehended and brought before the House.

For some years the castle seems to have been at the mercy of its successive holders, and the draft is extant in the Journals of the House of Lords, of an order for the Earl of Northumberland "to have the first refusal of purchasing Farnham Castle" (1647). In 1648, the Parliament ordered the fortress to be put "in that condition

of indefensibleness that it might be no occasion for endangering the peace of the country;" and this appears to have been done.

Until the Restoration the castle is not again mentioned; but Charles II. restored what remained of the edifice, together with the manor of Farnham, to the see of Winchester. From this ruinous condition it was rescued by Bishop Morley, who between 1662 and 1684 spent no less than £10,000 in building for his successors a palace worthy of the see, including such portions as remained of the original structure.

In his will occurs the following:—

"To the end that my successors in y^e See of Winchester may have a House neere their Cathedrall large enough to receive them & their families, though not so large stately and magnificent as there was formerly, to ye new front wh^h I have built already it is my will, and I have already taken order that, one of ye wings viz. that next to ye chappell shall be rebuilt before Michaelmas next; and whether I live to see the finishing thereof or not, my will is that it be finished at my charge whatever the charge comes to, I mean for the building of one wing only."*

From this time very little remains to be added as regards the castle. The last relics of the old office of constable perished in 1808, by the surrender to Bishop North of a patent which his predecessor had granted, and which the Dean and Chapter of Winchester confirmed in 1778, to Joseph Winter, of the office of janitor, together with the custody of the castle, at a yearly fee of 60s. and 10d.

Successive Bishops have wrought improvements of various kinds in the dwelling, and Bishop North at the beginning of the century greatly improved the parks by laying out new walks, planting trees, and removing

* It has been suggested to me by the present Bishop of Winchester that this extract applies to Bishop Morley's buildings at Winchester, and not at Farnham.—W. St. J. B.

nuisances. The present Bishop in the last few years has also lighted and fitted up the castle according to modern ideas, and the present commodious building is the result.

In conclusion, it may be said that the interest which attaches to the castle as a relic of antiquity is doubled by the way in which the distinctive features in its history at different periods illustrates the general history of England. As in the old days the possessors of Farnham seem to have rivalled the warlike energies of their compeers, while in the same spirit they reflected the hospitality of the Tudors, and emulated the open-handedness of the Stuarts, so in the present day the best features of English life may be found at Farnham Castle.