

**HUGH DE GRENTMESNIL  
& HIS FAMILY**

**BY  
HENRY JAMES FRANCIS**

**Part I.—Pre-Conquest**

**Part II.—The Conquest and After**

## I. Pre-Conquest

When the fiscal survey known as the Domesday Book was compiled, two churches, a hundred and ten houses, and certain other properties in the borough of Leicester, and more than seventy manors in the county, were held by Hugh de Grentemesnil, a Norman baron who had fought at Hastings and had taken a leading part in the subjugation of England. This powerful nobleman was thus by far the greatest landowner in Leicestershire, and his estates formed the nucleus of the honour attached to the earldom of Leicester, which was created in the next century, when the local pre-eminence and possessions of the Grentemesnils passed to the still more important family of Beaumont, from which Simon de Montfort, the last of the pre-Lancastrian earls, derived his right of succession.

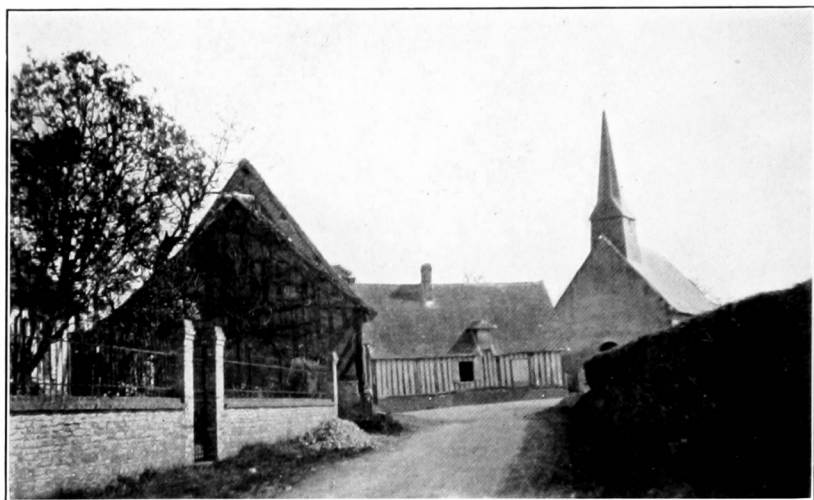
The family of Grentemesnil was established soon after 996, when Richard II of Normandy succeeded his father as ruler.<sup>1</sup> One of Richard's first acts on coming into the dukedom was to distribute large portions of his inheritance among his kinsmen, on the understanding that each of these should hold his estate under the duke's suzerainty.<sup>2</sup> In this partition, the district called the Hiémois was allotted to Richard's halfbrother William, who had no sooner received possession than he began to assert an independence that did not accord with the terms of the grant. An army was consequently dispatched against him, and in 998, after a stubborn resistance, he was defeated and made prisoner.<sup>3</sup> Richard then resumed possession of the Hiémois, and a few years later granted fiefs therein to a number of his more faithful adherents.<sup>4</sup> One of these fiefs, that

<sup>1</sup>Origines, p. 95.

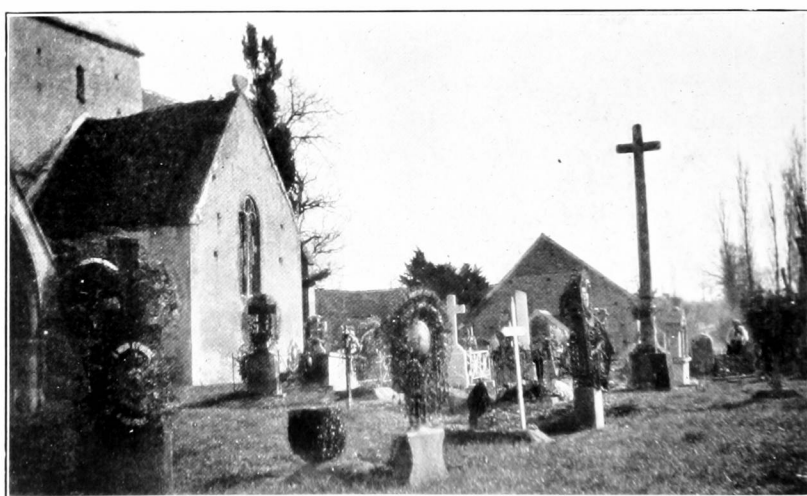
<sup>2</sup>Origines, p. 97.

<sup>3</sup>Origines, p. 99.

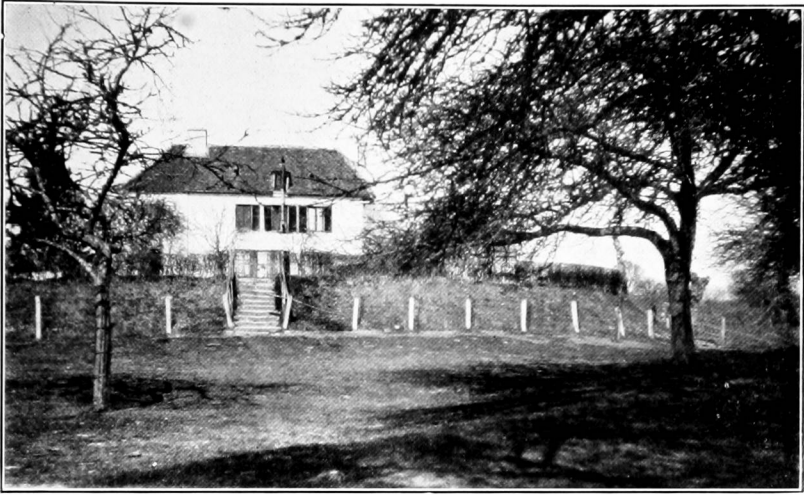
<sup>4</sup>Origines, p. 100.



THE VILLAGE OF GRANDMESNIL



NORREY CHURCHYARD, IN WHICH HUGH DE GRENTMESNILS'  
FATHER WAS BURIED



THE MOUND OF THE GRENTEMESNILS' CASTLE, THE FARMHOUSE IS MODERN



PORTION OF THE OUTER EARTHWORKS OF GRENTEMESNIL, CASTLE

of Grentemesnil, he gave to a certain Robert, the founder of the lordly house with which we are now concerned.<sup>1</sup>

Robert, when he entered upon his domain, did not erect his stronghold at Grandmesnil, as the name is now spelt, but upon higher ground about half-way between that village and a place called Norrey. The mound is now occupied by a modern farm-house, and other earth-works of the old fortress still remain and were photographed by me when I visited the district in the spring of 1921. Upon my arrival at Grandmesnil I found that the position of the castle and the names of its early lords were unknown to the villagers, and it was only after much journeying to and fro that I succeeded in locating the site of the castle. The tenants of the farm-house were under the impression that their home stood upon a fortification raised by some ancient lord of Norrey, and a different place was pointed out to me as the site of Grandmesnil castle. However, I did not alter the opinion to which my investigations had led me, and six months later I had the satisfaction of finding this confirmed in the writings of M. de Caumont,<sup>2</sup> who says: "*Les vestiges du château des sires de Grandmesnil se trouvent sur le territoire de Norrey, au lieu dit 'la Baronnie.' M. le comte de Beaurepaire a signalé le premier il y a longtemps cet emplacement. On distingue bien les anciens fossés du château, qui se composent d'une motte assez considérable sur laquelle est aujourd'hui une maison moderne.*"<sup>3</sup> Though it is not possible to say anything definite about the castle, as no excavation ever appears to have been attempted, I formed the opinion that it had been of the ordinary primitive type, and had consisted of a wooden fort with stockaded enclosures. We know, however, from a St. Evroult charter of 1128, that there was a chapel attached to it, and that this was dedicated to the Holy Trinity and was served by the priest of Norrey.<sup>4</sup> Robert appears to have received the lordship of Grentemesnil about the end of the first decade of the eleventh century, and it was probably about the time of this advance in his fortune that he married Hawise, second daughter of the head of an illustrious

<sup>1</sup>Origines, p. 105.

<sup>2</sup>Statistique, p. 407.

<sup>3</sup>Words of the same import appear in tome V, pp. 117-118 of Monsieur de Caumont's "Cours d'Antiquité's Monumentales."

<sup>4</sup>Gallia

family called Giroie, by whom he had three sons,<sup>1</sup> Robert, Hugh and Arnold, and at least one daughter.<sup>2</sup> The second of these sons was the territorial magnate, the catalogue of whose lands occupies so much space in the Leicestershire section of Domesday.

As we are all supposed to know, at the death of Robert the Devil, which occurred in 1035, the ducal crown of Normandy passed to his illegitimate son William, the future conqueror of this country. In the extensive rising provoked by this irregular succession, Robert de Grentemesnil took the side of the insurgents, and, while fighting against Roger de Beaumont, a partisan of duke William and an ancestor of the Leicester Beaumonts, he was severely wounded in the abdomen. Feeling that his end was near, the lord of Grentemesnil divided his possessions between his sons Robert and Hugh, to whose care he entrusted the third son, Arnold, with the admonition that they should treat him with fraternal kindness when he grew to be a man.<sup>3</sup> Then, after lingering painfully for three weeks,<sup>4</sup> he died on 17 June, 1039,<sup>5</sup> and was buried in the graveyard of St. Mary's Church, Norrey, about a mile from Grentemesnil castle.<sup>6</sup> His widow married again, taking for her second husband, William, son of Robert, archbishop of Rouen,<sup>7</sup> and grandson of Richard I, duke of Normandy, by whom she appears to have had two daughters. The circumstances of Robert de Grentemesnil's death are thus narrated by Benoit, the twelfth-century *trouvère*, in his *Chronique des Ducs de Normandie* :—<sup>8</sup>

“ Robert cil de Grente-maisnil,  
Dunt mult firent grand dol si fil,  
Fu iloc navrez morteument ;  
Ne vesqui pas puis longement,  
Ainz treis semaines fu feniz ;  
Sa terre laissa à ses fiz,  
Robert e Huun l'ainzé.”

<sup>1</sup>Ord. Vit., Vol. I, p. 395.

<sup>2</sup>Origines, p. 105. Ordericus says “three daughters.” But this seems to be a mistake as he appears to have included the two daughters Hawise had by her second husband. The daughter she had by Hugh was named Adelise.

<sup>3</sup>Guillaume, Chap. III, Bk. VII.

<sup>4</sup>Ord. Vit., Vol. I, pp. 149 & 401.

<sup>5</sup>Du Moulin, liv. VII, p. 127.

<sup>6</sup>Ord. Vit., Vol. I, p. 401.

<sup>7</sup>Guillaume, Chap. IV, Bk. VII.

<sup>8</sup>Lines 32044-32050. Edition—Paris, Imprimerie Royale, MDCCCXXXVI.

Early in his adult career, Hugh de Grentemesnil was called upon to render military assistance to Yves de Belême, the accomplished and witty bishop of Séez, against a party of bandits who were ravaging that episcopal city. These desperadoes, when Hugh arrived upon the scene, had taken up a strong defensive position in the cathedral church of St. Gervais. Hugh and the bishop made several attempts to oust them from this improvised fortress, but without success, for the malefactors fought stoutly and every attack was vigorously repelled. As a last resource, the besiegers endeavoured to force them into the open by setting fire to some neighbouring houses. The effect of this risky stratagem was that the flames spread to the church, which was burnt to the ground, while the bandits escaped in the smoke and confusion.

Shortly after this adventure, Hugh and Robert, in accordance with the custom of the great Norman lords of that time,<sup>2</sup> for the salvation of their souls and the souls of their ancestors, determined to erect a monastery at Norrey, on land appropriately near to the place of their father's burial.<sup>3</sup> The foundations of the intended building had already been laid, (and were still to be seen in the seventeenth century),<sup>4</sup> when the brothers were approached by their maternal uncle, William Giroie, who urged them to abandon their original purpose in favour of an alternative scheme in which he was prepared to join them.

Ordericus Vitalis, the English-born chronicler who entered the Benedictine abbey of St. Evroult in 1085, when he was ten years old, tells us, in his *Ecclesiastical History of England and Normandy*, that William Giroie, who had been a man of great eminence, was "at the head of a powerful family, including sons, brothers and nephews, who were formidable to their foes far and near." At the time of his intervention, however, he was in the most pitiable condition, having been emasculated, blinded and deprived of his ears by William Talvas, son of William de Belême.<sup>5</sup> Though a modern writer, the vicomte de Motey,<sup>6</sup> maintains that, allowing for the barbarous notions of reprisal which then prevailed, the unfortunate gentleman richly deserved

<sup>1</sup>Guillaume, Bk. VII, Chap. 13.

<sup>2</sup>Ord. Vit., Vol. I, p. 382.

<sup>3</sup>Op. cit., Vol. I, p. 384.

<sup>4</sup>Du Moulin, liv. VII, p. 127.

<sup>5</sup>Ord. Vit., Vol. I, p. 384.

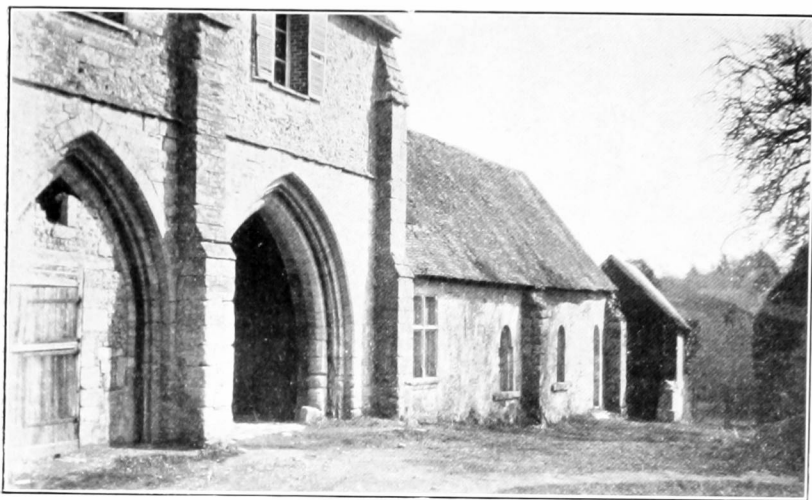
<sup>6</sup>"Origines," Chap. II.

his appalling punishment, it is gratifying to learn from Orderic that "so odious a crime rendered Talvas universally detested, and [that] some time afterwards he was stript of his honours by his own son Arnulf."

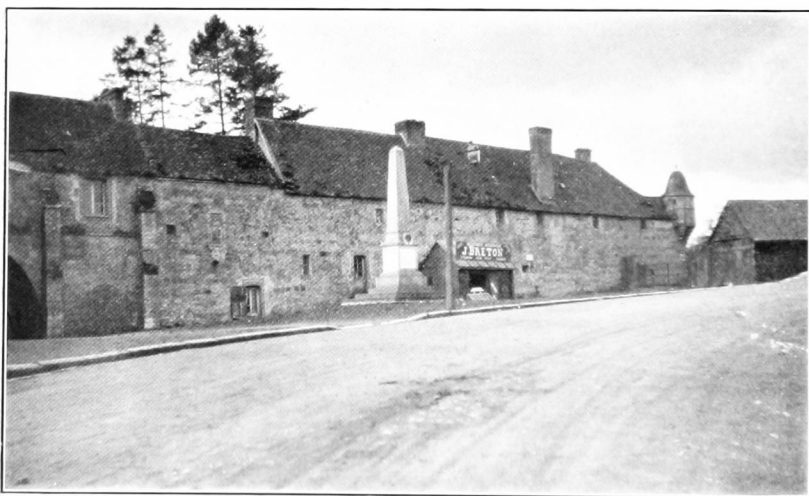
Continuing his narrative from this point, the chronicler says: "William Giroie was all his life devoted to holy church, and held the monks and the clergy and other men of religion in high honour. Twice he made pilgrimages to the tomb of our Lord at Jerusalem, once when he was in the full enjoyment of health and prosperity, and a second time when he had suffered the outrage which we have just mentioned. On his return from this second pilgrimage he determined on quitting the world, and, going to Bec, there assumed the monastic habit and piously granted the church of Ouche to that abbey. He had for some time been an inmate of Bec when he heard of his nephews' enterprise at Norrey, and was moved to lay before them a scheme of his own which he considered sounder and more promising than the one they had already begun to put into effect." The story is thus told by Orderic, who writes as though he had himself been present at the interview between the young men and their uncle:—

"When William Giroie was informed of his nephews' vow to build a monastery, he sought them out and thus addressed them: 'It causes me great joy, my dear sons, to find that Almighty God has vouchsafed to inspire you with the design of building a house in His name. But you must be sensible that the spot on which you have begun to build is not suited for a habitation of monks, because it wants water, and the forest [to provide fuel for the community and pasturage for the indispensable herds of swine] is at too great a distance. It is quite certain that these two elements are absolutely necessary to the subsistence of a convent. Now, if you will take my advice, I will point out to you a more convenient site. The place is in the Canton of Ouche, where there formerly dwelt a holy abbot, the friend of God, whose name was Evroult, who assembled there a large body of monks, and after performing many miracles died happily in the Lord. Restore that monastery which was ruined by the pagans. You will find there abundance of water, and I possess a forest close by which will enable me to supply the





ENTRANCE GATEWAY OF THE ABBEY OF ST. EVROULT



MONUMENT TO ORDERIC VITAL, OUTSIDE ST. EVROULT ABBEY BUILDINGS

monastery with whatever is necessary. Come then and see this spot, and, if it pleases you, let us join in building there a house of God, and place in it a company of faithful men who shall offer continual prayers on our behalf; and we will endow it from our domains with such secure revenues that they may devote themselves altogether to the worship of God.'

"Upon hearing this, his nephews Hugh and Robert thanked him for his proposal, and they all proceeded together to survey the spot he had pointed out. On their coming there, a book containing the life of the holy father Evroult was presented to Robert, which he carefully perused and explained with intelligence to Hugh and the rest of his companions. Need I say more? The situation of Ouche pleased the two brothers; but, as it had formerly been granted to the abbey of Bec, and certain monks from the convent were already stationed there, . . . the brothers made over to the abbot and monks of Bec a vill called La Roussière, securing in exchange the fee of the land at Ouche.

"In the year of our Lord 1050, the plan of restoring the abbey of Ouche being thus determined on, William and Robert, the sons of Giroie, with Hugh and Robert, the sons of Robert Grentemesnil, applied to William duke of Normandy, and, informing him of their intentions, entreated the assistance of his paramount authority in the good work they had undertaken. They likewise made over the place so often mentioned to his guardianship, on a tenure so free that neither they nor any persons whosoever could claim from the monks or their people either rent or customary dues, or anything else except the benefit of their prayers. . . .

"Hugh and Robert, having the duke's licence to choose an abbot, then proceeded to Jumièges, and besought the lord Robert, who was then superior of that abbey, to allow the monk Theódoric [de Matonville] to take the government of their new abbey,<sup>1</sup> and abbot Robert, readily complying with the request of his noble guests, yielded to them the monk whom he well knew to be qualified for such a pastoral care. Hugh and Robert now, with great satisfaction, presented him [Theodoric] to the duke, who receiving him with due distinction, delivered to him the pastoral staff, as the custom was, thus giving him the preferment of the abbey of Ouche [*i.e.*, of St. Evroult]."

<sup>1</sup>Ord. Vit., Vol. I, p. 386.

After giving some account of the early life of Theodoric, and a short history of the house of Giroie, Orderic goes on to say that "in the first year of the founding of the abbey of St. Evroult, William and Robert, sons of Giroie, and Hugh and Robert [de Grentemesnil] their nephews, assembled at Ouche, with their sons, nephews [*i.e.*, the nephews of the two Giroies] and barons. Consulting together for the advantage of the unfinished monastery which they had begun to erect, they agreed in common that each of them should at his death bequeath his body to St. Evroult, with the whole of his substance, and that none of them should make a gift, whether of tithes, or of a church or of anything appertaining to a church, nor even offer it for sale, without first giving the option to the monks of St. Evroult. The founders of the monastery then took account of their possessions, and granted a fair portion, according to their ability, to the church they were building."<sup>1</sup>

It is certain that Hugh de Grentemesnil did not bequeath "the whole of his substance" to St. Evroult's, and it may be that this part of the agreement was understood to be subject to limitations imposed by the laws of tenure and by family considerations.

Orderic sets forth in detail the copious grants of Robert, Hugh, and Arnold Grentemesnil; but as these grants, of course, were all situate in Normandy, it is thought their mention here *in extenso* is not of sufficient interest to English readers.

All the properties with which the Giroies and the Grentemesnils endowed the abbey of St. Evroult were set forth in a charter, which they presented to William duke of Normandy, who confirmed their donations and subscribed the charter with the Sign of the Cross. He also granted to the abbey the special privilege of being for ever exempt from foreign jurisdiction, and vested the election of its abbots entirely in the chapter of the brethren, subject to the rules of regular discipline, and on condition that the votes were not obtained corruptly, by favouritism, relationship or bribery. By the duke's authority the charter was made to conclude as follows:—

<sup>1</sup>Op. cit., Vol. I, p. 395.

"I, William, count of Normandy, have caused this deed of gift to be put in writing, and have had it confirmed, under pain of excommunication, by the signatures of the archbishop of Rouen, and the bishops, abbots and nobles whose names and marks are hereunto subscribed, in order that its provisions may remain firm and undisturbed henceforth and for ever; so that if anyone shall presume to infringe them or shall in any way injure them, either by himself or any other, he shall, by the authority of God and all the saints, be excommunicated from all Christian privileges, and, if he do not repent, be accursed for ever."

In the same year, 1050, Robert de Grentemesnil entered the abbey as a monk.

The eldest of the Grentemesnil brothers, who soon after his submission to the monastic rule became prior of St. Evroult's, had in his boyhood been remarkable for his devotion to letters and for the retentiveness of his memory. As he grew up, however, he "began to despise the inaction of learning, and sought with eagerness the toils of arms." In the days of his youth he served for five years as an esquire to duke William, who rewarded him with noble generosity and raised him to the honours of knighthood. At this stage in his career, the calamitous death of his father having set him reflecting upon the chances and changes of life, he arrived at the conviction that it was "better to serve humbly in the Lord's house than to flourish like grass in the courts of the wicked."<sup>1</sup> Though it was not in Robert's nature to serve humbly in any capacity, he was honestly zealous in the cause of religion, and there is little doubt that it was he who first suggested the ecclesiastical enterprise which eventually led to the restoration of the mouldering abbey of St. Evroult. Orderic tells us that, after his assumption of the monastic habit, Robert "suffered much inconvenience in supplying the necessities of the church, and often laid hands on the substance of his kinsfolk, who were very wealthy, charitably distributing it in the support of the faithful. Paying his mother Hawise forty livres of Rouen, he deprived her of her dowry, consisting of lands in Noyer-Menard, Vieux-Mesnil, La Tanaisie and Mesnil-

<sup>1</sup>Ord. Vit. Vol. I, pp. 400-1.

Dode, which he transferred to the abbey of St. Evroult. He also presented to the monks of St. Evroult, as his mother's gift, the 'great psalter illuminated with pictures,' which the choir frequently uses to the present time [probably about 1130] in chanting the praises of God. . . . [He] conferred many other benefits on his church, and rendered himself very agreeable to his brethren, both by the ecclesiastical ornaments he furnished and by the necessary comforts he procured for them."

The psalter referred to had been presented by Emma, wife of the English king Ethelred, to her brother Robert, archbishop of Rouen, whose son William<sup>1</sup> was the second husband of the elder Robert de Gentemesnil's widow. According to Orderic, William had "secretly abstracted" the book from his father's chamber and given it to Hawise, to whom he was so much attached that he sought every means of affording her pleasure. That the purloining of a sacred book was regarded more lightly in those days than it would be now is shown by a twelfth-century Italian poem, translated by Dante Gabriel Rossetti, in which a lover brings about the capitulation of his hitherto reluctant lady by declaring:—

"Then on Christ's Book, borne with me still  
To read from and to pray,  
(I took it, fairest, in a church,  
The priest being gone away,)  
I swear that my whole self shall be  
Thine always from this day."

Orderic tells the story of William's theft, which he obviously believed to be true, without the faintest hint of disapproval.

The next reference I find relating to the Grentemesnills informs us that Hugh was present in 1055 at the wedding of Mabile de Belleme to Roger II of Montgomery.<sup>2</sup>

As a monk Robert de Grentemesnil was anything but an ideal subject. His zeal and affection for the new abbey were real enough. But he was irritable and headstrong, and being of the opinion that the abbot devoted too much time to spiritual matters and too little to secular, Robert and his superior were:

<sup>1</sup>"Origines," p. 184.

<sup>2</sup>Bibl. Nat. Baluze 77, 44, quoted by the Vicomte du Motey.

often at loggerheads. When relations became too strained the abbot withdrew himself to a quiet retreat near Séez until Robert de Grentemesnil should return to a more reasonable frame of mind. This went on for some time but, finding that matters became worse instead of better, Theodoric tendered his pastoral staff to duke William and offered to resign his abbacy. The duke thereupon committed the matter to Maurilius, archbishop of Rouen, instructing him to enquire into the cause of the dissension and to make such order thereon, as, by the advice of prudent counsellors, he should think right.

The result of the inquiry, which took place in 1056, was that the abbot Theodoric was to continue the government of the abbey as he had done before, and Robert de Grentemesnil was admonished in the fullest terms to conform to his vows of poverty in Christ, and to obey his spiritual father in all humility. A year afterwards strife broke out again, and Theodoric, to get away from it all, undertook a pilgrimage to Jerusalem.<sup>1</sup>

Theodoric died while on this pilgrimage, and on hearing of his death the monks chose Robert de Grentemesnil to succeed him. Robert was conducted to duke William, by whose order he was invested with the exterior jurisdiction of the convent by the bishop of Séez, and with the interior cure of souls by the bishop of Evreux. This was in June, 1059. The new abbot entered diligently upon his duties, and, far from diminishing the proper observances instituted by Theodoric, he augmented them.<sup>2</sup>

Robert de Grentemesnil was much more successful as the supreme ruler of the abbey than he had been in the secondary office of prior. During his administration, the number of brethren was considerably increased, and the fame of the monastery spread far and wide. When he found that the liberality of his government overtaxed the revenues of the monastery, which was situated in a barren district, he applied to his wealthy relatives, who continued to assist him with willing and generous donations.

The old chapel built by St. Evroult in the sixth century was

<sup>1</sup>Ord. Vit., Bk. III, Ch. III.

<sup>2</sup>Ord. Vit., Vol. I, p. 423.

a small and rude edifice ; but the new abbot had the pleasure in the first year of his rule, of laying the foundations of a new church in a noble style of architecture, which he resolved to dedicate to the Virgin Mary, and to enrich with many altars of the saints. On account also of the holy relics which were deposited in the old church in the time of St. Evroult (but, owing to the lapse of time, the place of deposits, as well as the origin of the relics had been lost) he determined to make the new building of such dimensions that it should include within its walls the whole of the ancient chapel, and thus for ever honourably contain the bones and tombs of the saints which lay hidden within. But he was compelled to desist from his undertaking by the stormy times which began to threaten.

When Robert de Grentemesnil had been in office for about a year and a half, during which the affairs of the convent appear to have been managed with ability and discretion, he was so unfortunate as to incur the serious displeasure of his ducal sovereign. In the latter part of 1061, according to Orderic without any just reason, William disinherited and drove into exile Hugh de Grentemesnil, Ralph de Toeni and Arnold d'Echaufour.<sup>1</sup> Though the old historian regards these enterprising warriors as the victims of misrepresentation, the vicomte de Motey has shown that Hugh had taken a leading part in the fomenting of an insurrection against Roger de Montgomerie, afterwards earl of Shrewsbury, who was holding the frontiers of Normandy against the duke's enemies. Simultaneously with the disgrace of Hugh and his associates,<sup>2</sup> Robert de Grentemesnil was cited to appear before the ducal court to answer a charge brought against him by Rainer, a monk of Chatillon, whom he had raised to the office of prior of St. Evroult's and had treated as a confidential friend. The allegation was that, in the course of a private conversation, Robert had commented disparagingly upon William's personal character. Whether there was anything in Rainer's story or not, Robert, who had been secretly informed that the duke was violently enraged against him and all his kindred, did not appear on the day appointed to defend himself against the accusation. Feeling that he was in danger of bodily

<sup>1</sup>Ord. Vit., Vol. I, p. 491.

<sup>2</sup>"Origines," p. 30.

injury, he acted on the advice of his friend the bishop of Lisieux, and prudently fled from the wrath that threatened him. On 27 January, 1061, after chanting at vespers the antiphon, *Peccata mea, Domine*, he took his departure, and mounting on horseback with two monks, Fulk and Urse, travelled through France, and thence proceeded to present himself to pope Nicholas and lay his case before him.

During Robert's absence, duke William invested Osbern, prior of Corneilles, with the abbacy of St. Evroult.

Upon his arrival at Rome, abbot Robert obtained an interview with the pope, to whom he explained in detail the circumstances that had led to his hurried departure from St. Evroult's. The pope, who was a native of France, listened with sympathy to all he had to say and promised to support him in his difficult position.<sup>1</sup> Having so far accomplished his business, Robert paid a visit to his relatives in Apulia, and then, furnished with apostolic letters and accompanied by two papal legates, returned to Normandy and presented himself at the duke's court, which was being held at Lillebonne. When William heard that Robert and the legates had come to claim the abbey of St. Evroult, and to take proceedings against Osbern as an intruder, he flew into a rage and declared that, though he would willingly receive the pope's envoys on matters touching the Christian faith, if any monk in his territories laid charges against him, he would hang him with contempt on the highest tree in the neighbouring forest. The bishop of Lisieux, who was present when this threat was made, communicated it to Robert, with the suggestion that he would do well to avoid the presence of the angry duke. The wisdom of this counsel being undeniable, Robert again fled hastily from Normandy, this time to the abbey of St. Denys, near Paris, "where he was received by his cousin Hugh, the venerable abbot, and was for some time honourably entertained by him, and others, his friends and relations, who were among the most powerful of the French nobility." From St. Denys', he wrote to Osbern, suggesting that both of them should appear before the Roman cardinals at Chartres, and that, when the controversy had been thoroughly enquired into to, they should both

<sup>1</sup>I am following Orderic here. His account differs from Guillaume de Jumièges, but doubtless Orderic's position enabled him to know the facts.



submit without hesitation to the final judgment, whatever this might be, of the ecclesiastical authorities. "On receiving this summons, Osbern declared that he would willingly go to the court of Rome; but by the advice of others, he did not appear at the appointed time and place. Whereupon Robert sent letters, by the pope's authority, excommunicating Osbern as an intruder, and positively requiring all the monks of the abbey of St. Evroult to submit to him." When the monks "heard of the excommunication launched against the intruding abbot, and received the monition of father Robert commanding his sons to join him, with the pope's concurrence, some of them, turning their backs on Normandy, accompanied their abbot to the apostolic see."<sup>1</sup>

Pope Nicholas died in July, 1061, and was succeeded by Alexander II, who was crowned on the last day of September in the same year. Not long after this event, Robert de Grentemesnil, and eleven monks who had followed him to Italy, presented themselves before the new pope, who graciously assigned to them the church of St. Paul at Rome, with permission to live there according to their rule until such time as they could find a more suitable abode. Robert then sought the aid of his cousin William of Montreuil, the pope's standard-bearer, who had established himself by force of arms in Campania and restored the schismatic natives to catholic unity. William gave to the exiled abbot and his companions "the half of an ancient city called Aquina," famous as the birthplace of Juvenal and St. Thomas Aquinas. After visiting Richard de Carel, prince of Capua, a son-in-law of Tancred de Hauteville, who deluded him with empty promises, he proceeded to wait upon Tancred's son, Robert Guiscard, prince of Apulia and duke of Calabria, who "paid him great honours as his natural lord, and begged him to take up his abode permanently with his monks in his territory." This mighty conqueror, the ablest and most successful of Tancred's twelve sons, gave to abbot Robert the church of St. Euphemia, on the west coast of Calabria, and commanded him to rebuild the abbey of St. Euphemia, which about sixty years before Robert's arrival had been plundered and demolished by the Arabs of Sicily. The duke and other Normans made large

<sup>1</sup>Ord. Vit., Vol. I, p. 435.

grants to this abbey, which, after its refoundation by the Norman immigrants, flourished for a long period. In it was buried Fredesend, wife of Tancred de Hauteville, on whose behalf "her son Guiscard endowed the church of St. Euphemia with a large farm." The same prince committed to Robert de Grentemesnil the abbey of the Holy Trinity at Venosa and the monastery of St. Michael the Archangel at Melito, an episcopal city in Lower Calabria. Berenger, a monk of St. Evroult's, was made abbot of Venosa, and William of Ingram, another of Robert's followers, who made his profession at St. Euphemia's, was placed over the convent at Melito.

While Robert was on his travels, his uterine sisters, Judith and Emma, both of them nuns, remained at Ouche, living in a chapel at St. Evroult's. When, however, they heard how their brother was flourishing under the protection of his powerful friends in Calabria, they betook themselves to Italy, where they entered with zest into the life of the world and married husbands who were not informed that their wives had taken vows. Judith married Roger, count of Sicily, and Emma another count whose name Orderic did not remember. Neither of these daughters of Eve was blessed with children, a misfortune which the chronicler attributed to their having offended their heavenly spouse.<sup>1</sup>

When abbot Osbern learned of Robert's settlement in Calabria, he sent a letter, composed for him by a sagacious monk called Witmund, to pope Alexander, in which were set forth the history of his appointment to the abbacy and the consequent troubles that still afflicted his mind. The writer, after what appears to be a fair and temperate statement of the main facts, in which Robert de Grentemesnil is referred to as "a cousin of your faithful servant, William of Normandy," expresses Osbern's petition to "the common and most excellent father of all mankind" in the following terms: "Therefore, most apostolical lord, the venerable father of all Christendom, prostrate on the earth at the feet of your merciful benignity, I earnestly supplicate with tears and groans that you who occupy the place of St. Peter . . . would be pleased in your zeal for God to abate by a righteous judgment this fierce controversy between me and

<sup>1</sup>Op. cit., Vol. I, pp. 439 & 440.

the brother [Robert] of whom I speak, and altogether remove the present perplexity from my mind. Accordingly, my prayer is, that by virtue of your authority you cause to appear both myself and those who took part in my consecration, together with abbot Robert, my accuser, before fit and lawful judges, who shall impartially try the cause ; so that, if it be found that I was rightly instituted to the office of abbot, I may continue to hold it ; if improperly, I may surrender it . . . For whether it happens that I have to remain or depart, my brother's anger will be set at rest by the decision of the judge, and I shall be freed from perplexity, and shall serve God in peace and security."

This reasonable and eloquent epistle was carried to Rome by William, priest of St. Andrew's, Echaufour, and, after it had been duly presented, was carefully considered by the assembly of cardinals, to whom it was read by Alexander himself. Robert de Grentemesnil, who formed one of the ecclesiastical company, time and circumstances having softened his anger, kindly interceded on Osbern's behalf, and the messenger was sent back to Normandy with the papal benediction. Great was the rejoicing at St. Evroult's when the priest of Echaufour returned from his mission, and Osbern, secure in his office and no longer excommunicate, settled down to his duties with peace in his heart.

In 1063, when the Normans were preparing for war with Maine and Brittany, the duke recalled from exile Hugh de Grentemesnil, Ralph de Toeni and Arnold d'Echaufour.<sup>1</sup> The hereditary estates of Hugh and Ralph were given back to them, and a truce was made with Arnold, who went to visit his relatives in Apulia.

One of the castles defended at this period for William was that of Le Neuf Marché en-Lions ; but owing to the attacks of the soldiers of Milli, Gerberoi and elsewhere, none of the barons appointed to its command proved capable of holding it for more than a year.

Roger de Montgomerie, who was one of William's strongest barons, and who was jealous of Hugh de Grentemesnil's renown, suggested to the duke that Hugh should be entrusted with the defence with one named Gerold. Roger made the recommendation in the hope that Hugh would prove no more successful than his

<sup>1</sup>"Origines," p. 235.

predecessors, and would be thus brought to disgrace. Hugh, however, was so successful that he struck terror into the hearts of the enemy, made prisoners the two counts of Beauvoisins<sup>1</sup> and restored tranquillity to the whole district.<sup>2</sup>

During his occupation of Neuf-Marché castle, Hugh had a violent quarrel with Ralph, count of Mantes, whom he rashly encountered with inferior forces, and by whom he was compelled to retire.<sup>3</sup>

Hugh de Grentemesnil must have been about forty-five years of age at the time of the Norman invasion of England. Nichols, in his *Leicestershire*, says "the king richly married him to Adeliza, lady of Brokesburne [Broxbourne], a great inheritrix of noble family," and elsewhere expresses the opinion that Hugh's wife was of English descent. The description of Adeliza as "lady of Brokesburne" though correct so far as it goes, is misleading, and the conjecture that she was of English descent is hopelessly wide of the mark. Orderic, who knew all about the Grentemesnils and their matrimonial alliances, states that "the noble Hugh de Grentemesnil was in his youth distinguished for his valour, and married a very beautiful lady, Adeliza, daughter of Ivo, count de Beaumont, by whom he had Robert, William, Hugh, Ivo and Aubrey; Adeline, Hawise, Rohais, Matilda and Agnes."<sup>4</sup> That the marriage was celebrated not later than 1050 may be inferred from Orderic's account of a quarrel between the king's sons, Robert Curthose and William Rufus, that took place about ten years after the Conquest. At the time of this brawl, which will be referred to later, Curthose was about twenty-two, and it is obvious that the young Grentemesnils, if they had been appreciably younger, would not have ventured to act as they did.

Edward the Confessor died on 5 January, 1066, and Harold, the son of earl Godwin, ascended the throne of England. Early in the year, Harold's younger brother Tostig, who in 1065 had been driven from his earldom of Northumbria, and had taken refuge in Flanders, paid a visit to his brother-in-law, William of Normandy, whom he strongly exhorted to invade England. William therefore called together a large assembly of prelates

<sup>1</sup>Du Moulin, liv. VII, pp. 167-168.

<sup>3</sup>Ord. Vit., Vol. I, p. 456.

<sup>2</sup>Ord. Vit., Vol. I, pp. 455-6.

<sup>4</sup>Ord. Vit., Vol. II, p. 505.

and barons, to consider the practicability of the adventure to which Tostig had urged him with so many alluring arguments. Hugh de Grentemesnil appears in the list of thirteen noblemen named by Orderic as standing foremost in the ranks of the laity summoned to this momentous deliberation.<sup>1</sup> As the members of this council were unable to arrive at a satisfactory decision, William sent the archdeacon of Lisieux to Rome, to seek the advice of the pope. Alexander II, moved by considerations of ecclesiastical polity, "favoured the legitimate rights of the duke, enjoined him to take up arms against the perjurer [Harold, who was alleged to have sworn to secure William's succession to the English throne], and sent him the standard of St. Peter the apostle, by whose merits he would be defended from all dangers." Thus fortified, the duke got together a large army and a fleet of ships, the fighting forces being augmented by many foreigners, who, "scenting the booty which the conquest of Britain offered, were prepared to undergo the various perils and chances, both by sea and land, attending the enterprise." The expedition sailed on 29 September, landed safely on the shores of England, and, meeting with no opposition, took possession of Pevensey and Hastings. When the main army moved inland, Pevensey was left under the command of Humphrey du Tilleul, who had married Adeliza de Grentemesnil, the sister of Robert and Hugh.<sup>2</sup> The battle of Hastings was fought and won on 14 October, and William was crowned at Westminster on Christmas Day.

<sup>1</sup>Ord. Vit., Vol. I, p. 462.

<sup>2</sup>"Origines," p. 141.

## II.

### The Conquest and After

Hugh fought in the battle of Hastings,<sup>1</sup> and Wace describes an exciting episode in which de Grentemesnil seems to have been the chief actor. Wace says: "A vassal from Grentemesnil was that day in great peril; his horse ran away with him, so that he was near falling, for in leaping over a bush the bridle rein broke and the horse plunged forward. The English seeing him, ran to meet him with their hatchets raised; but the horse took fright, and turning quickly round brought him safely back again."<sup>2</sup> It may be objected that a person so important as Hugh would not be designated in such terms as are used in Wace's chronicle, but that objection will not stand, as none other than the great William Fitz-Osbern is described by Wace as a vassal also.

Though there appears to be no more definite record of the part played by Hugh on that memorable occasion, the trust subsequently reposed in him, and the extent of his share in the fruits of conquest, are sufficient proof that he acquitted himself with credit and maintained the reputation that his brilliant achievements at Neuf-Marché had won for him.

In March, 1067, three months after his coronation, William returned to Normandy<sup>3</sup> and remained there until the following December. Orderic tells us that the king "built a strong castle within the walls of Winchester, a fortified and wealthy city contiguous to the sea, and placing in it William Fitz-Osbern, the best officer in his army, made him his lieutenant in the south of the kingdom. Dover and all Kent he committed to his brother Odo, bishop of Bayeux, a prelate distinguished by great liberality and worldly activity. These two were entrusted with the chief government of England; and he joined with them Hugh de

<sup>1</sup>Ord. Vit., Vol. I, p. 484, and G. de Poitiers.

<sup>2</sup>Wace.

<sup>3</sup>Wace, p. 171, and Du Moulin, p. 195, liv. VII.

Grentemesnil, Hugh Montfort, William de Warrene and other brave warriors."<sup>1</sup>

In the same year Hugh's name appears as a witness to a charter given by the king to Westminster abbey,<sup>2</sup> while in 1069 he witnessed a deed of gift made at Dover by Robert de Vitot.

The inclusion of Hugh de Grentemesnil in the vice-regal council that governed during William's nine months' absence shows that he stood high in the king's regard, and all the facts concerning him that remain to be told tend to show that, throughout the Conqueror's reign, he was looked upon as a competent and reliable upholder of his master's sovereignty in England. Though, as will be related, he absented himself from this country at a critical time and returned to Normandy, his departure implied no defection, but was due to an imperative domestic necessity, or at any rate to what he regarded as such.

After William's return to England he was much occupied in suppressing insurrections in various parts of the kingdom.

At this period, when their services were in special request, several of the king's officers received urgent letters from their wives, who, weary of a grass widowhood that threatened to be indefinitely prolonged, declared that if their husbands did not forthwith rejoin them in Normandy, they would take to themselves fresh partners. Naturally the recipients of these indecorous missives were gravely perturbed, for, whatever laxity of conduct they may have considered excusable in themselves, the gentlemen of that era were extremely jealous of the honour of their wives. These officers were indeed placed in about as embarrassing a quandary as could well be imagined; if they remained in England, there was no knowing what might happen at home, while, if they returned to Normandy, they would incur the odium of deserting their sovereign at a critical juncture, and forfeit all claim to share in the confiscated estates with which it was William's policy to reward his faithful supporters. No compromise was practicable; for the ladies declined to face the perils and discomforts of the sea, to which they were not accustomed, and did not regard England, in its then state of chronic warfare and liability to invasion, as a fit place of residence.

<sup>1</sup>Ord. Vit., Vol. II, p. 5.

<sup>2</sup>Nichols, Vol. I, p. 20.

Among the military leaders directly affected by this were Hugh de Grentemesnil and his brother-in-law Humphrey de Tilleul. Orderic says that these two, no doubt after considering the situation in all its bearings, "returned obsequiously to their lascivious wives in Normandy, but neither they nor their heirs were ever able to recover the honour and domains which they had already gained, and relinquished on this occasion."<sup>1</sup> At the date in question, Hugh was governor of the Gewissæ, the district, more extensive than the present Hampshire, round Winchester; Humphrey held the castle of Hastings, which had been committed to his charge at the time of its erection in 1066. There is nothing to enable us to trace Hugh's movements during the time that immediately followed his departure from England, and the date and circumstances of his return are not known; but certain broad inferences, which leave us in little doubt concerning the general course of his career in England, can be drawn from the entries relating to him and his wife in Domesday, and these may now be set forth in such detail as to make their biographical import apparent.

When Domesday Book was compiled, by far the largest number of the landed estates held by Hugh de Grentemesnil were situated in Leicestershire. Hugh held as tenant in chief twenty-six manors in the county, viz., Wigston, Sapcote (with a carucate in Frolesworth), Sharnford, Earl Shilton, Ratby (with two carucates in Bromkinsthorpe, three in Desford, half a carucate in Glenfield, and a half in Braunston), Groby, Kirkby Mallory (two manors), Desford (apparently a second manor), Stapleton, Newbold Verdon and Brascote, Peckleton, Illston, Thorpe Langton, Stockerston, Burton Overy, Carlton Curliu, Noseley, Thurstaston, Belgrave, Birstall, Anstey, Thurmaston, Humberston, Swinford and Bruntingthorpe. In forty-seven other manors that he held in chief, he appears to have enfeoffed a number of tenants who held them by subinfeudation. These manors were:—Thurlaston (two), Smeeton, Twyford, Oadby, Peatling Parva, Sapcote, Willoughby Waterless (two), Croft, Broughton Astley, Enderby, Glenfield, Braunston, Kirkby Mallory, Sutton Cheney, Cadeby, Nailston, Barleston, Sheepy, Cotes-

<sup>1</sup>Ord. Vit., Vol. II, pp. 20-21.



bach (two), Evington, Ingarsby, Stoughton, Galby, Frisby, Shangton, Stonton Wyville, Langton, Glen (two), Syston, Birstall, Thurmaston, Wymeswold, Sileby, Ashby-de-la-Zouche, Alton Grange, Staunton Harold, Whitwick, Waltham, Thorpe Arnold (two), Market Bosworth, Barton-in-the-Beans and Newbold Verdon. In addition to these holdings in chief, Hugh held, as sub-tenant of the countess Judith, the following manorial estates:—Broughton Astley, Markfield, Elvelege (a place not identified), Ricolthorpe [= Scalford] and Glooston. To prevent misunderstanding, it may be as well to explain that there were often two or more manors in one vill, and that sometimes portions of different vills went to form a single manor, whose court, it may be presumed, was generally held in the place considered most convenient, or in which the greatest amount of its constituent land was situated.

The properties held by Hugh de Grentemesnil in the borough of Leicester are thus stated, though not in a single paragraph, as is here convenient, in the *Victoria County History* annotated translation of Domesday:—"Hugh de Grentemesnil has 110 houses and 2 churches. Besides these he has 24 houses in common with the king, in the same borough. Besides these the same Hugh has in Leicester 24 burgesses pertaining to Hanstogie [Anstey] and 13 burgesses pertaining to Siglesbie [Sileby] and 3 houses pertaining to Inwaresbie [Ingarsby] and 10 houses pertaining to Merdegrave [Belgrave] and 4 houses pertaining to Brohtone [Broughton Astley] and 9 houses pertaining to Stotone [Stockerston] and 4 houses pertaining to Wichingestone [Wigston] and 7 houses pertaining to Andretesbie [Enderby] and 3 houses pertaining to Sceltone [Earl Shilton] and 10 houses pertaining to Burstelle [Birstall] and 2 houses pertaining to Burton [Burton Overy] and 1 house pertaining to Brunestanestorp [Bruntingthorpe] and 2 houses pertaining to Diresford [Desford] and 3 houses pertaining to Legham [ ], which he bought of Osbern, and 1 house pertaining to Lettone [Thurlaston] and 1 house pertaining to Turchitelestone [Thurcaston]. In the same borough the same Hugh has 2 churches, and 2 houses, and 2 waste houses," i.e., two houses unoccupied. The court at which his representatives exercised jurisdiction over his burghal tenants was presumably held at the fortress, by the Soar, on the same

site as the later Norman castle, believed to have been erected by Robert de Meulan, the first of the Beaumont earls. Hugh's fortress was doubtless regarded as the centre of his barony, as it was probably his chief place of residence in England.

In addition to these Leicestershire properties, Hugh had a large number of manorial estates in the adjacent counties of Warwick and Northampton. In Warwickshire, he held lands at Hillmorton and Willoughby, Butler's Merston, Pillerton Hersey, Middleton, Oxhill, Shrewley, Lapworth, Thurleston, Ladbroke, Easington, Pillerton Priors, Whatcote, Rowington, Billersley, Loxley and Whitacre.<sup>1</sup> In the borough of Warwick he had four houses, and another was held under him by the monks of Pillerton. His Northamptonshire estates were situated at Farndon, Marston Trussel, Thorpe Lubbenham, Weedon, Bec, Ashby St. Ledgers, Welton, Staverton, Thorpe (near Green's Norton), Maidford, Newbottle, Middleton-Chenduit (*i.e.*, Middleton-Chesney), King's Sutton, Byfield, Woodford, Eydon and Charwelton.<sup>2</sup> He also held lands at Layham, in Suffolk;<sup>3</sup> at Merston, in Gloucestershire;<sup>4</sup> at Edwarlton and Thrumpton, in Nottinghamshire;<sup>5</sup> at Cottesford, Charlton-on-Oxmoor, Shipton-on-Cherwell and at Sibford Gower, in Oxfordshire;<sup>6</sup> and in Hampshire he was entitled to the dues of two houses by grant of the king.<sup>7</sup> He also possessed the valuable manor of Ware, in Hertfordshire, of which some particulars will be given presently.

Adeliza de Grentemesnil, the wife of Hugh, held lands of the king at Belgrave, Peatling Parva and Barkby Thorpe, all in Leicestershire. She also had a manor in Broxbourne, Hertfordshire,<sup>8</sup> as well as holdings at Middleton in Warwickshire,<sup>9</sup> and at Shelton, Houghton Conquest, Charlton and Milton Ernest in Bedfordshire.<sup>10</sup> Hugh and his wife appear each to have held a moiety of the Warwickshire manor of Middleton. Mr. W. F. Carter, B.A., in his note to the Domesday entry concerning that place, says: "This looks suspiciously like a dupli-

<sup>1</sup>Vict. County Hist. of Warwickshire.<sup>7</sup>V. C. H. of Hampshire.

<sup>2</sup>V. C. H. of Northants.

<sup>8</sup>V. C. H. of Herts.

<sup>3</sup>V. C. H. of Suffolk.

<sup>9</sup>Op. cit.

<sup>4</sup>V. C. H. of Gloucestershire.

<sup>10</sup>V. C. H. of Warwickshire.

<sup>5</sup>Domesday Bk.

<sup>11</sup>V. C. H. of Bedfordshire.

<sup>6</sup>V. C. H. of Northants.

cate entry of her husband's estate in Middleton, but there are differences, and we may suppose that the former tenants Pallin and Turgot [mentioned by the compilers of the survey] enjoyed an equal division, which Hugh and his wife had continued, the husband retaining the manorial mill, and his interest in the priest's estate whatever that may have implied." For some reason, Adeliza must have been specially favoured, for it was unusual for ladies to receive manorial grants directly from the crown.

Hugh's important manor of Ware was valued in Domesday at the large sum of forty-five pounds. There was a priest and a reeve resident in the vill, an enclosure for beasts of the chase, and four arpents of vineyard just planted. From these facts Mr. Round reaches the reasonable conclusion that Hugh had a place of residence there,<sup>1</sup> and it may be that the manor of Broxbourne, four or five miles from Ware, which was held by Adeliza de Grentemesnil, was purchased after Hugh had acquired his Hertfordshire estate.

It will be remembered that Orderic states definitely that, about two years after the battle of Hastings, when he returned to Normandy to satisfy the connubial demands of his wife, Hugh de Grentemesnil gave up the estates he had already acquired in England, and that these were never recovered either by him or his descendants. In 1086, we find him a great territorial magnate, holding a very large number of manors in Leicestershire and other counties, chiefly the neighbouring ones of Northampton and Warwick, and also in possession of the valuable manor of Ware, which he had apparently received in exchange for certain lands in Bedfordshire, which had previously been granted to him. These facts leave us in no doubt that, between the time of his leaving the country with Humphrey de Tilleul and others whose domestic anxieties were similar to his own, he had rendered signal services to the Norman cause in England, for the Conqueror was unlikely to have bestowed great estates upon any one without getting an adequate *quid pro quo*. We also find Adeliza, his wife, established as tenant-in-chief of several manors in the counties where the majority of Hugh's lands were

<sup>1</sup>V. C. H. of Herts.

situated, a distinction granted to very few Norman ladies. This circumstance makes it probable that Adeliza had co-operated with her lord in some way that the crown deemed so serviceable as to be worthy of substantial recognition. In seeking to account for the condition of things revealed by Domesday, it is reasonable to bear in mind three facts already known to us, viz., (1) that Hugh's notable achievements at Neuf-Marché had proved once for all that he was a capable and vigorous military commander ; (2) that he had been placed in positions of trust immediately after the Norman invasion, and had loyally served the king during the two years or so that he remained in this country ; and (3) that he had a family of sons and daughters, for whose future welfare both he and Adeliza would naturally wish to make the best possible provision. The prospect of securing this desirable end, and of satisfying their own social ambitions, was much better in England than in Normandy, whence Hugh's brother Arnold had, some years before the Conquest, emigrated to Italy, as a knightly cadet, to seek his fortune.

When Hugh returned to Normandy, he presumably did so with the knowledge and sanction of the king, who would nevertheless be sorry to part with him at a time when the assistance of every tried and competent officer was urgently needed. It is well within the bounds of probability that Hugh was then promised great territorial rewards if he would come back as speedily as possible, and also that he was empowered to promise such grants as she afterwards received to Adeliza, to induce her to accompany him to England and so set his mind at rest on her account. It may also be supposed that Adeliza, who was no immature girl, after the conjugal rights for which she had clamoured were restored, recovered her calmness of mind, and was better able to view the situation in its true perspective. Moreover, Hugh would stand a better chance of bringing her to reason in his own person than by means of hasty dispatches written on foreign battlefields. Even if she was not open to persuasion, he was doubtless quite able to exercise marital authority in his own house, and, it seems certain that he either persuaded or compelled her to do what he considered right and expedient. However the matter was managed, the most reasonable hypothesis that can be drawn from the evidence before us appears to be, that Hugh returned

to his military duties after an absence of no great length, and that he either brought his wife back with him or arranged for her to follow him at a convenient time. Considering his position and the vast extent of his dominion, it cannot be doubted that Hugh took his full share in the conquest and settlement of England, and the grants made to Adeliza can only be accounted for on the supposition that she overcame her objections to the sea, and gave him that support in his career which a man has a right to expect from his wife. Though this is no more than a deduction, for there is no direct account of the actual course of events, there seems to be no other hypothesis that will fit the facts that are known to us. That Hugh was in possession of his estates, including the manor of Ware that had been acquired by exchange, before 1081 is shown by a charter of that year in which are recorded the English grants made by Hugh de Grentemesnil to the monks of St. Evroult.

Our knowledge of this charter comes from Orderic Vital, who says that, "encouraged by the serenity shed on affairs by prosperous times," abbot Mainier crossed the sea to England in the fourteenth year of his government [1081], and presented himself at the court of king William. During this visit the possessions, churches and tithes, which the friends and neighbours of the monks had granted to them, were recorded in a charter "for the better knowledge of posterity."

It appears from the section of the charter in which his grants are set forth, that Hugh gave to the brethren of St. Evroult's, to hold for ever, the following hereditaments in England:—all the land he had in Little Pillerton, in Warwickshire, and two parts of the tithes of all his lands, together with sixteen villeins to collect the tithes, and nine churches. He also gave three villeins at Earl Shilton, one at Carlton Curlieu, two at Belgrave, one at Stoughton, one at Church Langton, one at Thurmaston, and one at Kirkby Mallory, all in Leicestershire; one at Butler's Merston and one at Oxhill, in Warwickshire; one at Charlton-upon-Otmoor, in Oxfordshire; and two at Ware, in Hertfordshire. He also gave the church of Ware, with all the tithes belonging thereto, and two ploughlands; the church of Thurmaston, with all the tithes, and two ploughlands; the church of Glenfield, with all the tithes, and two yard lands; the church of

Carlton, with all the tithes, and five yard lands ; the church of Noseley, with all the tithes, and two yard lands ; the church of Belgrave, with all the tithes, and eleven yard lands, with Wilcot, Gloucestershire, and whatever Hugh the clerk of Sap held under him in England ; the church of Butler's Merston, with all the tithes, and the lands thereto belonging ; the church of Little Pillerton, with the tithes and tenements appertaining to it ; the church of Charlton-upon-Otmoor, with the tithes and three yard lands ; the church of Cottesford, Oxfordshire, with the tithes and one hide of land ; and the church of Peatling Magna, with all that Leofric held there under him.<sup>1</sup> This last was in Domesday included in the lands of Adeliza, under whom Leofric is stated to have held eight plough lands and a half. Whether the nine churches referred to in the first clause of the Grentemesnil section were additional to the eleven mentioned by name is not clear. These gifts, and those of himself and of other barons named in the charter, were confirmed by William the king at Winchester, in the year of our lord 1081, and the charter was sealed by him with the sign of the holy cross in the presence of his sons, Robert and William ; Roger of Shrewsbury, Hugh of Chester, Ralph de Conches and William de Bretenil ; Hugh de Grentemesnil and his nephew, Robert de Rhuddlan ; Robert son of Murdac, Goulier de Villeraï, William de Molines, Richer de Laigle, Eudo the dapifer and Warin, sheriff of Shropshire.

Though it is clear from the Domesday evidence that Hugh de Grentemesnil occupied a very high position in this country, it is equally clear that he never held, or could have held, the office of high steward of England, which many historians, who have not gone into the matter closely, say he enjoyed as an appurtenance of the barony of Hinckley. This utterly erroneous tradition is based upon several mistaken accounts of the origin of the high stewardship of England. The following, by Sir Robert Cotton, which occurs in Hearne's *Antiquarian Discourses*, is a representative example :—

“ For it appears out of our English story that among many worthy persons that came in with the Conqueror one, Sir Hugh de Grentemesnil, a Norman of noble descent, so valiantly behaved himself [that] the king rewarded him, not only with great store of

<sup>1</sup>Ord. Vit., Bk. VI, Chap. V.

lands and manors in the shires of Gloucester, Northampton, Leicester, Nottingham and Suffolk, but also richly married him to one, Adeliza, a great inheritrix of a noble family, and at the solemnization thereof gave him the office of lord high steward of England. By this Adeliza he had two daughters, Petronilla or Pernell the eldest, and Adeliza the second, who married Roger Bigod, a Norman. All the inheritance of the said sir Hugh Grentemesnil was divided betwixt those two daughters, saving that in the partition the lordship of Hinckley and the office of High Steward of England fell to Pernell, because she was the eldest. This Pernell married Robert ove les blanches-mains . . . the son of Robert le Bossu Earl of Leicester . . . so that this Robert was the first of the house of Leicester in whom this office took root."

When we examine this story, which is now thought to have had a fraudulent origin, it is found to contain many inaccuracies of the most absurd character. Before stating what the chief of these are, it will be well to quote part of a recent account of the rise and development of the stewardship in England, from the appendix to Mr. Skillington's short *History of Leicester*, based upon the documentary evidence printed in Mr. L. W. Vernon Harcourt's *His Grace the Steward and Trial of Peers* :—

"The High Stewardship of England, an office eagerly desired by Simon de Montfort and John of Gaunt, was derived from an office, comparatively menial until after 1070, of the French royal household. The organisation of the Conqueror's English household, apart from certain elements borrowed from Anglo-Saxon custom, was based upon the practice of the petty Norman court, and this in turn was modelled upon the royal household of France. The French officers corresponding to the English stewards were called dapifers, and they were, as the name implies, primarily the servers or caterers of the king's banqueting hall. The office, however, was held by many persons of high rank, and between 1070 and 1100 it was so remarkably developed, that during the greater part of the twelfth century the French dapifers were the pre-eminent ministers of state, with powers comparable to those of the English justiciars, who were responsible dignitaries of viceregal standing. But at the time when the English household was formed, the French dapifers had not risen above their

original status, and the early dapifers of this country and of Normandy were, as one would expect, functionaries of even less importance than their French contemporaries. In the Norman court several dapifers were in existence simultaneously, and in the early Norman period the same rule was observed in England, though the services of the more illustrious holders of the office appear to have been reserved for coronation festivals and other ceremonious occasions. Some of these early stewards of the household were described in the charters of their investiture as 'dapifers of England and Normandy,' others simply as 'dapifers of England.' During the anarchy of Stephen's reign, the dapifership tended to become hereditary in certain families, notably those of Bigod and de Courci, and eventually it came to be regarded as an appurtenance of the earldom of Leicester. The lands associated with the stewardship and other offices were held by a tenure known as grand serjeanty; that is to say, they were enjoyed contingently upon the holder performing the proper duties of his office, which ranked as honorary service to the king . . . Though in many cases of tenure by grand serjeanty the land was of more importance than the service by which it was held, the stewardship, through the reputation it acquired, was in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries a much greater asset than the land that went with it."

It will be seen from this passage that, though the office of high steward became of the first importance in the thirteenth and fourteenth century, it did not even exist in the time of Hugh de Grentemesnil. The "hereditary dapifership" of England and Normandy, with certain lands in both countries, was granted in 1153 by Henry of Anjou to Robert le Bossu and his son Robert Blanchmains, the second and third Beaumont earls of Leicester, and this grant was confirmed when Henry became king of England. Later, when the dapifership had come to be called the stewardship, it was because of the prestige it had gained through being held by le Bossu, the loyal and capable justiciar of Henry II, and also because it had come to be regarded as an hereditary appurtenance of the earldom of Leicester, that it was so eagerly desired by Simon de Montfort; and it was because of these facts, and its association with the mighty Lancastrian earls of Leicester, that John of Gaunt went out of his way to obtain it. There was



no office that could with any show of reason be called the hereditary high stewardship of England until the middle of the twelfth century, more than fifty years after Hugh de Grentemesnil was laid in his grave, nor is there a particle of contemporary evidence that Hugh had the slightest interest in the lordship of Hinckley.

The manor of Hinckley appears in the Leicestershire section of Domesday as part of "the land of Earl Aubrey," and is valued at ten pounds a year. The person described as *Earl Aubrey* was Aubrey de Couci, earl of Northumbria, who in 1086 had relinquished his English estates and returned to Normandy.<sup>1</sup> His Leicestershire holdings consisted of sixteen manors, including Hinckley, and at the end of the Domesday list of them is the compiler's note:—"Harding with his men held all these lands; Earl Aubrey had them afterwards; now they are in the king's hand." The statement that Hugh de Grentemesnil had, by his wife Adeliza, a daughter Petronilla or Pernell, and that "*this* Pernell married Robert ove les blanches-mains," the son of Robert le Bossu, which Robert le Bossu died in 1168, is chronologically absurd. The Petronilla who married Robert Blanchmains, and was the mother of the last Beaumont earl of Leicester, is generally presumed to have been the heiress of the Grentemesnills, and she may have been, as she appears in the Grentemesnil pedigree in Baker's *Northamptonshire, the great-grand-daughter* of Hugh and Adeliza; but we really know nothing that justifies a definite statement concerning her parentage and descent. The traditional story of her inheriting the lordship of Hinckley and the (non-existent) high stewardship directly from the first Hugh de Grentemesnil is therefore preposterous.

Negative proof that Hugh de Grentemesnil was ever a dapifer is found in the fact that there are shoals of known charters attested by these functionaries, but never once does the name of Hugh de Grentemesnil appear in that capacity, nor yet does the name of any of his children or grand-children. Moreover Ordericus Vitalis, who always puts in a good word for the benefactors of his abbey, never mentions Hugh's connection with the dapifership.

It is stated in the *Matriculus* of bishop Hugh of Wells that the church of Hinckley was presented to the Norman abbey of

<sup>1</sup>V. C. H. of Leicestershire.

Lyre by William Fitz Osbern, whose great-granddaughter Amicia married Robert le Bossu, the father of Petronilla's husband. The English estates of Fitz Osbern's son, Roger earl of Hereford, were confiscated on account of his rebellion, but it is possible that Hinckley may have been restored to the Amicia who married Robert le Bossu, whose claim to the dapifership was probably based upon his wife's descent from William Fitz Osbern, whose father had been a notable dapifer in Normandy. This hypothesis is in some degree supported by a charter, printed by Nichols in his *Leicestershire*, in which it is written that Amicia held "*duas marcas argenti in villa de Hinckley*." When le Bossu made his claim for the stewardship or dapifership, as the office was then generally called, he probably did so on the ground that his wife was a descendant of William Fitz Osbern, and not because through her, he possessed any exceptional rights associated with the township of Hinckley.

Near to the church at Hinckley is an ancient earthwork known as the "castle," but the only piece of masonry discovered there is definitely Early English in character and may be presumed to have been of ecclesiastical origin. When Nichols, in the part of his history devoted to Hinckley, described Hugh de Grentemesnil as high steward of England and lord of Hinckley, and pictured him as the builder of a stately castle there and the layer-out of a noble park, and as the founder of Hinckley church, he was simply letting his imagination run riot. It is only fair to add, however, that, in the borough of Leicester part of his work, the historian of the county expressed serious doubts whether the story of Hinckley and the stewardship, which he had got from Henry of Knighton's chronicle, was really true.

For what appears to be the real explanation of the myth's origin, we must go to the history of the Leicester earldom in the latter part of the fourteenth century. When Henry Plantagenet, fourth Lancastrian earl of Leicester and first duke of Lancaster, died in 1361, his estates were inherited by his two daughters, Maud, countess of Hainault, and Blanche, who was married to John of Gaunt. The Lancaster estates passed to Gaunt, through his wife Blanche; the Leicester estates to the count of Hainault, through his wife Maud. In the partition, however, the manor

of Hinckley was included in Blanche's portion, and, as the stewardship had by that time acquired such prestige that it practically endowed its holder with vice-regal powers, it was obviously to Gaunt's interest to secure it for himself. We know that Gaunt was an ambitious and unscrupulous man, and that he did, when he had acquired it, as was currently believed, by bringing about the untimely deaths of Maud and her husband, virtually rule the kingdom as high steward of England. It is therefore extremely probable that the mixture of truth and falsehood of the which the "barony of Hinckley" story is made up, was concocted for him by some ingenious person, who knew how to give verisimilitude to an otherwise bald and unconvincing narrative, to enable him to obtain by fraud the office he coveted. Apparently the story was never used for this purpose; for, as Maud was childless, when she and her husband had been put out of the world, their share of the inheritance, and the stewardship associated with the earldom of Leicester, came to Gaunt as a matter of course. Putting together all the known facts, and bearing in mind that the tradition appears never to have been known before Gaunt's time, the hypothesis concerning its fraudulent genesis stated above appears to be the only reasonable explanation of a tale that, on other grounds, is demonstrably false. I recommend a perusal of Mr. Harcourt's book to those who wish to study this matter more closely.

We must now break off our narrative concerning Hugh and go back a few years in order to chronicle some facts relating to other members of his family.

In the year 1077, Robert de Grentemesnil, who had by that time become abbot of St. Euphemia in Apulia, paid a visit to Normandy. While there he had an interview with William the Conqueror, at which the king asked Robert's pardon for having unjustly driven him into exile. This was readily granted and cordial relationship again established. Robert profited by the occasion and visited many of his friends and relations, and also assisted at the consecration of churches at Caen, Bayeux, and Bec. About the same time he received an invitation from Philip king of France, to become bishop of Chartres, but the invitation was not acted upon owing to the French dislike of submitting to Normans. At the end of the year Robert returned to his abbey in Apulia.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Ord. Vit., Vol. II, p. 209.

The domestic relationship between William the Conqueror and his children was far from being a happy one ; his eldest son, Robert, being very dissatisfied with the position under his father's rule. Robert's two brothers, William Rufus and Henry, took their father's side, and a discreditable brawl took place in which two sons of Hugh de Grentemesnil played a leading part.

The Conqueror was staying at Laigle, in the house of Gunher, whilst his son Robert was staying at the house of William Calcege. William Rufus and Henry paid a visit to Robert with the intention of causing trouble, and while playing dice in the gallery of Calcege's house they made a great noise, and threw water on the heads of Robert and his friends, who were below.

Upon this, Ivo and Aubrey de Grentemesnil, the fourth and fifth sons of Hugh de Grentemesnil said to Robert, "Why do you put up with this insult? See your brothers have mounted above you, and shower their filth upon you and us in contempt. Do not you perceive what they mean? If you do not instantly resent this insult you are a lost man, and can never lift up your head again." This speech aroused his fury, and he hurried to the banqueting room where his brothers were, determined to chastise them. The clamour which ensued brought the king from his lodgings, and by interposing his royal authority he put an end for the time being to his sons' quarrels. The same night Robert departed, and it was not long before fighting took place between the different sides.<sup>1</sup> (? A.D. 1078.)

King William besieged the castle of Gerberoi which Robert had fortified ; but was not successful in obtaining its capitulation, and therefore returned to Rouen. Whilst here Hugh de Grentemesnil, amongst others, tried to affect a reconciliation between father and son, but without success.<sup>2</sup> But, later on, after the bishops, the queen and others had used their powers of persuasion, peace was established. But it was of short duration, and Robert left his father's court never to return until William lay dying. And it is of particular interest to us to know that the messenger William employed in order to call Robert to his death

<sup>1</sup>Ord. Vit., Vol. II, pp. 108-9.

<sup>2</sup>Ord. Vit., Vol. II, pp. 177-8. La Roque informs us that Hugh undertook this task at the request of a council of the notables of Normandy.

bed was count Aubrey, who at one time held possessions in Leicestershire, amongst them Hinckley.<sup>1</sup>

In 1081 we find William de Grentemesnil, Hugh's second son, fighting at Durazzo on the Adriatic,<sup>2</sup> and he appears to have remained in the district east of the Adriatic until the middle of the year 1085.<sup>3</sup>

In 1082 Hugh de Grentemesnil appears as a witness to the charter of the foundation by the king of the abbey of St. Etienne at Caen.<sup>4</sup>

On Dec. 12th, 1082, Hugh's brother, Robert de Grentemesnil, abbot of St. Euphemia died. He was present at the battle of Durazzo, and soon after his return was poisoned. It seems a Saracen who was employed as a baker in the convent nurtured a secret hatred of the abbot. In consequence it is said that he mixed poison with Robert's food. Robert languished for thirteen days, surrounded by the weeping monks. He was interred at the church of St. Mary, which he had himself built from the foundations, and the anniversary of his death was appointed to be reverently kept every year to his memory. It was also a custom to distribute liberal alms to the poor on that day in honour of their deceased pastor.<sup>5</sup>

Ordericus informs us that Hugh de Grentemesnil's third son Hugh died about the year 1087 and was buried at St. Evroult. He is described as a young man of distinguished bravery.<sup>6</sup> This is all we know of this son Hugh.

Somewhere about the same date the second son, William, went to Apulia. He is reported to have stood high in the esteem of king William, who offered him his niece in marriage. This young woman was a daughter of Robert, count of Meulan, of whom we shall hear more later. William de Grentemesnil rejected the offer, and in Apulia he married the daughter of Robert Guiscard, she receiving fifteen castles as her dowry.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Ord. Vit., Vol. II, p. 180.

<sup>2</sup>Ord. Vit., Vol. II, p. 358.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., Vol. II, p. 368.

<sup>4</sup>La Roque, p. 46.

<sup>5</sup>Ord. Vit., Vol. II, p. 362.

<sup>6</sup>Op. cit., Vol. II, p. 426, and Vol. III, p. 56.

<sup>7</sup>Op. cit., Vol. III, p. 56.

On the death of king William Hugh de Grentemesnil was one of the barons who supported the claims of the Conqueror's eldest son Robert against those of William Rufus. Hugh and other distinguished knights fortified their castles and trenches, increased the garrisons, and drew in abundant supplies of food for men and horses.

The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, after narrating the pillaging and burnings committed by the Normans in this insurrection, goes on to say, "Hugh also was one of those who did no better than this in any respect neither in Leicestershire nor in Northampton."<sup>1</sup> While William of Malmesbury informs us in much the same manner, "Roger Bigot at Norwich and Hugh de Grentemesnil at Leicester, each with their party, were plundering in their respective neighbourhoods."<sup>2</sup>

The rebellion was soon put down by William Rufus, who punished some of his enemies with the utmost severity but designedly overlooked the offences of others. The old barons who had shown some signs of disaffection to him were prudently spared, both out of regard to his father's memory, to whom they had been loyally attached, and from respect to their age; for he shrewdly thought that disease and death would soon prevent them from giving him any trouble.<sup>3</sup> And as Hugh de Grentemesnil was now an old man he was doubtless among the latter.

About this time William de Grentemesnil, the second son of Hugh, was, on account of his bravery, given the command of several castles in Calabria.<sup>4</sup>

Hugh, however, was not destined to spend his last years in tranquillity, for serious trouble arose in the district in which his castle of Grentemesnil was situated. Robert de Belême, who appears to have had an undue sense of his own importance, having erected castles at Fourches and other places, embarked upon an attempt to bring all his neighbours under his personal dominion. This course was naturally resented by the Norman lords, who took counsel together with a view to defeating so nefarious a project. Hugh de Grentemesnil was at the head of

<sup>1</sup>"Anglo-Saxon Chron.," year 1088.

<sup>2</sup>"Hist. of Kings of England and of His own Times," by Wm. of Malmesbury, year 1088.

<sup>3</sup>Ord. Vit., Vol. II, p. 442.

<sup>4</sup>Op. cit., p. 464.

this council of defence, and he and Richard de Courci, who had married his daughter Rohesia, took the lead in directing the military operations that were necessary to prevent de Belême from having things all his own way. Hugh and Richard were the first to take arms, and to strengthen the garrisons and defences of their castles of Grentemesnil and Courci, which were many times besieged by the usurper's forces. Hugh and his son-in-law were able to help each other, for when one castle was attacked the forces of the other came out against the besiegers. De Belême, finding himself unable to cope with his energetic neighbours, by humble supplications and specious promises won the duke of Normandy to his side and prevailed upon him to march to his aid.

We will quote Orderic:—"In the year, therefore, of our Lord, 1091, in the month of January, the duke laid siege to Courci, but unwilling to come to extremities with his great nobles, he took no measures for closely investing the besieged. Robert, however, used every source of open attack and stratagem against the enemy for three weeks, employing various engines of war in his assaults on the fortress, but the garrison being numerous and making a resolute defence, he was repulsed with shame. He caused a vast machine, called a belfry (that is a wooden tower on four wheels with a number of stages, or floors) to be erected over against the castle walls, and filled it with all kinds of warlike instruments; but even this failed of compelling the garrison to submit; for as often as he began an assault on Courci the powerful force from Grentemesnil hastened to the rescue and charging the assailants with fury, drew them off from their intended attack. Meanwhile the garrison took prisoners William de Ferrers and William de Rupiére, whose ransoms were a great assistance to the besieged. But the lot of war is uncertain, and the victors often have to yield to those they have defeated. Thus Ivo de Grentemesnil, the fourth son of Hugh, and several others were made prisoners by the besiegers, and had some experience of the horrors of Robert de Belesme's dungeons. Hugh de Grentemesnil did not bear arms himself on account of his advanced age, but in council his shrewdness and wisdom enabled him to take the lead. The long continuance of the siege caused him extreme pain, and in consequence he sent the fol-

lowing message to the duke who was engaged in it : ' I have long served your father and grandfather and suffered much in their service. I have also been loyal to you. What have I done? In what have I given you offence? How have I merited at your hands this hostile attack? I openly acknowledge the fealty I owe you as my liege lord, and on that account I do not appear in arms against you ; but I offer you two hundred livres to withdraw where it may suit your pleasure for one single day, that I may take the opportunity of fighting Robert de Belesme, it is clear enough that his principal reliance is on your protection and that the besieged are more restrained by their loyalty to you, than by any fear they have of their enemies.'

" An oven had been built outside the fortifications, between the castle gate and the assailant's belfry, and there the baker baked the bread required for the use of the garrison, because the siege was begun in such haste that they had no time to construct an oven within their new defences. It followed therefore that the thickest of the fight often raged round this oven, much blood was shed there and many spirits departed by violence from the prison of the flesh. For the people of Courci stood in arms to defend their bread, whilst Belesme's followers tried to carry it off, so then many desperate conflicts occurred. It happened that one day, while the loaves were being baked in the oven, and the hostile parties were engaged in a violent quarrel, the troops on both sides came up, and a desperate conflict ensued, in which twenty men were killed and more wounded, who never tasted the bread their blood had purchased. Meanwhile, the friends of the besieged daily entered the castle in sight of the besiegers, and the duke taking no care to prevent it, conveyed to their comrades fresh supplies of arms and provisions to give them courage and support."

On one occasion Robert and his troops having been repulsed from an assault, those who pursued them made a squire mount into the belfry and set fire to it on the north side.

Gerard, the politic bishop of Séz, came during the progress of the siege to use his efforts to restore peace between the contending parties in his diocese, and took up his abode at the abbey of Notre Dame de St. Pierre sur Dive. He proposed terms of accommodation, but was grieved to find that the spirit of discord



was too powerful and caused them to be rejected.

However, the siege was not of long duration, for in the same month William Rufus crossed over to Normandy with a great fleet. The duke was alarmed at his arrival, and he and Robert Belesme and the other besiegers went home. During this visit Robert and William Rufus were reconciled.<sup>1</sup>

Hugh's troubles, however, were not at an end, for on the 11th of July in the same year his wife Adeliza died at Rouen, and was buried at the chapter house of St. Evroult.<sup>2</sup>

In the month of September, 1096, Robert, duke of Normandy, put William king of England in possession of his dominions, and having received from the king ten thousand marks, set forth on a crusade at the head of large bodies of troops, both horse and foot. He was accompanied by Ivo and Alberic, the fourth and fifth sons of Hugh de Grentemesnil.<sup>3</sup>

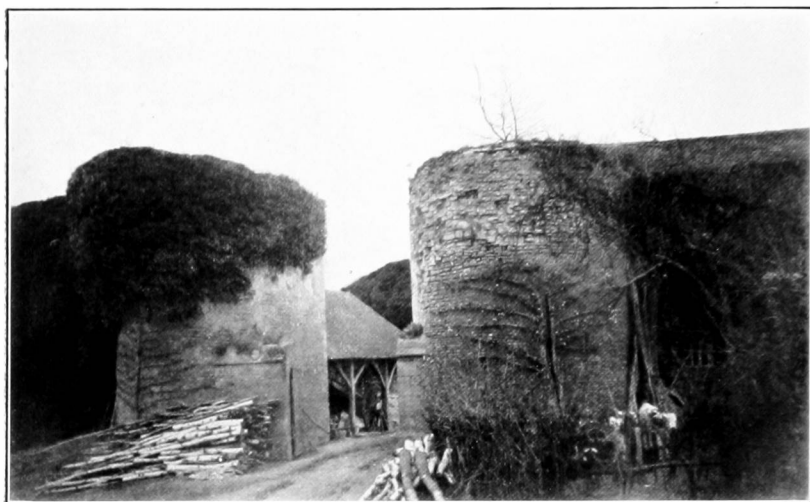
In Macedonia in the following year they appear to have been joined by their brother William, the second son of Hugh.

William, Ivo and Alberic behaved ingloriously on this crusade, for in June, 1098, when the Moslems were investing Antioch, which the Christians had captured, these three brothers, owing to fear, thought of making their escape from the town during the night. The battle on the preceding day had gone against the Christians, and the Grentemesnils being anxious to escape the next day's conflict, let themselves down from the walls by ropes. In consequence of this they were ever after nicknamed "the rope dancers." Walking all night through a rocky country, they arrived on foot, their hands and feet excoriated, with many companions at the port of St. Simeon. They found a number of ships lying there, and terrified the crews, who were already in a state of great uncertainty, by their alarming reports, giving out that the Turks had retaken Antioch and massacred all the Christians. On receiving this intelligence some of the sailors cut their cables and leaving their anchors, put out to sea, others more slow in their movements, dissembled their intentions; but all were filled with alarm and consternation.

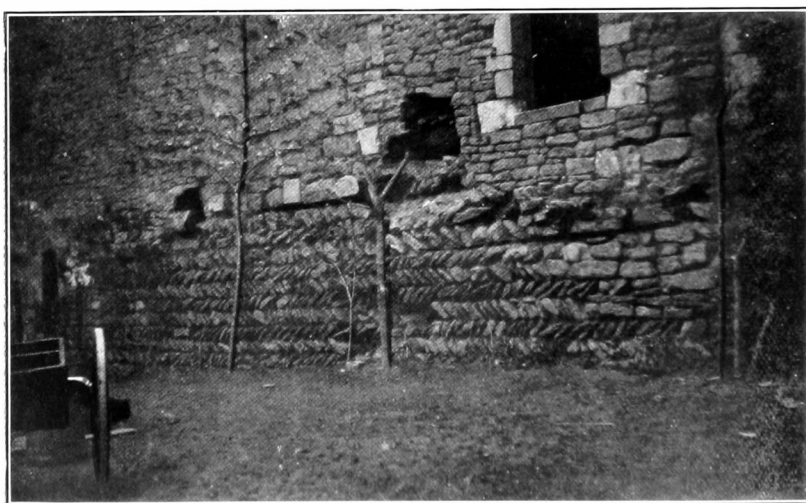
<sup>1</sup>Ord. Vit., Bk. VIII, Chap. XVI; and Bk. VIII, Chap. XVIII.

<sup>2</sup>Op. cit., Vol. III, p. 55. Dr. Cox, in Vol. II of the V. C. H. of Surrey, states that Adeliza was buried at Bermondsey Abbey. I can find no evidence to support this, and it appears to be clearly an error.

<sup>3</sup>Ord. Vit., Vol. III, p. 80.



THE ENTRANCE GATEWAY, COURCI CASTLE



HERRING-BONE MASONRY, COURCI CASTLE



THIRTEENTH-CENTURY REPRESENTATION OF HUGH DE GRENTEMESNIL IN THE APSIDAL WINDOW OF THE CHURCH OF THE ABBEY OF ST. EVROULT

In the midst of this the Turks who watched the coast suddenly made their appearance and putting to the sword the timid sailors, unprepared for defence, pillaged the ships which remained in port, and set them on fire.<sup>1</sup>

According to Ordericus it was in the year 1098 that Hugh de Grentemesnil finished his earthly course. Worn out with age and infirmity he took to his bed in England, probably at Leicester. He there received the monastic robe from Geoffrey of Orleans, prior of St. Evroult, who had been lately sent by abbot Roger to England to give him succour, and he died six days after, on the 22nd of February. His body, preserved in salt and sown up in an ox hide, was conveyed to Normandy by Bernard and David, monks of St. Evroult, and honourably interred by the abbot and convent on the south side of the chapter house, near the tomb of the abbot Mainier. Arnold de Tilleul, his nephew caused a marble slab to be laid over his grave, and Ordericus Vitalis, who was then a young man of twenty-three, furnished the following epitaph :—

*Ecce sub hoc tumulo requiescit strenuus HUGO,  
Qui vixit multos multa probitate per annos.  
Mansio Grentonis menilio dicitur ejus,  
Unde fuit cognomen ei multis bene notum.  
Guillelmi fortis Anglorum tempore Regis  
Inter praecipuos magnates claruit heros ;  
Militia fortis fuit et virtute fidelis,  
Hostibus horribilis et amicis tutus herilis.  
Sumtibus officiis augens et pinguibus armis  
Coenobium Sancti multum provexit Ebrulfi :  
Dum Cathedram Sancti celebrabat plebs pia Petri,  
Occidit emeritus, habitu monachi trabeatus,  
Ecclesiae cultor, largus dator, et revelator  
Blandus egenorum laetetur in arce polorum.<sup>2</sup>*

There being no satisfactory rendering of these lines in existence, Mr. Charles J. Billson has kindly turned them into English verse as follows :—

Here HUGO rests, who rested not through life,  
But long and nobly toiled in arduous strife.

<sup>1</sup>Op. cit., Vol. III, pp. 128-9.

<sup>2</sup>pp. 7 & 8, Bibl. Top.

From his great fief his second name he drew,  
 And all the world GRENTEMESNIL'S glory knew.  
 He, when the English bore our William's reign,  
 All chiefs outshone, a hero without stain,  
 A warrior tried, who dealt with every blow  
 Hope to his friends and horror to the foe,  
 Till, worn with age, from this world he withdrew,  
 Dowered with great wealth the House of St. Evroult,  
 And in monk's habit, freed from earthly care,  
 Died on the Feast-day of Saint Peter's Chair.  
 The Church's friend, the poor man's help at need,  
 Courteous in speech, and generous in deed,—  
 God in high Heaven accord him glorious meed !

Epitaphs are notoriously eulogistic, but, from what is known of his life, his courage and his loyalty, this one does not appear to exaggerate grossly Hugh de Grentemesnil's virtues either as a soldier or a man. He fought well for king William, was a staunch supporter of his friends, and he honourably maintained the prestige of his family.

Hugh was succeeded in his English possessions by his fourth son Ivo.<sup>1</sup>

We have already heard of the inglorious exploits of this gentleman in the Holy Land, and his later deeds do not place him in any more favourable light.

No sooner was Henry I on the throne of England than Ivo with others set on foot a design by which Robert, duke of Normandy, was to invade the kingdom in an effort to seize the crown. The invasion actually took place, but miscarried, and in the following year the king exacted his revenge.

Ivo de Grentemesnil bore a double guilt, for, besides taking part in this insurrection, he had set the example in England of waging war on his own account, and of giving to the flames the territories of his neighbours. Such private feuds were common enough in Normandy, but hitherto they had been unknown in this country.

In consequence he was heavily fined by the king, and found

<sup>1</sup>Ord. Vit., Vol. III, p. 56.

himself in serious financial embarrassment.<sup>1</sup> Therefore Ivo was driven to seek the assistance of Robert, count of Meulan, and place himself under the earl's protection.

The derision caused by his rope dancing exploits at Antioch galled him and he was afraid that he should never, or not without great difficulty, reinstate himself in the king's favour. He therefore decided on joining another crusade, and made an agreement with the count of Meulan to the following effect: The count was to procure his reconciliation with the king, and to advance him five hundred silver marks for the expense of his expedition, and in return Ivo pledged the whole of his domains to the count for fifteen years as a security. Also the count was to give the daughter of his brother Henry, earl of Warwick, in marriage to Ivo's son, who was yet an infant, and to restore to this son Ivo's inheritance. This contract was confirmed by oath, and ratified by the king's consent.<sup>2</sup>

According to La Roque this son was also named Ivo, and so well acknowledged was the arrangement that the earl of Warwick's daughter Marguerite was known as the Dame de Grentemesnil.

Ivo then set out on his pilgrimage, accompanied by his wife, a daughter of Gilbert de Gand, but he died on the road.

When the fifteen years had expired, Robert de Meulan, instead of honestly fulfilling the contract to which he had sworn, retained the Grentemesnil estates in his own hands, and Ivo's son received neither his promised bride nor the hereditary lands that were due to him.

Ivo's son, who bore his father's Christian name, is generally thought to have been the father of Petronilla, or Pernelle, who married Robert Blanchmains. The end of two other sons of the first Ivo is graphically described by Ordericus in the following abbreviated passage:—

“After Henry had put his affairs in order in Normandy he set sail from Barfleur with a large fleet. William and Richard, the king's sons, and many of the nobility embarked on the

<sup>1</sup>Op. cit., Vol. III, pp. 329-330.

<sup>2</sup>Op. cit., Vol. III, p. 330.

Blanche-Nef. The prince gave orders that the mariners were to have drink given to them. No sooner was the wine delivered than they had a great drinking bout and pledging their comrades in full cups, indulged too much and became intoxicated. Several voyagers left the vessel upon observing that it was overcrowded with rioters and headstrong youths. The crew consisted of fifty experienced rowers, besides an armed marine force, who were very disorderly and, as soon as they got on board, insolently took possession of the benches of the rowers, and, being very drunk, forgot their station and scarcely paid respect to anyone. Alas, how many, among the company embarked, were without the slightest feeling towards God, 'who rules the storm and calms the raging sea.' They even drove away with contempt, amidst shouts of laughter, the priests who came to bless them, with the other ministers who carried the holy water. Besides the king's treasures and some casks of wine, there was no cargo in the ship, which was full of passengers, and they urged Thomas, the owner, to use his utmost endeavours to overtake the royal fleet which was already ploughing the waves. In his drunken folly, Thomas, confident in his seamanship and in the skill of his crew rashly boasted that he could leave behind him all the ships that had started before them.

"At last he gave the signal for departure, the sailors seized the oars without a moment's delay, and joyously handled the ropes and sails and made the ship rush through the water at a great rate. But as the drunken rowers exerted themselves to the utmost in pulling the oars the luckless pilot steered at random and got the ship out of its due course, and the starboard bow of the Blanche-Nef struck violently on a huge rock. Two planks having been shattered by the crash, the ship filled and went down, and only two persons were saved."

The king's two sons perished and amongst others two beautiful sons of Ivo de Grentemesnil.<sup>1</sup>

I have now traced, as far as the material at my disposal has enabled me, the salient landmarks in the history of the Grentemesnil family. It only remains for me to state the few facts that are known concerning members who have a minor interest for us.

<sup>1</sup>Ord. Vit., Bk. XII, Chaps. XXV & XXVI.

Hugh's eldest son Robert was thrice married, first to Agnes, daughter of Ranulph de Bayeux, secondly to Emma, daughter of Robert d'Estoteville, and lastly to Lucy, daughter of Savaric Fitz-Cane. Orderic tells us Robert allowed the possessions he had inherited from his father to slip away. In 1106 he assisted the king at the battle of Tinchebrai, but in 1119 he was meditating revolt against Henry, but thought better of it. He was a witness to a charter granted in 1128 at Rouen to St. Evroult,<sup>1</sup> and died a very old man in June 1136. He was buried in the chapter house of St. Evroult.

Aubrey, the youngest son, was, in his youth devoted to letters, but when he grew up, he renounced the profession of a learned clerk and, embracing the career of arms, became a knight-errant. In one of his combats he wounded Tancred, son of Eudes, "The Good Marquis," and in consequence Tancred was lame for the rest of his life.

Hugh's eldest daughter, Adeline, the wife of Roger d'Ivri (the king's cup-bearer) died about the year 1112, at which date Matilda, who had married Hugh de Mont-Pincon, was still alive.

Hawise died when approaching womanhood, and Agnes married William de Say.

The sons of Hugh are described as being tall and handsome, but none of them enjoyed a continuance of peace and prosperity, and only Robert lived to an old age.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Gallia.

<sup>2</sup>Ord. Vit., Bk. VIII, Chap. XVI; Chap. XXVIII.



## EXPLANATION OF FOOTNOTES.

Origines	=	Origines de la Normandie, et du Duché d'Alençon, par le Vicomte du Motey ; Paris ; 1920.
Statistique	=	Statistique Monumentale du Calvados ; t. II., par Monsieur de Caumont.
Gallia	=	"Gallia Christiana," Tome II., Cols. 204-210 of the Instrumenta.
Ord. Vit.	=	Ordericus Vitalis, "Ecclesiastical History of England and Normandy." Bohn's Edition, 1853.
Guillaume	=	"Guillaume de Jumièges" in "Collection des Memoires relatifs à l'histoire de France," ed. by M. Guizot, Paris, 1826.
Du Moulin	=	Du Moulin, "Histoire de Normandie."
G. de Poitiers	=	Guillaume de Poitiers.
Wace	=	"Master Wace, His Chronicle of the Norman Conquest, From the Roman de Rou," translated with notes and illustrations, by Edgar Taylor, Esq., F.S.A., London, 1837.
Nichols	=	History of Leicestershire.
La Roque	=	Historie de la Maison d'Harcourt, 1662.
V. C. H.	=	Victoria County History.
Bibl. Top.	=	Bibliotheca Topographica Britannica No. VII, London MDCCCLXXXII.