A Walk to Chalgrove Field.

WITH NOTES BY THE WAY.

By Walter Money, F.S.A.

IN these days of rapid travelling, when we are whirled through the country at the rate of fifty or sixty miles an hour, a very slight knowledge is obtained of the many features of general interest which the enquiring Englishman may find in such variety in every corner of his native land. To see the country thoroughly there is nothing like a walking tour, but while we by no means under-rate the pleasures that reward the enthusiastic pedestrian in search of novelty and freshness, we must admit that it requires a good deal of dogged endurance to plod over a distance of some twenty-five miles in the short February days, in the face of a relentless East wind, in order to visit a spot simply for its historical associations. Yet after all these drawbacks are only secondary, and give piquancy to what is the real enjoyment when any special object is in view.

There are few things more interesting to the antiquary and historical student than to visit an old battle-field—the very circumstances impress indelibly on your mind the history connected with the place. It awakens a more lively interest about the deeds done there than the mere perusal of them in books, and kindles a new curiosity about all the persons and the events which once passed over it; and when you have personally traced out the scene the actual knowledge which you have gained of the place fixes the facts for ever in your memory.

Of all the battle-fields in the country, few perhaps more interest the imagination than that of Chalgrove Field, where the patriot John Hampden received his mortal wound in the fierce skirmish—we are scarcely justified in calling it a "battle"—which took place between the Royalist and Parliamentarian troops on the 18th June, 1643. It was to this historic spot that we made a pilgrimage in the month of February, one thousand eight hundred and ninety-five.

Starting from Pangbourne, we first climbed the long hill above the village of Whitchurch, and after having accomplished this toilsome march in the very teeth of a bitter "Nor'-easter," which was bending the weather-beaten firs, and tearing in wild gusts round the corners, we reached the high level table-land above the Thames Valley. Having scaled this height we naturally turned about to admire the glorious expanse which we fondly imagined was spread out before us, but lo and behold

"We viewed the mist,
But missed the view,"

for the whole valley and hills beyond were magnificently enveloped in clinging curtains of dismal haze or fog; but when the sunshine lights up the hills the panorama is said to be, and we can believe it, one of great extent and diversified beauty.

Pressing forward through a cheerless, dismal country, after some miles of steady plodding, we passed the village of Woodcote, some 560 feet above sea level, which occupies the higher ground of the Chilterns, from whence it is said the Crystal Palace is distinctly seen on a clear day, which it certainly was not on the day of our visit. We therefore did not linger here, and reached a still more desolate country, where one sees nothing but hill beyond hill, valley running out of valley, with no house, farm buildings, or sign of man, not even the tinkling of the sheep-bell, or the chirping of a solitary bird. It was a silence which might be felt. A turn and a dip brought us at length to the village of Ipsden, close to the Chiltern Hills, with its scattered cottages grouped around the ancient village church, and standing somewhat aside from the road, we catch a glimpse of the manor house, the seat of the Reade family, and the birthplace of Charles Reade the author. In the church, which belonged to the great Abbey of Bec in Normandy, there are several monuments to the Reades, and a stained-glass window dedicated to the memory of Malcolm and Winwood Reade.

Passing along the Upper Icen-eld Street, or the old street of the Iceni, one of the four great Roman ways, but of British origin, a little further on we crossed the Grimsdyke, or *Grimes dic* of the Anglo-Saxon charters, which is very perfect between Mongewell and Nuffield. Striking ahead, the sound of wheels is heard for the first time since we left Pangbourne, but as we had burnt our boats and were bound for Chalgrove, we scorned the idea of obtaining a lift, so we strode along right merrily—my companion being a very con-

versible friend, full of local reminiscences, and well stored in agricultural topics. We passed on the left Cold Harbour Farm, now absurdly called "Col d'Arbres," whereas its name implies one of the many Cold Harbours or places of shelter, or as we should call posting stations, invariably found on the line of Roman roads.

Just before reaching the old turnpike road from London to Oxford through Benson, *viâ* Nettlebed, still nightly traversed by the Parcels Post coach, we passed Gould's Grove, occupied of late years by a gentleman whose name has acquired almost European reputation as a successful breeder of sheep, his prize-roll in this direction being most distinguished. There are, however, very few sheep now to be seen in the neighbourhood, in fact, in covering a distance of some fifteen miles we only saw one or two small flocks, and this too in a renowned sheep-rearing district. Well may the poor farmer exclaim in the words of the pastoral poet of old—

> The time is come I never thought to see;
> Strange revolution for my farm and me! . . .
> Farewell my pastures, . . . my paternal stock,
> My fruitful fields, and my more fruitful flock, . . .
> No more my sheep shall sip the morning dew,
> No more my song shall please the rural crew!
>
> *Dryd Virg.*

and which so truly represents the sad state of the agricultural interest at the present day.

We then proceeded through country lanes, retaining, we should think, much of the character they possessed in pre-historic times, to the pleasant and extremely interesting village of Ewelme, at the foot of the Chilterns. But we were well acquainted with the charming old almshouses, and the fine old church, which was preserved from mutilation when the Parliamentary troops were in the neighbourhood, by Colonel Francis Martyn, who forbade any person to enter the sacred building except for service,—so we did not make a long halt here. As we walked up the village street, we passed the manor-house, the site of the royal palace of Ewelme, which we called to remembrance as the scene of three national events—(1) Margaret of Anjou was detained here as a prisoner for several years; (2) Henry VIII. spent his honeymoon here with Jane Seymour; (3) it was the house occupied by Prince Rupert during his sojourn in this part of the country. Our way lay by the famous watercress beds, which succeed each other at different levels, and were of such high repute that "Ewelme watercress" was a familiar London cry not many years ago.

After walking up a very long, straight road, which has the appearance of an ancient British trackway, and passing only one sign of human habitation, appropriately named "Lonesome Farm," we at last sighted the village church of Chalgrove, but we found that we still had some little distance to walk before we reached the battle-field. The approach to Chalgrove Field is not very striking, particularly on a bleak day in February, but it is impossible to view the spot "where Hampden bled" without feeling the deepest interest, or without reflecting how much all parties owe to the patriotism of such a man as John Hampden, whose conduct must, in fact, have been as irreproachable as his character, since amid the turmoil of factions, and the malevolence of political animosities, his bitterest enemies were never able to fix a stain upon either.

The moment you set foot on the scene of action you recognise every position of the contending armies, and the objects that surrounded them. There is the lane down which Rupert's infantry marched to guard the line of retreat at Chiselhampton Bridge—there is the spot where, under a black banner, edged with yellow, and bearing the arms of the Palatine, might have been seen the Prince's impetuous cavalry, clothed in their black uniform—black, a fitting colour for that thunderstorm of war which broke with resistless fury on the ranks of the enemy. On the other side is the road by which the Parliamentary troops emerged on that then open plain, with their steeple-crowned hats and basket-hilted swords. Here were drawn up Hampden's Buckinghamshire men in green, and a few paces off is the spot where their leader received that fatal shot which led to disaster and defeat. But we are anticipating, and must first narrate the circumstances which led to the encounter between the rival forces on Chalgrove Field. Essex having advanced to Reading, fixed his headquarters at Thame, and his troops were quartered in the neighbouring villages. Meanwhile, Colonel Hurry, a Scotch mercenary, bred in the German wars, and had done good service for the Parliament at Edgehill and under Waller, had thrown up his commission of colonel of horse in their army, and offered to Prince Rupert to lead an expedition against an exposed quarter of the enemy—his late employers. The Prince also heard from Hurry that a sum of £21,000 was on its way to Thame from London, and knowing Hurry to be a capable officer, and aware of his thorough acquaintance with the movements and condition of the army he had recently left, Rupert accepted his proposals, put himself at the head of a powerful body of horse, and, late in the evening, marched out

of Oxford under the guidance of the renegade. At Postcombe, the expedition came unexpectedly upon a regiment of dragoons, and killed or took them prisoners to a man. At Chinnor, a regiment of newly-levied men were surprised, while soundly sleeping in the hamlet, and some fifty poor fellows were shot down or knocked on the head as they attempted to escape, and 120 surrendered themselves as prisoners. Rupert, however, missed his prize, as the drivers were warned by a countryman, and turned their teems into the beech woods, which then, as now, clothed the sides of the Chiltern Hills. The cavalier party then marched back upon Oxford, intending to fall in with a body of infantry, which Rupert had ordered to meet them by the pass at Chiselhampton Bridge, the point where he would have to re-cross the river. Hampden that night lay at Watlington, where the alarm of Rupert's appearance quickly roused him. Immediately he despatched the only trooper that attended him, to Essex, to recommend his moving a sufficient force upon the pass at Chiselhampton, and at the same moment a body of the Parliament's horse coming up he volunteered to put himself at their head, and by attacking the Prince's rear-guard to impede his retreat, and give Essex time to draw out his troops towards the river. By this time Hampden being joined by Colonel Dalbier, and several other officers, they amounted to a body of horse not greatly inferior to Rupert's. The Prince, meanwhile, hastened on through Tetsworth, his rear continually threatened by the pursuing party. On Chalgrove Field, from whence, as we have said, a lane leads down to the Bridge at Chiselhampton, he fell in with his infantry. This spot, made famous that day in English history, was then an unenclosed plain, of several hundred acres, but is now divided into many fields with hedgerows. Here, among the green corn which covered it, Rupert drew up his forces in order of battle; directing the party who guarded the prisoners and booty to move on to Chiselhampton Bridge. The Parliamentarians now came fiercely on, in three bodies. The first which reached the ground was led by Colonel Gunter; it consisted of several troops of horse and dragoons, and bore down on Rupert's right wing. Rupert charged; and the long rapiers of his life-guards did terrible execution. Gunter's party, though at once reinforced by the troop of Colonel Neale and General Percy, gave way and fled, leaving their commander dead on the field. At this juncture, Hampden at once put himself at the head of the attack; but in the first charge he received his death-wound. Overwhelmed by numbers, their best officers

killed or taken, their great leader and the hope of their cause retiring in a dying condition from the field, and the day absolutely lost, the forces of the Parliament gave way, and fled towards Essex's now unavailing squadrons. Rupert, though not able to pursue, made good his retreat across the river; and about noon entered Oxford, with near two hundred prisoners, seven cornets of horse, and four ensigns of foot, bringing back most of the men who had marched out with him—some officers had been taken prisoners, but none killed.

In great pain and nearly exhausted, Hampden reached Thame. The surgeons who dressed his wounds encouraged his grieving fellow comrades with hopes of recovery; but from the first his own impression was, that the wound was mortal. It was too true a one, and after six days of extreme suffering Hampden breathed his last.

Mr. Firth in the *Academy* of Nov. 29th, 1889, has conclusively shown that Clough's narrative of Hampden's last days found in the *Gentleman's Magazine* for May, 1815, is a nineteenth-century forgery. "The belief that we possess the words of Hampden's last prayer," says Mr. Rawson Gardiner, "must therefore be abandoned." But we obtain some exceptionally interesting particulars of Hampden's last days in a letter written by his most intimate friend and neighbour, Colonel Arthur Goodwin, to his daughter, Lady Wharton:—

> "Deere Jenny,—I am now heere at Hampden in doeinge the last duty for the deceased owner of it, of whome every honest man hath a share in the losse, and therefore will likewise in the sorrowe: In the losse of such a friend to my owne particular, I hae no cause of discontent, butt rather to bless God he hath not according to my deserts bereft me of you, and all the comforts deerest to me: All his thoughts and endeavours of his life was zealously in for this cause of God's, wch he continued in all his sickness, even to his death; for all I can heere the last words he spake was to mee, though he lived six or seven howers after I came away as in a sleepe: truly Jenny (and I know you may be easily persuaded to it) he was a gallant man, an honest man, an able man, and take all, I know not to any man livinge second, God now in mercy hath rewarded him . . . . . I hae with to London for a black suite, I pray let me begg of you a broad black ribbon to bange about my standard . . . . Yr ever, deere Jenny, most affectionate father, Ar Goodwin. Hampden, June 26th, 1643."*

He was buried in the parish church of Hampden. His soldiers, bareheaded, with arms reversed, and muffled drums, escorted his body to the grave, singing, as they marched, that lofty and melancholy psalm, in which the fragility of human life is contrasted with

* Carte's MSS. Letters, Bodleian Library, No. 40.

the immortality of Him to whom a thousand years are as yesterday when it is passed, and as a watch in the night.

The monument in commemoration of the event, erected on Chalgrove Field, chiefly through the instrumentality of Lord Nugent, was inaugurated on the two hundredth anniversary of the battle 18 June, 1843, with the following inscription cut on the north side :—

Here
In this field of Chalgrove,
John Hampden
After an able and strenuous
But unsuccessful resistance
In Parliament
And before the Judges of the land
To the measures of an arbitrary Court,
First took arms,
Assembling the levies of the associated counties
Of Buckingham and Oxford
In 1642;
And here,
Within a few paces of this spot,
He received the wound of which he died
While fighting in defence
Of the free Monarchy
And antient liberties of England,
June 18th, 1643.
In the two hundredth year from that day
This stone was raised
In reverence to his memory.

On the South side are the names of those who raised the subscription by which the monument was erected. On the West side is a medallion portrait of the patriot in marble, and below the following inscription has been added :—

This monument was repaired and completed by
George E. Hampden Cameron Esq.,
The present owner of the Hampden estates,
Descended from the patriot John Hampden
Through his daughter Mary, wife of Sir John
Hobart, Bart., and by Sir Henry Edward Austen
Of Shalford in the county of Surrey,
Another descendant of John Hampden through
Juliana, daughter of Richard Hampden,
The patriot's second son, 1863.

On the West side are the Hampden arms, with the motto, "Vestigia nulla retrorsum," which was borne on the standard of the

regiment of green coats, raised and trained by Hampden, which was considered as one of the best in the service of the Parliament.

There are no entries in the church register of Chalgrove relating to the burial of soldiers who fell in this—one of the most eventful actions in the Civil War,—which lends support to the village tradition that the dead were buried on the 19th June, 1643, the day after the desperate encounter, in a deep hollow near Chalgrove, called "Clay-pit," once rich in soft turf and verdant moss, abounding in various curious shells, gorse, and juniper bushes, but now, sad to say, the huge cavity has been filled in and levelled!

Returning from the battle-field, we visited the old church of Chalgrove, which in itself was worth the journey to visit, and is one of the most interesting parish churches in this part of the country. The chancel is of decorated architecture, with two windows on each side, and a larger one at the East end, all with flowing tracery; there are also sedilia and a piscina of a somewhat uncommon type, and on the North side is a very remarkable squint or hagioscope. At the Western end of the south side of the chancel is a low side window, at a convenient height from the floor for a person to look out through it. The purpose for which these so-called "leper windows" were intended is still an open question, and requires further elucidation. The church also contains brasses to Reginald Barantyne, 1441, Drugo Barantyne, and his wife Joan, 1437, and Beatrice, 1446; and Thomas, son of Thomas Barantyne, 14th century. There are also several good monuments relating to the families of Winchcombe (descended from "Jack of Newbury"), Lewis, Villiers, Whorwood, Bradshawe, Quatermaine and others, but it was too dark to copy the inscriptions.

The chief feature of the church, however, consists of the beautiful series of mural paintings in the chancel, which were brought to light in 1858, and preserved by the perseverance of a former Vicar, the Rev. Robert Lawrence, and his family. They are divisible into two parts, viz., those relating to the life of our Lord, and those relating to the death and assumption of the Blessed Virgin, and are certainly some of the most perfect, if not the most perfect, we have remaining in this country of wall paintings of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. A full description, with plates of the subjects, by the late J. H. Parker, F.S.A., C.B., and William Burges, will be found in Vol. xxxviii. of *Archæologia.*

Near the church is a very interesting Tudor mansion, known as the Old Rectory, dating from the time of Henry VIII., if not earlier,

which, we were informed, formerly belonged to Christ Church, Oxford, the Lay Rectors, by whom it was sold a few years since, after being dismantled of most of its carved oak panelling and other ornaments. The picturesque old house is now abandoned to the bats and owls, and it is entirely owing to the inherent vitality of its oak beams and joists that the whole of a marvellously curious fabric does not come down with the run. The other parts of the rambling structure have so ghastly and forlorn an air that we should be sorry to be in it on a dark November evening. But its capabilities are great, and by the aid of a cultured taste and an unlimited purse it might easily be made to blossom forth with much stately beauty.

Early Berkshire Wills, from the P.C.C., ante 1558.

(Continued from Vol. III., p. 203, of the Quarterly Journal of the Berks Archæological and Architectural Society.)

It may appropriately be stated here that the printing of these genealogical abstracts of Berkshire Wills is rendered possible by the issue, under the auspices of the *British Record Society, Limited*, of an "Index of Wills Proved in the Prerogative Court of Canterbury, 1383-1558, and now preserved in the Principal Probate Registry, Somerset House, London," compiled by Mr. J. Challenor C. Smith, late Superintendent of the Literary Department at Somerset House.

G. F. T. S.

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The Will of MASTER EDWARD BLANDE, bachelor of Canon law and rector of the parish church of Burghfeld.—18 September, 1475. To be buried in the church of S. Mary de Burghfeld "coram ymagine sancte Trinitatis." Legacies to the Cathedral of Sarum, the parish churches of Burghstede, Swarford, and Bentham, to the brothers of St. Trinity at Houndeslowe, and to the friars minors of