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Dr. Bulmore

THE LANIONS of LANION, MADRON, CORNWALL.

Through an intermarriage in the fourteenth century, in our county of Cornwall, two incidents occurred in the Lanion family. These happenings were not concurrent, but followed one another, and for a time affected the domestic happiness of the one and the prosperity of the other - a father and son - both seated at Lanion in Madron; but, before relating them, we might note what was doing at home and abroad in 1345, the year we believe the first incident to have happened.

After five hundred years we are apt to lose sight of the acquisition, continuance in, and loss of our possessions in France, a long time attached to the Crown of England. In 1345 the kingdom of France was but a small portion of the country we now know by that name; where for many years there had been a struggle between the English and French peoples for this or that part of it, broken by an occasional truce; and now accounted the most illustrious period in our ancient history.

In this year, then, King Edward III. and his people decided to invade France with two armies, their idea - to bring about a speedy and successful termination of the war. Money was raised for the maintenance of these armies and their transportation to France from Portsmouth; one army to sail for Normandy under command of the king and his beloved son, Edward, the Black Prince, the other to go to the south of France under their tried leader and Captain-General, Henry, Earl of Derby.

This Earl of Derby was the King's cousin, and a Plantagenet through descent from his grandfather, Edmund, one of King Henry the Third's younger sons, and a favoured one, in that his father created him the first Earl of Lancaster (then our oldest English title) and gave him the honour of Lancaster. "that kingdom within a kingdom." Edmund's second son, Henry, now held both, and, dying in 1344, (the year of his only son's greatest exploits) Henry, Earl of Derby, succeeded to his father's earldom, and the Palatine of Lancaster.

Twice before, in 1342 and 1344, the new Earl of Lancaster had led expeditions to the South of France. The king, and indeed all Englishmen, knew the Earl's reputation - a fierce fighter and valorous soldier, (even to imperilling his life in a battle), and only the cry of "a Derby" from his soldiers would cause dismay in the enemy's camp.

It was, however, in the last of these two expeditions that the Earl of Lancaster had particularly distinguished himself for the military skill he had shewn in the taking of many cities and towns in Guienne and elsewhere, supported by an army keen to follow wherever he led, and from its events an imperishable renown was shed on the military character of England. Those of the third expedition in 1345 but added fresh laurels to the Earl of Lancaster and his army for, though Calais fell in 1347, fighting continued in the south of France up to 1350.

Having reviewed this period of our English history, we see how its events affected far-off Cornwall and the lives of some of its people, and, by briefly following the Earl of Lancaster's brilliant career, we can judge what manner of man he was, and how his conduct re-acted on others.

Returning to Cornwall, we are told there dwelt in the Manor house of Tregaminion a family bearing that name; owned at the time our story opens by Joyce Tregaminion and his wife, Joan; their three children were: Richard, the only son and heir, and two daughters named Sibyl and Isabel. The elder daughter Sibyl married a John de Lynyen, of Lanion Manor, in Madron parish, some four or five miles distant from the Tregaminion Manor. Either at the end of the year 1344 or beginning of 1345, Sibyl visited her old home: (as the word "late" is used in speaking of her mother, Joan, she might have just died). Before her

return to Lanion Manor, and for a reason we are not given, Sibyl took "some goods and jewels" of her mother's and "carried" them away to her home. It may be that Sibyl's husband, John, knew nothing of his wife's wrong conduct until she was charged with this felony - by whom we are not told - but, whether ignorantly or knowingly, he was bound by both love and chivalry to give her his protection and the shelter of his home, (though the law deemed him an "accessory to a felony"), and to face the penalty of his lands becoming forfeit, and he himself outlawed, should the Courts' verdict go against him.

As anticipated, John de Lynnen's indictment followed; his offence, the "receiving" of his wife, Sibyl. Against this charge John appealed to a higher court, and then left Cornwall to join the Earl of Lancaster's army; in a very disturbed frame of mind we may be sure, little knowing that the good fortune awaiting him in France was to give him the opportunity of wiping out this undeserved stain on his honour and good name.

A Patent Roll of 24 Edward III. explicitly states that John's domestic tragedy took place "before the last passage of the Earl to those parts", that is, this third expedition of 1345, for though the Earl paid a visit to England in 1347 for the express purpose of receiving from the King a grant of the castle and town of Brigerac, which he had taken by assault and held to ransom, he returned to France until the war was over.

We may be certain that all ranks of the Earl of Lancaster's army would try and emulate their beloved warrior's brave deeds and chivalrous conduct. The Patent Roll, already alluded to, does not disclose what John de Lynnen did in the Earl's presence, or what the nature of John's "good service in Gascony"; sufficient for us to know that on the army's return to England the Earl of Lancaster, at Westminster on June 3rd, 1350, himself gave personal testimony to this good service, which witness obtained the royal pardon for our Cornishman and enabled him to return, a free man, to his own country. We can only wish we could have been present on John's arrival home and seen the astonishment and joy of wife and friends when he shewed them the deed that confirmed the wonderful story he had to tell them.

The Madron Lanion Coat of Arms, placed in the College of Arms by the King's Herald in 1531, pictures an old tradition relating to the above-mentioned hero, John de Lynnen.

THE SECOND INCIDENT IN THIS LANION FAMILY

In thirty-six years many events can happen in a family, and - fortunately for us - some of these are to be found in an Inquisition, taken at Marazion in the spring of 1386, not under the usual circumstances - on the death of a person - but an inquisition on the lands, late of the Tregaminion family.

Here we might say something of the two Royal personages mentioned in the Inquisition. Joan, the only daughter of the Earl of Kent, a Plantagenet, was styled for her beauty the "Fair Maid of Kent". In 1361, and for the third time, Joan (Countess of Kent in her own right) married her cousin Edward, the famous Black Prince, who having returned from Bordeaux a very sick man, died on June 8, 1376, and their son, Richard, succeeded to the throne when his grandfather, King Edward the Third, died in 1377.

To take these happenings in their order - we are informed that John Lanyeyn and his brother-in-law, Richard Tregaminion, had died, also that Richard's son, James, succeeded to the Tregaminion Manor, and had died, without heirs; so that this Manor, consisting of rents, messuages, and lands,

^ Bacon's "Abridgment".

became the heritage of two sisters, the aunts of James Tregaminion; Sibyl, the widow of John Lanyeyn, and Isabel now the wife of John Robyn als Luky; later said to be a "bond tenant of the Princess of Wales."

All legal formalities settled, Sibyl, (of whom there is no further mention) granted her half of the estate to her son, Ralph or Radolphus, whilst Isabel, having no heir, nor, by law, any property apart from her husband, John Robyn, joined with him in granting the remainder to her nephew, Radolphus Lanyeyn; and two deeds state that he "took its profits" and was in "peaceable" possession of the whole property for "a long time" until "expelled therefrom by reason of the serfdom of the said John Robyn"; because the Warden of the Princess of Wales "alleged that John Robyn was a villein of the said Lady before Radolphus Lanyeyn was enfeoffed of the Tregaminion Manor and before the above-mentioned Inquisition, on which account, he, John Robyn, had never held the lands," and now that the Princess of Wales had died the Escheator of Cornwall claimed them for the next heir, her son, King Richard the Second.

In his Ancient Petition Radolphus Lanyeyn replied to this charge of the Warden by saying: "There was no claim of villeinage made of John Robyn before the said enfeoffment of the lands to him (Radolphus) nor long afterwards, as he is ready to swear", and asked for livery of his lands and the repeal of the Patent of May 12, 1387, granting the Tregaminion lands to one Alexander Langueth. Radolphus also stated that "a moiety of the lands came into the King's hands" in 1386, and the Patent that Alexander was to hold this grant "during the lives of the said John and Isabel." This seems to indicate that Isabel's portion was the one first seized from the heir, Radolphus Lanyeyn.

We regret this Inquisition does not furnish such interesting facts as :-

- (a) Why John Robyn left this Crown Manor - whose situation is not given - when, by remaining on its privileged soil for a year and a day he would have been freed from serfdom;
- (b) John's reason for that flight;
- (c) What chartered town gave him refuge for the year and a day that, if undiscovered, would give him freedom;
- (d) Where, and when, and under what circumstances did he meet and marry Isabel Tregaminion, the gentlewoman?

That John Robyn, the unfree, never lapsed into servitude is, I think borne out by the statements in Radolphus Lanyeyn's Ancient Petition, but two historical facts confirm him. In 1348, when a terrible plague visited Europe, it swept away, in Cornwall, so many serfs that labour became scarce, and, to end the conflict between the serfs and their lords, a Statute of Labourers was drawn up and passed by Parliament towards the end of 1349. One of its clauses read: "Every man or woman ... free or bond ... able in body and within the age of 60 ... shall be bound to serve any employer requiring his services". In spite of this and other stringent clauses the new law provided, difficulties arose in applying it and the ingenuity of the Manor Stewards (often lawyers) was taxed in trying to find the customary labour for their manors, in the recovery of runaway serfs, and the return to the estate of those villeins permitted by their lord to work elsewhere; yet this far-flung net had not caught John Robyn, the erstwhile serf, and in all respects he acted like a free man until the Warden discovered him - how, we are not told - and claimed from him, his portion of the Tregaminion Manor for the Princess of Wales.

Though Isabel Tregaminion's mesalliance bore no immediate conse-

* Vinagrodoff, 1911.

queues, later she was to prove that the marital subordination of a free woman to an unfree husband carried with it a conditional disability that could not be overcome when the tribunal of 1386 refused to vindicate her rights because of her entanglement in villeinage, yet the Norman law did not hold such subjection as absolute, because the Courts made a distinction between acquiring and retaining possession of property. Had Isabel acquired her portion of her father's inheritance before, in place of after her marriage to John Robyn, the serf, she had the assize of novel disseisin against any person trying to oust her from it.

In order to show the spirit that animated the lords of the soil, from royalty downwards, it is related of the Princess of Wales that, when returning from a pilgrimage to Canterbury with her ladies, she met the revolted peasantry of Kent, who, however, did not molest her in her journey to the King's palace. Informed of this encounter, King Richard at once met them, when the peasants demanded abolition of their slavery and a fixed rent on lands in lieu of services due by villeinage. Thinking it politic to comply, he granted them a Charter of enfranchisement and a pardon, but the king's weak and vacillating character caused him to break its spirit. When the peasantry reproached him for his bad faith, he replied: - "Villeins you were, and villeins you are, in bondage ye shall abide, and that not your old bondage, but a worse."

How, then, could John Robyn or any other serf expect justice or mercy; but for an explanation of a seemingly arbitrary action on the part of two high Court officials, we must go back to the time when the Saxons ruled in England, and slavery was practised in Cornwall and elsewhere.

After five centuries it is difficult for us to realise the state of the unfree Cornishman of the fourteenth century, or what numbers of her people were held in agrarian subjection on the large Cornish manors. Though the Normans themselves never practised slavery, yet the hardships of feudal tenure and military service under their system, gradually imposed on, and later, nationally adopted by the English nation, equally deprived the English people of their liberties.

Under Norman law all villeins were alike, and their legal position a low one, but on a manor the unfree man was divided into three classes, so that the word "nativus", (used in speaking of John Robyn's serfdom) indicated that he had come to this state by birth, not, as in some cases, through misfortune.

The recorded trials plainly show that the Norman laws on villeinage were in a state of transition, and by no means settled; but from the two deeds treating of John Robyn's case, it is clear that his civil disabilities precluded him from holding any property, even though acquired through marriage, and that he was alienating that which he had never lawfully possessed, but might well have looked on as his own.

The Common Law on Villeinage said - "Lords are owners not only of the serf's chattels but of his body" - and - "what was acquired by the bondman was acquired by the lord, if the lord did not interfere", and therein lay John Robyn's misfortune. It is patent that the real motive of the Warden of the Princess of Wales and, later, that of the Escheator of Cornwall, was to get possession of the Tregaminion Manor for their Royal patrons, and that the plea of John Robyn's serfdom, though correct in fact, was but the means to the end in view: therefore the jury made that serfdom the determining factor against Radolphus Lanyeyn's re-entry on his lands; and, on John Robyn's death, this decision was again confirmed in an Inquisition at Truro in 1396. Of Isabel there is no further mention, and we may therefore presume her death as happening before that of her husband, John Robyn.

By relating the story of the marriage of a free woman with an unfree man, we get a clearer knowledge of life in Cornwall in the early centuries, and a record of the difficulties ancient families encountered in retaining their manors.

JANIM.