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The Earls of Warwick.

AMONG the many beautiful country seats which claim the willing admiration of tourists and visitors, none perhaps is so well known and so dear to the country at large, as Warwick Castle. Standing as it does to this day, in its ancient feudal magnificence, it is the pride, not only of the quiet little town which surrounds it so closely that it seems as if clinging to it for protection, but of all who love the history of their country, and who delight to preserve not only in the library, but in every form of relic, the remembrance of "the brave (if stormy) days of old."

This was avowedly the spirit which prompted the generous subscription raised on the occasion of the disastrous fire a few years ago—a fire which, by the way, has left, we may be thankful to know, few *outward* traces of its ravages. It was not because the residence of Lord Warwick had been threatened with destruction that money flowed in so freely, but because we looked upon Warwick Castle as a national treasure, and would have mourned it as a national loss. And not to Englishmen only is it dear—there is no spot in England to which the steps of American pilgrims turn more frequently, when visiting the historic shrines of the old country.

We may hope, then, that a short sketch will not be unwelcome of the many illustrious men known to us as Earls of Warwick, not a few traces of whom are to be found in the stately pile, but whose fame has reached far beyond the limits of their own domains. Few men are more familiar to readers of English history, and have played a more important (if not always fortunate) part than the various owners of

this historic title, and in the endeavour to follow their fortunes we shall be brought into contact with many illustrious English Houses which by inheritance or marriage, have come into its possession.

The arbitrary transfer by the King of title and estates from one family to another, is a fact which often meets us in olden days, when such a display of power was but a part of the kingly prerogative, and when all classes benefiting by the feudal system admitted the Royal right to transfer estates after attainder. That this was a matter of frequent occurrence will not surprise us when we remember the many disputes in which the succession to the throne was involved, and the warmth with which the great nobles espoused the cause of Plantagenet, Yorkist, Lancastrian, or Tudor. Of course the victor rewarded his followers with the possessions of those who were on the losing side. We shall see how this was the case with the Earls of Warwick in the disastrous Wars of the Roses.

To begin at the beginning, or rather a little before, our first mention must be of the romantic and mythical Guy the Saxon, Earl of Warwick. There are many allusions to this famous hero in mediæval chronicles, but none earlier than the 14th century, and, as one of Guy's great achievements, the fight with the Danish champion Colbrand the Giant, ("that same mighty man," as he is called in "King John") is fixed in the year 926, antiquaries receive such comparatively late statements with a smile of incredulity. Shakespeare has another allusion to the renowned Guy in "Henry VIII.;" (Act 5, scene 3.) Chaucer refers to him in the "Canterbury Tales," and in the Percy Ballads are two old English poems—"The Legend of Sir Guy," and "Guy and Amarant." Other less known histories and legends are really too numerous to mention. After his famous duel Guy is said to have retired to a hermitage, and to have made with his own hands the cave known as Guy's Cliff, near Warwick. A few days before his death he revealed himself to his fair Countess Phillis, whom he seems to have treated in a somewhat unaccountable manner, for she was left in ignorance of her husband's abode, and only summoned, as we have said, to his deathbed. However, she was gentle and forgiving, and he, after a lofty accep-

tance of her devotion, died, we have no doubt, "universally esteemed and regretted." Several modern writers have been inclined to admit that his exploits had a basis of reality, and the Earls of Warwick have certainly adopted him as an ancestor, by causing his history to be worked in tapestry, by taking his christian name, and by calling after him a tower of their castle. His armour and gigantic "porridge pot" are shown with apparent good faith by the old woman in charge of the room containing the relics. She affirms the hero to have been 8 feet 11 inches in height.

Coming to historical times we find that, previous to the Norman Conquest, the titular Earls of Warwick were really no more than officers of the Earls of Mercia, and did not in their own right possess the town and castle. When the Conqueror usurped the throne, Jurchill, the son of Alwine, was Vicecomes (Viscount) of Warwick. He seems to have been a peaceable man, and wise in his generation, if wisdom consists in holding aloof from the struggles of one's country. Whatever his convictions or sympathies may have been, he refrained from giving assistance to Harold, and was allowed to remain, for the time being, in quiet possession of his estates. He obeyed the King's mandate to repair and fortify the town and castle, and is mentioned in the Domesday Book as one of the landowners of the county. Notwithstanding his adoption of the immortal principle that "whatever is, is right," Jurchill experienced the proverbial fickleness of Princes, for during his life we find the Conqueror transferring his title and estates to a follower of his own from "La belle Normandie," Henry de Newburgh, younger son of Roger de Bellamont, and in him we have now reached the first historical Earl of Warwick. In this family the honour remained till 1242, when Thomas de Newburgh dying without issue, left Margaret, his half sister, his heir. She married twice, both her husbands successively bearing the title of Earl; the second, John de Plesssetis, is recorded in the Annals of the County to have granted to the Burgesses of Warwick, in the 45th year of Henry III., a fair for three days. Countess Margaret died about 1263, having survived her second husband, and leaving no children; the Earldom was then

inherited by William de Malduit, her cousin, who, dying in his turn without children, was succeeded by his nephew, William de Beauchamp, Baron of Elmley.

The new Earls of Warwick were a more illustrious race than any of their predecessors, and have left numerous traces of their activity at home and abroad. We begin now to realise the individuality of each Earl, and to be able to follow his history more in detail. We do not hear much of Earl William beyond his own town, to which he was an important benefactor; he established fairs and markets in the reign of Edward I., and began the important works of walling and paving; they did not, however, proceed rapidly, for permission to levy tolls for their execution was granted by the two succeeding Edwards.

Thomas de Beauchamp, 10th Earl, was a man of high consideration in the 14th century, and was much distinguished in the French and Scotch wars of Edward III., earning "the priceless honour of mention by Froissart," who, speaking of him with Lord Clinton, says, "They took many strong towns, and gained great honour by their conduct and valour." He died near Calais in 1376, and is buried with his wife in the Choir of St. Mary's Church, Warwick, where his tomb is still to be seen.

He was succeeded by his son, also named Thomas, who was chosen governor to Richard II. during his minority, but being dismissed from Court, he spent the greater part of his life in a calm and happy exile in his own domains, "far from the madding crowd," and is best known to posterity as the builder of the tower at the north-east corner of the castle, known as Guy's Tower.

Dying in 1401, he was succeeded by his son Richard, whose career was a more eventful and distinguished one. He took in battle the standard of Owen Glendower during the rebellion of that chieftain against Henry IV. He fought with eminent success in the French wars of Henry V., and having, in 1425, been sent over to France with a reinforcement of 6,000 men, he was left by the Duke of Bedford to act as Regent during his own absence in England. While holding this post he carried on the war with great good fortune, and gained several

important places in the Province of Maine. On the return of Bedford to France in 1428, Warwick was summoned home by the English Council to undertake the guardianship of the minor Henry VI. He continued to fill this post till 1437, when he was appointed Regent of France. His second administration was not signalised by any remarkable event, and before it had lasted quite two years he fell ill and died at the Castle of Rouen, in April, 1439; in the following October his body was brought to Warwick, and deposited, by his own desire, in a chest of stone before the Altar of St. Mary's Church, until the erection, in accordance with his will, of the beautiful Beauchamp Chapel attached to that Church. The tomb to which his remains were ultimately removed stands in the centre of the Chapel and is considered to be inferior to none in England, except that of Henry VII. at Westminster. Gough says that "about the middle of the 17th century the floor of our Lady's Chapel fell in, and discovered the body perfect and fresh, till, on the letting in of the air, it fell to pieces. The ladies of Warwick made rings of the noble Earl's hair." He is known by the honourable title of "The Good," and by his second wife he left two children, Henry who succeeded him, and Anne, who married Richard Nevil, son of the Earl of Salisbury, whose name we must carefully remember.

Henry de Beauchamp's life was honourable but brief; inheriting the title in 1439, it is said that he was kept out of his estates for two years by Henry VI., who, to atone for his injustice, nominated him in 1444 Premier Earl of England, with the privilege of wearing a gold coronet, and a few days afterwards created him Duke of Warwick. Not content with this, Henry, in the following year, made this favourite of fortune King of the Islands of Wight, Jersey and Guernsey, crowning him with his own hand. Unhappily, honours do not ensure life to enjoy them, for in June of the same year (1445) Beauchamp died, leaving one little daughter Anne; the dukedom became extinct on his death, and the Earldom was inherited by baby Anne, who left this world and its distinctions in 1449, when six years old. There was now left but one representative of the illustrious Beauchamp family, Anne, daughter of the Good Earl Richard, sister of the late Duke, and aunt of the poor

little countess. This Anne, it will be remembered, had married Richard Nevil, who, when his wife succeeded to the vast family estates, was created Earl of Warwick, the dignity to descend to the heirs of his wife "with all pre-eminences that any of their ancestors before the creation of Henry, Duke of Warwick used."

The fame of the now extinct Beauchamps pales before that of the great Earl Richard, known to us so well as "The King-maker." It seems almost a work of supererogation to undertake his history, but still our sketch would be wholly incomplete without it, and it will do none of us harm to discover how much knowledge we now possess of what puzzled and wearied us all in our childish days, the unhappy Wars of the Roses. Surely no portion of English history is more sad, or more perplexing, and with it is inextricably woven the name of Richard Nevil, who seems to have been related to most of the eminent men of the day, in a manner which can only be unravelled by a herald or antiquary. The most important, and by far the most distracting of these alliances, is that which connected him with Richard, Duke of York who, as representative of Lionel, third son of Edward III., was the lineal heir to the throne now occupied by the House of Lancaster, descended from Edward's fourth son, John of Gaunt. It will be sufficient to say that Edward IV. (son of Richard, Duke of York) and the Earl of Warwick were first cousins.

We have now met the greatest name which will appear in our sketch "the hero of the age, Richard Nevil," whose history is that of the long and dreary contest between the Houses of York and Lancaster, and who, says Hume, "was the greatest, as well as the last, of those mighty Barons who formerly overawed the crown." With the reign of Henry VII. began a new order of things, and the great feudal system was at an end.

Warwick was by ties and sympathy a Yorkist, and to the competitor who had on his side the greatest noble of the age, who could bring into the field 60,000 men, and who belonged to "the most extensively connected family that ever existed among the nobility of England," success was almost guaranteed. When the incapacity of Henry VI.

was declared, and the Barons chose the Duke of York as Protector of the kingdom, Warwick adopted the cause of his kinsman, and the battle of St. Alban's, the first at which the Yorkists and Lancastrians met, was mainly won by his valour. He was rewarded with the Governorship of Calais, then and for long after, the most important military charge in Christendom; to this Henry, anxious to conciliate so powerful a subject, joined the command of the fleet for five years. Warwick added naval to his military successes, and on entering London in 1460 he was received with universal acclamation.

The Duke of York now advanced his claim to the throne; Warwick defeated the army of Margaret of Anjou near Northampton, and obtained possession of the King's person. The next battle, that of Wakefield, was disastrous to the Yorkists; the Duke was taken and put to death, and Warwick's father, with twelve other nobles, was beheaded at Pontefract. The Queen's second victory at St. Alban's liberated Henry, but a junction of Warwick's forces with those of the young Edward, now Duke of York, compelled the Royal army to retire to the north. Edward and Warwick entered London in triumph; on the 4th of March, 1461 the former was proclaimed king and the defeat of the Lancastrian army at Towton on the 29th secured to him the throne. During the remaining years of the struggle, Warwick performed many important services, and it was by him that the unfortunate Henry was conducted to the Tower in June, 1465.

Warwick was now at the height of greatness; he was Earl of Warwick and Salisbury, High Admiral, Great Chamberlain, Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, and Governor of Calais. What then was the reason of his great apostacy, and adoption of the cause of Queen Margaret and her son? Many motives are assigned for it; among them, King Edward's marriage; jealousy of the Queen's relations, the Woodvilles; the marriage of the king's sister with the Duke of Burgundy, contrary to his (Warwick's) advice, and his dishonoured embassy to the Court of France; and, according to one account, a gross insult offered by Edward to his daughter Anne. Lord Lytton considers the last to be the true reason, and discards all other

surmises. Certain it is that there was a rupture between the King and his hitherto faithful ally, and a hollow reconciliation which did not last long. In July 1468, Edward's next brother, the Duke of Clarence, gave great offence to His Grace by marrying the Earl's elder daughter Isabel Nevil.

The story of Warwick's movements at this time is lengthy and tedious; he soon broke out in open revolt against Edward, and concluded a treaty with Queen Margaret to the effect that her son, Prince Edward, should marry his youngest daughter Anne, and that, in failure of issue, the crown should devolve upon Clarence. King Edward escaped to Holland, and Henry resumed the sovereignty; this Revolution earned for Warwick his well known title of "King-maker." He was restored by parliament to the offices taken from him by Edward; but this only lasted a few months; in March, 1471, Edward, assisted by the Duke of Burgundy, landed in Yorkshire; Clarence and the Archbishop of York were won over, and on April 14th the two armies met at Barnet. The Lancastrians were defeated, and our great Earl and his brother Montague left dead on the field. Their bodies were exposed three days in St. Paul's, and then buried at Bisham, in Berkshire.

This was a fatal blow to the fortunes of the Nevils; they never recovered power after the battle of Barnet, and the present Earl of Abergavenny is the only lineal descendant of that almost regal House. The Earl's widow, Anne de Beauchamp, who survived him many years, was reduced to great poverty till the restoration of her estates after the accession of Henry VII.

The next inheritor of the title will not occupy us long; "the perjured and despicable Clarence," is unworthy of lengthened notice. He married, as we have seen, the King-maker's eldest daughter, and was created by the King Earl of Warwick. But Edward never forgot that Clarence had joined arms against him in connection with his father-in-law, and though afterwards reconciled, they were never cordial. Clarence was attainted of treason by a parliament which met in 1478, and was privately put to death, being drowned, as is popularly

believed, in a butt of Malmsey. His son also bore the title Earl of Warwick, and his history is perhaps the saddest we shall be called upon to record.

We do not hear much of him till after the accession of Henry VIII., when he was immediately lodged in the Tower. In 1468 broke out the insurrection of Lambert Simnel, who was put forward as the young Earl of Warwick, and was even received as such by the Duchess of Burgundy, sister of Edward IV., and accorded royal honours in the name of the unfortunate prisoner in the Tower. The imposture was soon detected, but another Pretender having arisen who gave himself the name of Earl of Warwick, Henry considered it essential to the safety of his dynasty to put the poor young Earl to death; and he was beheaded on Tower Hill. Henry, though rapacious and avaricious, was not bloodthirsty, and we must do him the justice of believing that, unless he considered himself compelled, he would not have committed so cruel an act. From this time there was no Earl of Warwick till Edward VI. conferred the title upon John Dudley, Viscount Lisle, who was maternally descended from Margaret Beauchamp, daughter of Richard de Beauchamp, twelfth Earl, and who is better known to us by his subsequently acquired title of Duke of Northumberland. He was the son of Edmund Dudley, infamous as the instrument of Henry VII's extortions, and was introduced at court by the reigning favourite, Charles Brandon, Duke of Suffolk, receiving the honour of knighthood for the gallantry he had shown while attending the Duke on his expedition to France. He enjoyed the patronage of Wolsey and Cromwell, and was by their interest appointed to more than one lucrative office. The fall of his patrons did not affect his fortunes, for in 1542 we find him raised to the peerage as Viscount Lisle, and next year he was made Lord High Admiral for life, and appointed Governor of Boulogne; finally, he was one of the sixteen noblemen nominated by Henry VIII. in his will, for the carrying on of the Government during the minority of his son.

At first all things went smoothly enough, and Dudley appears as a cordial supporter of the Protector's (Somerset) authority. In 1547 he

acquired the title which constitutes his interest to us, and was created Earl of Warwick. He greatly distinguished himself in the expedition to Scotland in the autumn of the same year, and gained the battle of Pinkey. When the rebellion broke out in Norfolk, "this noble chieftain and valiant Earl," as Hollinshed calls him, was entrusted with its suppression. The history of Warwick's rivalry with Somerset is an evil and treacherous page in his life, and one which makes us feel that the ultimate retribution he met with was just. The Protector's execution of his brother, Lord Seymour, is supposed to have been instigated by Warwick, who was bent on the destruction of both brothers. As Somerset's popularity declined, Warwick's increased, and he was soon strong enough to bring about the deposition of his rival from his high office and his committal to the Tower; he was afterwards released, and a reconciliation effected by means of his marriage with Warwick's daughter, but the two sons could not shine in the same hemisphere, and Warwick, now Duke of Northumberland and practically Protector, consummated his treachery when, by his means, Somerset was convicted of felony, and executed on Tower Hill. He met his death with courage, and popular sympathy was greatly excited in his favour by the feeling that he had fallen a victim to a man much less worthy than himself and that, in him, the Reformation had lost its great supporter. Dudley never overcame the hatred which that day's work incurred, and his fatal ambition proved his ruin. In April, 1552, Edward's health began to fail and Northumberland to plot for the transference of the Crown into his own family. His son, Guildford Dudley, had married Lady Jane Grey, great granddaughter of Henry VII., upon whose descendants Henry VIII. had settled the crown in failure of the lives of his son and daughters, and Northumberland induced the dying young King to exclude his sisters, and nominate Lady Jane as his successor. This was kept concealed for some days after Edward's death, but on the 10th of July Jane was proclaimed Queen, and on the 16th Northumberland left London at the head of a force of 8,000 men to meet the adherents of the Queen, but losing hope, he abandoned the cause of his

daughter-in-law and proclaimed her rival Queen. This, however, did not save him; on the same day he was arrested, and on the 25th committed to the Tower, where sad indeed must have been his thoughts, and the remembrance of his past grandeur and ambition. No position is more pitiable than that of the man who has had the highest power, save the kingly, within his grasp, and lost all by his own criminal folly. What repentance can be so bitter! Heartfelt and earnest, but so ineffectual! The last act of this sad tragedy took place in August, when Northumberland, with his eldest son, was arraigned for high treason; both were found guilty, but the father only was executed, and suffered on Tower Hill, proclaiming himself, to the general surprise, a Roman Catholic, though he had professed through life the Reformed faith.

His son, styled Earl of Warwick, was released from custody, but died a few days after, and his younger brother, Ambrose Dudley, was restored by Queen Elizabeth to the dignities of Baron Lisle and Earl of Warwick. He died in 1581, without children, and his monument is erected in Beauchamp Chapel. "Good Earl Ambrose" is best known, perhaps, as brother of the more famous, but less virtuous, Earl of Leicester.

We have now reached another interregnum in the family history, and the end of all historical interest attached to the Earls of Warwick; from this time they may have been respectable, but they were no longer illustrious. We have rapidly followed the fortunes of Newburgh, Beauchamp, Nevil, Plantaganet and Dudley, and a few words will dismiss those who succeeded to the title, but not to the greatness so long connected with it.

Ambrose Dudley died childless, and the Earldom remained dormant till it was revived by James I., in the person of Robert Rich, Earl of Warwick and Holland. It was retained by this family from 1618, when it again fell into abeyance, in default of male heirs; the only Earl of this race whom we need mention is Addison's stepson, who is, however, only known in connection with his illustrious stepfather; it was to him the dying poet addressed the famous words, "See how a Christian can die."

Another intricate genealogical puzzle brings us to the present owners of this ancient dignity, the Grevilles. Early in the 16th century, Sir Fulke Greville had married the granddaughter and heiress of Lord Willoughby de Broke and his wife Elizabeth Beauchamp, who was descended from a brother of the William de Beauchamp who became Earl of Warwick in 1267. On a descendant of this Sir Fulke (who had himself been created Lord Broke) the title was conferred in 1759, and in his family it still remains. Thus proud ambition and chequered fortunes have yielded place to peaceful honour.

A. G.