

From *The History of the Suburbs of Exeter*

## by Charles Worthy, Esq., London 1892

This selection is nearly the whole chapter: the first two pages and the last are omitted. I have not found a reprint of this out-of-copyright work.

### **Chapter IV: The Earldom of Devon. A Digression of the Families of Redvers and Courtenay.**

The first Courtenay on record was "Atho," a French Knight, universally admitted to have been of nameless origin, who built a castle at Courtenay, a small town in the Gatenois, sixty miles from Paris, early in the eleventh century, and took his name from his residence. His elder grandson, Milo, was certainly Lord of Courtenay whilst Josceline, the first Count of Edessa, whose territory extended on both sides of the Euphrates river, was, as certainly, a younger brother of the said Milo.

In the year 1152, one Reginald de Courtenay, widower with two adult sons, came to this country in the train of Queen Eleanor, and he was the indisputable ancestor of the English Courtenays.

The usually accepted accounts as to the origin and history of this Reginald de Courtenay are merely traditional. He is said "to have been the son of the aforesaid Milo, grandson of Atho, to have married at an early age, Matilda, the sister of Guy de Donjon, and by her to have been the father of Elizabeth de Courtenay, the wife of Prince Peter of France, and therefore the grandfather of the first, Courtenay, Emperor of Constantinople." He is also said "to have given his said daughter the Castle of Courtenay, and the rest of his French possessions, as a marriage portion."

Such being the case, he must have disinherited his two sons in order to provide for his daughter; and, even then, it was not from these sons, but from the daughter, who remained in France, that the Courtenays of Constantinople descended. And it must not be forgotten, that Eleanor of Guienne, then the wife of Henry of Anjou, subsequently our Henry II, was the divorced and disgraced wife of Louis VII of France, the eldest brother of Prince Peter. Is it therefore at all probable that the near relatives of the latter could be thus associated with her?

Still, it is unnecessary to question the tradition closely, since it only leads to the known facts -- that one Reginald de Courtenay, a widower, accompanied by two sons, came to England, to seek his fortune, nearly a century after this country had been settled by the Normans, and that they were of sufficient importance, at all events, to at once secure royal protection and patronage, as all of them contracted advantageous matrimonial alliances immediately after the accession of Henry as shown by the Exchequer Rolls, and other contemporary documents, by means of

which the history from that period has been ascertained step by step.

Robert de Courtenay, younger son of Reginald, who has been usually confounded with his nephew of the same name, married Alice de Romele, daughter of the north country lord of Skipton, Sheriff of Cumberland, and in the year 1209, the said Alice, as his widow, paid a fine to the Crown for recovery of her dowry.

Reginald and his elder son William, married two half-sisters, who were wards of the Crown, and Devonshire heiresses, although in recent pedigrees of the family each has been given the wife who properly belonged to the other.

Reginald, whose second wife's name is still preserved in an existing deed, married Matilda, younger daughter of Maud, Baroness of Oakhampton in her own right, by her second marriage with Robert Fitz-Ede, a natural son of King Henry I.

William de Courtenay, as shown by the Exchequer Rolls, became the husband of his mother's elder half-sister, Avis, whose father, Robert D'Aincourt, had been the first husband of the Baroness of Okehampton.

William de Courtenay and Avis his wife issue Robert, their son and heir, who has been usually confounded with his uncle Robert, as stated above.

Avis de Courtenay, being then "*widow*" of *William* de Courtenay, died in the year 1209, on the thirty-first of July, and at her death, Robert de Courtenay, her son, inherited the Barony of Oakhampton. She had previously succeeded to her half-sister's moiety of the said barony, whose husband, Reginald de Courtenay, grandfather of the said Robert, had died on the twenty-seventh of September, 1194, and thus she was enabled to leave the whole barony to her said son.

Robert at once executed a deed in favour of the Okehampton burgesses, which is still extant, and by which their privileges are duly confirmed as they had them in the time of "Richard son of Baldwin" (De Brion), "Robert son of Reginald" (D'Aincourt), "and Maude de Abrincis his wife," and "Avis of Courtenay my mother."

This deed is witnessed by his uncle, Robert de Courtenay, Sheriff of Cumberland, who must have died very soon after. One great point in previous efforts to establish the connection between the French and English Courtenays has always been the similarity of their armorial bearings, which were apparently, but not really, identical.

The former commemorated in their arms the money of old Byzantium (Constantinople), for very obvious reasons, and bore "Gules, 3 bezants"; whilst the English family have invariably borne "Or, 3 torteaux," a coat which will be shown to have been derived at a much later date from Redvers, and which is exactly the reverse of the Byzantine coat, and constitutes a perfectly different bearing, although when carved in stone and uncoloured it would appear to be precisely similar.

The Earldom of Devon was given by Henry I, immediately after his accession to the throne, to his "trusty friend and counsellor," Richard Fitz-Gilbert, brother to that Baldwin de Brion, who had married Albreda, niece of William the Conqueror, and had received from his successful master the Barony of Okehampton, and the hereditary shrievalty of Devon.

This Baldwin was the great great grandfather of Avis and Maude, ultimately his co-heirs, and the respective wives of William and Reginald Courtenay.

Richard Fitz-Gilbert and his brother Baldwin, who were both at Hastings, were the sons of Gilbert, Earl of Brion, in Normandy, whose father, Godfrey, Earl of Owe, was an illegitimate son of Richard Le Bon, Duke of Normandy, and first cousin of Richard Fitz-Gilbert, son of Gilbert, officary Earl of Owe, a natural son of the duke, Richard, "Sans Peur," and this latter Richard Fitz-Gilbert was the ancestor of the House of Clare.

Richard Fitz-Gilbert, first Earl of Devon, who has been more than once previously confounded with his father's kinsman, Richard Fitz-Gilbert Clare, was one of the earliest Norman settlers this country, and although he did not receive at first such a large share of the plundered property of the Saxons, as fell to the lot of his brother Baldwin de Brion, yet he held six manors, as sub-tenant to the latter, five under the Earl of Mortaigne, uterine brother to King William; two, under William the Porter and Ralph de Pomeroy respectively, besides the Manor of Levaton in that part of the parish of Ipplepen (now Woodland), which was his own demesne in the year 1087.

He assumed the name of Richard de Ripariis, afterwards anglicized into Redvers, or less commonly, Rivers, and, as I have said, King Henry created him Earl of Devon, conferred upon him the lordship of Tiverton, which continued to be the principal seat of his descendants until the reign of Queen Mary, and also gave him the great barony of Plympton.

He married Adeliza or Alice, daughter and co-heir of William Fitz-Osborn, Earl of Hereford, and through this marriage he acquired the lordship of the Isle of Wight, and his successors were known as "Earls of Devon and Lords of the Isle" until the Countess Isabella sold the latter lordship to the Crown, shortly before her death in 1293.

Richard, first Earl of Devon, died in the year 1107; he was succeeded by his eldest son Baldwin "de Redvers," as second earl.

The latter, whose wife was also called Adeliza or Alice, founded several monasteries, notably those of Quarr, in the Isle of Wight, and the Priory of St. James, at Exeter. To the latter he gave, with other property, the Manor of Cotleigh, which his father had held under the Earl of Mortaigne at the time of the Domesday Survey.

He had several children, and one of them, a daughter Maud, married Ralph de Avenel, whose claim to the Barony of Okehampton was upset upon a writ of ejectment.

This Ralph de Avenel, who has been hitherto given a perfectly erroneous descent, was the son of William Fitz-Baldwin, son of Baldwin de Brion. The latter had three sons and two daughters; but of these, one son and two daughters only, proved to have a right to the Barony of Okehampton, and it is therefore more than probable that the Conqueror settled that property upon his niece Albreda and *her* heirs, and that William Fitz-Baldwin, the founder of Cowick Priory, and his brother Robert Fitz-Baldwin, Governor of Brion, in Normandy, were the sons of Baldwin de Brion, by a second marriage, which he has been always said to have contracted, although his second wife's name is still a mystery.

One of the younger sons of Baldwin de Redvers, second Earl of Devon, was known as "William de Vernon," so called because he was born at Vernon Castle, in Normandy, the seat of his grandfather, prior to his arrival in England, and who *had died in 1107*. He witnesses, as "William son of the Earl," his father's deeds in favour of St. James' Priory as early as 1143, and has been invariably confounded with "William de Vernon," sixth Earl of Devon, who died in 1217, and whose daughter Mary, married Robert Courtenay. This is manifestly absurd for several reasons, chief amongst them, that the first William de Vernon lived three generations previously to the said Robert Courtenay, and it is hardly likely that the latter took to wife a lady who was contemporary with his grandmother, and if, for any special reasons, he had been induced to do so, he would have naturally expected a speedy release from his matrimonial entanglement. But Sir Robert Courtenay lived until 1242, whilst his wife survived him many years, is believed to have married again, and it is certain that in her widowhood she at length took the veil and retired to the cloister.

Baldwin de Redvers, second Earl of Devon, died on the fourth of June, 1155, at Quarr, in the Isle of Wight, and was buried there.

He was succeeded by his eldest son, Richard de Redvers, whose wife is called "Dionisia," in a deed dated 1157, transcribed by Dugdale, and copied by Oliver. This is probably a mistake of the scribe for Hawisia, or Avis, since she bore the latter name, and was the daughter of Reginald, Earl of Cornwall, natural son of Henry I. By this lady he had a son and two daughters -- Maud, who married William de Romara, Earl of Lincoln, and Avis, wife of Sir Hugh Worthe, of Worth, in the parish of Washfield.

Amongst the Normans who settled in this county immediately after the Conquest, were three brothers, Ralph, Reginald, and Robert, who, in all probability, first came here with the Conqueror, on his march westward in the autumn of 1067, and in the immediate train of his trusted follower, William de Pollei.

The Domesday Record shows that, at the period of the Survey, 1080-1086, Ralph

and Reginald were settled at Witheridge, the latter being lord of that manor, under Robert, Earl of Mortaigne, whilst Ralph was also lord of the manor of Worth in Washfield.

"Worde," "Weorth," or Worthe, commonly written Worth, is an Anglo-Saxon term, which signifies an enclosed estate. Both Reginald and Robert also acquired property in Plymstock, and the greater portion of the lands of the three brothers was alike held under De Pollei, who had thus alienated, to sub-tenants, eight, of the twenty-one Devonshire manors, his royal master had given him out of the spoil of the conquered Saxons.

Reginald succeeded his brother Ralph at Worth. His eldest son, and successor there, was called after his other uncle, Robert, of Plymstock, and his posterity, at first "De Worthe," or "De la Worthe," in reference to their habitation, ultimately became known as "Worthe" without the prefix.

The said Reginald de Worthe received the honour of knighthood, and Sir Hugh Worthe of Worth, Kt., was fourth in descent from him.

Richard, third Earl of Devon, died in 1162, and was succeeded by his son, Baldwin de Redvers, as fourth earl. This Baldwin de Redvers married Adeliza or Alice, daughter and ultimate heir of Ralph de Doles, sometimes written Dale, of Berry, whose arms were, "Or, a lion rampant azure."

It has been invariably asserted, for some unaccountable reason, that he had "no issue by her, and that he was succeeded in the title by brother Richard, who also died childless, and thus the earldom came to their uncle, William Vernon"; but, in addition to the anachronism I have already explained, the existing armorial evidence assists to refute these statements. It seems perfectly clear, upon examination, that the fourth earl, who died almost immediately after his accession to the title, left two sons, Richard and William, and the latter, having been born at Vernon, was known as William de Vernon.

The mention by the latter, in a deed relating to Quarr Abbey, of "the Earl Baldwin my father, Adeliza my mother, and my senior brother Richard" has of course assisted the confusion as to his identity, since the William "de Vernon" who witnessed the St. James' charter in 1143 (two generations previously) was also the son of an Earl Baldwin whose wife was Adeliza or Alice, and he also had a senior brother Richard.

So Richard de Redvers, whose widowed mother married secondly Andrew de Chauvens, and died between 1199 - 1216 (at Egg Buckland, without further issue, when her Manor of King's Carswell, granted her upon her second marriage, reverted the Crown), succeeded his father (not brother) Baldwin as fifth earl, but only enjoyed his dignity for a short period. He died, childless, in 1166, although he had married Emma de Ponte Arche, and perhaps, subsequently, Margaret Bissett; therefore his

younger brother (not uncle), William de Vernon, came to the title as sixth earl.

This William de Vernon executed a deed, as earl, in favour of his cousin Robert, son of his aunt "Avis Worthe," and this deed is sealed with a seal of arms precisely similar to that subsequently adopted by the Courtenay Earls of Devon, viz, three roundels, surmounted by a label of three points, which have since been invariably blazoned "Or, three torteaux, a label of three points azure."

William de Vernon, sixth earl, married Mabel, daughter of the Earl of Mellent, and died on the tenth of September, 1217. He had three children -- Baldwin, who predeceased him on the first of September, 1216; Joan, who married William Brewer of Tor-Brewer, and died without issue; and Mary, the wife of Robert Courtenay.

Baldwin de Redvers, son of a father of the same name, by his wife Margaret Fitzgerald of Harewood, succeeded William de Vernon, his grandfather, as seventh earl. He married Amicia, daughter of Gilbert, Earl of Gloster, and died in 1245.

His son, also called Baldwin, then inherited the title and became the eighth earl of his name. By his wife, Avis of Savoy, he had an only child, John de Redvers, who predeceased him, and the eighth earl departed this life in the year 1261.

His only sister, Isabella de Redvers, had been the second wife of William de Fortz (commonly called De Fortibus), eighth earl of Albemarle, who had died in 1256, leaving issue by her, Thomas de Fortibus, his successor, who died unmarried before 1269; Avice, wife of Ingelram de Percy, who died a childless widow in her brother's lifetime; Avelina, wife of Edmund Plantagenet, Earl of Lancaster, who had no family either, and died in 1274.

At the death of Baldwin, the eighth earl, his sister the Countess of Albemarle, became Countess of Devon in her own right, and Lady of the Isle of Wight.

The latter lordship she is said to have ultimately sold to the Crown, and its purchase from her, by Edward I, was declared to Parliament in 1301. The alleged amount of the purchase money was six thousand marks, but the claim was not set up until after the death of the countess, and there have always been strong suspicions that no such sale really took place, and that the Crown became possessed of this island, which had been the heritage of the Redvers family, in succession to the Fitz-Osborns, since the time of the second earl, by fraudulent means.

The Countess Isabella survived her offspring, and as these had all died without children, she was the last of the Redvers line who held possession of the Earldom of Devon. She departed this life in the year 1293.

The Redvers family did not entirely become extinct with the death of Isabella de Fortibus. One branch of the Avenels, the descendants of Maud de Redvers, daughter of the second earl, flourished at Loxbeare, in the male line, until the reign of Henry

VI. The posterity of Maud, wife of the Earl of Lincoln, failed in or about 1195, but that of Avis, the other daughter of the third earl, by her husband, Sir Hugh Worthe, of Worth, in Washfield, held that same property, in the elder male line, until the death, without issue, of the late Reginald Worth, of Worth, on the twelfth of March 1880, and she still has direct male representatives, descended from the Worthes of Compton Pole, in the Parish of Marldon, an estate acquired by marriage with a co-heir of Sir John Doddescombe about 1347, and which, with land at Barnstaple, derived from Willington, likewise descended from Baldwin, second earl, was settled upon a second son, already referred to on a previous page. It is shown by family evidences and other records, that the final "e" was abandoned by the elder line in time of Anthony "Worth" of Worth, 1517. It was continued by the second house, of Compton Pole, until long after their migration to Crediton, and was ultimately changed into "y" by John, son of George Worthe, in the first half of the seventeenth century. This John "Worthy" was a Puritan, and one of the Parliamentary Commissioners for the County of Devon in 1647.

The Courtenays, as descendants of Mary de Redvers, daughter of the sixth earl, naturally laid claim to the earldom of Devon, and the whole of the Redvers property, upon the death of Countess Isabella.

Fierce opposition, however, was made to their claim. The Bishop of Exeter, Walter Stapledon, proved himself their bitter opponent, and for the long space of forty-three years the Courtenays were not permitted to assume the title, which remained dormant, until at last, by a peremptory order from the Crown, they obtained possession of it, on February the twenty-second, 1335.

It is difficult to understand why the Courtenay pretensions should have been so long opposed. Since a female had held the earldom, in the person of Isabella de Fortibus, the descendants of another female would naturally claim to succeed her; but had William de Vernon been the person genealogists have hitherto made him, and had the third earl left, as asserted hitherto, two issueless sons, then Lady Avis Worthe, or her son, Robert, would have succeeded the last of these, and William de Vernon and his posterity would never have inherited at all.

It was not until the latter portion of the reign of Henry III that heraldry became reduced to a science, and prior to this, although armorial ensigns were frequently assumed and used, and appear upon seals of early date, yet they were generally so assumed arbitrarily, and were not of necessity hereditary.

In after ages, however, the charges upon old seals were very often taken as evidence of ancient coat armour, and these charges were attributed, as real armorials, to people who had been long dead, and the use of them as hereditary armorials was confirmed by the heralds to their descendants.

It is certain, from seals still in existence, that the Earls of Devon, from the time of

Baldwin de Redvers, the second earl, down to William de Vernon, the sixth earl, possessed and used a seal which bore the device of a griffin trampling upon a small animal, like a dog; and the arms, therefore, which were in after years attributed to these earls, were founded upon this seal, and have since been blazoned "Gules, a griffin segreant or."

That William de Vernon, Earl of Devon, had a seal of his own, with a device similar to the arms now borne by the Courtenays, "Or, three torteaux, a label of three points azure," is also quite certain, as explained above.

There is no evidence that either of the seals I have described were used by their owners for any other purpose than to confirm their deeds and charters; but we are told by one old historian that Richard de Redvers, the fifth earl, took for arms "the blue lion," which was clearly derived from "Doles" or "Dale," and, as it is sufficiently evident now that his mother was "Alice, daughter and heir of Ralph de Doles," he very probably may have adopted her badge or cognisance, although, according to prevalent heraldic laws, he had no real right to do so in his said mother's lifetime.

According to the "Pedigrees of Nobility" (MS. Harl. 1441), Richard's great-grandson, who survived until 1261, first assumed this coat of Doles, "Or, a lion rampant azure "; and this is very probably because during the latter portion of this earl's lifetime the science of armory was much studied, and such ensigns had then become, or were fast becoming, hereditary. It is possible that William de Vernon adopted the seal, similar to the present Courtenay arms, to denote his affinity to Geoffry de Bouillon (for which reason, Gibbon suggests, the Courtenays themselves adopted them), who is said to have borne these arms in the Crusade in which he was famous. As for the "label," it has been invariably used to distinguish the eldest son, or elder line, since the fourteenth century, but labels constantly appear, as in the case of William de Vernon's seal, early in the thirteenth, and in the earliest examples they were not intended as a mark of cadency. The label is simply a representation of the iron prongs, or feet, "lambels," which were attached to the crosses carried by pilgrims, that they might erect them in the ground without any difficulty at their various halting places; and therefore it was naturally adopted by the Crusaders as a cognizance, on account of its association with the great emblem of the faith.

From the time of William de Vernon, 1217, we hear nothing more of the label on his seal until the year 1335. Robert Courtenay, grandson of Reginald de Courtenay, succeeded, as I have said, to the Barony of Okehampton at the death of his mother, Avis, widow of William Courtenay, on the thirty-first of July, 1209. He used a seal of arms, as shown by his charter to the burgesses of Okehampton, already referred to, precisely similar to those now borne by the municipality of Okehampton, and which have been assigned to Baldwin de Brion, the first Baron of Okehampton and the great-great-grandfather of the said Robert's mother, Avis -- "Chequy or and azure, over all two bars arg."



Robert married, as I have said, Mary, youngest daughter of William de Redvers, of Vernon, sixth earl of Devon, and the arms of his mother's family -- his assumption of which clearly shows that in 1209 he had no knowledge of any armorials to which he was entitled on his father's side, that is, in right of Courtenay -- are on the right, or dexter side of the seal, space being left on the sinister side for his wife's arms, the marshalling of which should at that period have been effected by "dimidiation." But the sinister side of the shield on this seal is left perfectly blank, which proves further, that his wife, Mary, had not then adopted any device, heraldic or otherwise, although a seal of her mother-in-law, Avis de Courtenay, exhibits the figure of a woman standing, which, however, has no armorial significance.

Robert Courtenay had two brothers, William and Reginald. He served the office of Sheriff of Devon in 1232, and was also Sheriff of Oxford. He died at his Manor of Iwerne Courtenay, County Dorset, on the twenty-sixth of July, 1242, and his body was brought to Devonshire and was interred at Ford Abbey.

His widow, who ultimately inherited the property of her sister, Joan de Briwere, is said to have married a second husband, Peter Prou, Lord of Gidleigh, but there is no absolute evidence of this. It is certain, however, that she was for many years a widow, professed as a nun, and became Abbess of Quarr, in the Isle of Wight, which had, at first, a nunnery adjacent to the abbey. She was subsequently Abbess of Pratelles, in Normandy, with which her mother's family, the Mellents, were connected.

Sir Robert Courtenay left very little property. By Mary, his wife, he had two sons and a daughter; the latter, called Avis, after her grandmother, was married to John Neville. He was succeeded in the Barony of Okehampton by his eldest son, John Courtenay, who married Isabella, daughter of Hugh de Vere, Earl of Oxford, died in 1273, and was buried at Ford Abbey.

Sir Hugh Courtenay, Knight, their son and heir, born 1250, took to wife Eleanor, daughter of Hugh De Spencer. She died in 1238, and her husband was laid by her side in the conventual church of Cowick, February, 1291, just previously to the death of Isabella de Fortibus, Countess of Devon and Albemarle.

Hugh de Courtenay, his eldest son, had been born in 1275, and duly succeeded to the Barony of Okehampton, and, immediately upon the death of the said Isabella de Fortibus, he took possession of Tiverton Castle and of the rest of the Redvers property, as heir of his great-grandmother, Mary, he being then, through her, the representative of William Redvers, of Vernon, sixth Earl of Devon; and he also laid claim to the earldom.

But, as I have said already, his claim to this dignity met with much opposition, and the authorities, both in this county and elsewhere, declined either to pay him the "dues," or to recognize the title of Earl of Devon, which he had ventured to assume,

so the dignity was virtually dormant for more than forty years.

By his wife Agnes, daughter of Lord St. John, he had four sons and two daughters, and the second of his sons, Sir Hugh Courtenay, married Margaret de Bohun, daughter of Humphry, Earl of Hereford, and granddaughter, through her mother Elizabeth Plantagenet, of King Edward I.

This marriage naturally increased the Courtenay influence at Court, so on the twenty-second of 1335, the aforesaid Hugh Courtenay, of Okehampton, became Earl of Devon, by of a peremptory order from the King, Edward III, and which was addressed to the Sheriff of Devon, from the Court then at Newcastle-upon-Tyne. He died in 1340.

His eldest son John Courtenay had been admitted into Holy Orders at Crediton, on the twenty-third of March, 1313, although his reasons for having adopted the clerical profession have always been incomprehensible. He had become Abbot of Tavistock in 1334, but he is described as having been throughout his career, "very vain and much addicted to dress," and to some other more reprehensible "pomps and vanities of this wicked world."

He permitted "feasting and revelry" in the private chambers of the Abbey, and, as shown by our Episcopal Registers, he was more than once censured by the Bishop of Exeter, for riotous living, and he involved the community over which he presided, to the extent of over £1,300, an enormous amount in those days.

He survived until 1349, and upon his father's death, he succeeded, nominally, to the Barony of Okehampton, but he was passed over in the succession to the Earldom, which was conferred upon his brother Hugh, whose wife, Lady Elizabeth Bohun, was the king's cousin.

This illustrious Peer, one of the original Knights of the Garter, had a large family.

His sixth son, Sir Philip Courtenay, was seated at Powderham, which estate had been his mother's dowry. He built the castle there, early in the reign of Richard II.

Another of the sons, William, became Archbishop of Canterbury.

Another, Sir Peter, was Constable of Windsor, grand standard bearer, and chamberlain. He died in 1405, and lies buried in Exeter Cathedral.

The Earl's eldest son, Sir Hugh Courtenay, born 1327, was summoned to Parliament, as Baron Courtenay, in 1371. He left a son Hugh, who married Matilda, daughter of Joan Plantagenet, daughter of Edmund, Earl of Kent, by her second husband, Thomas Holland. Her third husband was the Black Prince.

But both Lord Courtenay, and his only son, predeceased the earl, who, in conse-

quence of the failure of his grandson's issue, was succeeded at his death, in 1377, by another grandson, Edward Courtenay, elder brother of Sir Hugh Courtenay, of Haccombe and Boconnoc, and son of Edward Courtenay, of Godlington, who had also died in his father's lifetime.

This Edward, born in 1357, was Admiral of the King's Fleet, and some time Earl Marshal of England. He subsequently had the misfortune to lose his eyesight, and is known in history as the "blind earl."

Genealogists have held divided opinions as to the mother of his children, since Mills has stated that his wife was Eleanor, daughter of the Earl of March; and Brooke, York Herald (than whom there cannot be a more untrustworthy authority, since he would have said or written anything that first occurred to him in opposition to Vincent or Camden), agrees with Mills.

But the Roll of Parliament, first Edward IV, shows conclusively that "Eleanor, second daughter of Roger Mortimer, died childless," and other evidence, of equal value, goes to prove that she was never the wife of the earl, who was two generations her senior, but of his young son Edward, who predeceased him.

There was once armorial evidence at Tiverton, which confirmed the marriage of the earl, as set down in most of the pedigrees of his family, to Matilda, daughter of Thomas Lord Camoys, but can hardly have been the mother of his children, since the eldest of these, Edward, was knighted in 1399, and the second of them, Hugh, who succeeded to the earldom, was "aged thirty at his father's death," and must therefore have been born in 1389.

Matilda Camoys, without any doubt a second wife, and very much her husband's junior, survived the earl forty-eight years, and died in 1467, as proved by the "Inquisition" taken after her decease -- seventh Edward IV, No. 4.

The second son of the "blind earl," Hugh Courtenay, succeeded his father on the fifth of December, 1419. He was also a distinguished naval officer, and Lord High Steward of England. He married a daughter of the Lord Talbot, and was followed by his son, Thomas, in 1422, who married Margaret Beaufort.

Up to this time, through all the long period of two hundred and seventy years, the English Courtenays had been uniformly fortunate, whilst those of their name in France had been equally notorious for their miseries and troubles.

Peter of Courtenay had, as we have seen, ascended the throne of Constantinople in 1217, but two years later he had died in captivity, and during the succeeding years, and until their final expulsion in 1261, his sons had certainly done nothing to redeem the prestige of their family.

The short reign of Robert de Courtenay, the eldest of these, was little but a record of

calamity and disgrace.

His brother Baldwin, associated during his minority with John of Brienne, ruled alone after the year 1237, and then immediately commenced that "remarkable series of mendicant progresses" which have rendered his name memorable. He came to England on two occasions, but on his first visit he was stopped at Dover, and received a present of seven hundred marks, on condition of immediate departure from these shores.

During the whole of the twenty-five years of his reign he was reduced to the direst extremities for want of money, He dissipated the whole of the residue of his grandmother's dowry, which had come into his hands, until he had literally nothing but the Marquisate of Namur, and the Lordship of Courtenay, both of which he endeavoured to alienate.

But Louis IX objected very strongly to the sale of Courtenay Castle, and it was ultimately annexed to the royal demesne. Baldwin, however, contrived to obtain a considerable sum from his royal kinsman, which he frittered away in useless expeditions.

When in his palace at Constantinople, he tore down neighbouring houses, in order that he might use their materials for winter-fuel; and he stripped the lead from the roofs of the churches, in order to provide for his daily expenses.

He at length raised some small loans, at usurious interest, from the Italian merchants, and at that time "pledged" his son and heir Philip, who was left at Venice as security for the debt.

Constantinople was rich in "relics," and, after one or two previous redemptions, the "Holy Crown of Thorns" was finally sent to Paris in exchange for a sum of ten thousand silver marks.

"A large and authentic portion of the true Cross; the baby-linen of the Son of God; the lance, sponge, and other instruments of the Passion; the rod of Moses, and a portion of the skull of John the Baptist," soon rejoined their ancient companion, the "Crown of Thorns," in its new resting-place in the Gallic capital; and the money received for them was unfortunately quickly spent.

Such a state of things could not last for ever; the Latins were encompassed on every side, and in 1261 Michael Palaeologus marched, into Constantinople, and the Emperor Baldwin de Courtenay fled to Italy, where he died in 1274.

The line of the Counts of Edessa had failed with that Joscelin de Courtenay, who had "vanished" in the fall of Jerusalem, and his name, as Gibbon tells us, had been lost by the marriages of his two daughters "with a French and a German baron."

As for the many younger descendants of Peter and Elizabeth Courtenay, his wife, they all sank lower and lower in the social scale, and after the death of Robert, Great Butler of France, they passed, from princes, to barons.

The next generations were amalgamated with the simple gentry of Tanlay and of Champignelles. Some were soldiers, and some, those of the branch of Dreux, were merely of the condition of husbandmen or paupers.

They kept up their traditions, however, in one or other of their branches, and on the accession of the Bourbons these strenuously asserted the royalty of their descent, and, one of them having been accused of murder, in 1616, claimed to be tried as a "prince of the blood."

All their petitions, however, were scornfully rejected, one after the other, by the French government, and their "hopeless pursuit of honours" was terminated by the decease of last male of their name, Charles Roger de Courtenay, in 1730; and the title of "Princess of the Blood Royal," which had been assumed by Helene de Courtenay, Marchioness de Beaufremont, was suppressed by an edict of the Parliament of Paris, on the seventh of February, 1737.

And these reverses of the French Courtenays had long cast a sort of melancholy halo around their name, when Thomas, Earl of Devon, succeeded his father at Tiverton in 1422, and with him began a succession of misfortunes for the English house, which may indeed be said to have lingered with it ever since, and which supports the prevalent idea as to the repetition of history.

Thomas, Earl of Devon, being allied to the family of Beaufort, was naturally devoted to the of the house of Lancaster. He died at the Abbey of Abingdon, from the effects, as it is believed, of poison, whilst in attendance on Henry VI, on the third of February, 1458, at a meeting had been arranged in the vain hope of effecting a reconciliation between the adverse parties.

His eldest son, also called Thomas, held the earldom but three years. He was taken prisoner at the bloody battle of Towton, and was immediately afterwards attainted and executed, his head being set over the gates of York.

His brother, Henry, never succeeded to the title, as the attainder was not removed, yet Edward IV permitted him to enjoy a portion of the family property, as a means of procuring his adherence to the Yorkist cause. But Henry retained the principles of his father and brother, engaged in a conspiracy against the King, and was beheaded at Salisbury, on the fourth of March, 1466.

Then Tiverton Castle was given to Humphry Stafford, of Southwick, who was created Earl of Devon on the seventeenth of May, 1470, but he was beheaded by his own party for desertion, three months subsequently.

John Courtenay, youngest brother of Henry, regained possession of the earldom, and estates pertaining to it, during the temporary restoration of the Lancastrians, but he fell, sword in hand, at Tewkesbury, together with his kinsman, the second Courtenay of Boconnoc, on the fourteenth of May, 1471. Thus the three brothers and their cousin sealed their fidelity to the Red Rose, and thus expired the line of Edward Courtenay, "the Blind Earl."

Immediately after the Battle of Bosworth, Henry VII restored the estates to Edward, grandson of Sir Hugh Courtenay, of Haccombe and Boconnoc, brother of the blind earl, and who was therefore heir-at-law. He was created Earl of Devon by patent, "to him and the heirs male of his body," on the twenty-sixth of October, 1485.

This earl married his cousin, Elizabeth, daughter of Sir Philip Courtenay, of Molland, and was the father of Sir William Courtenay, created a Knight of the Bath at the coronation of Henry VII.

This Sir William Courtenay took to wife Katherine Plantagenet, daughter of King Edward IV, and youngest sister of Elizabeth, King Henry's queen.

It was a most unfortunate marriage; Henry VII soon became jealous of his brother-in-law, and shut him up in the Tower, "to keep him out of harm's way," and in the Tower he, and his son and grandson, practically resided, as prisoners.

For although the Princess Katherine, or, as princesses were called in those days, the Lady Katherine, was the youngest sister, yet, as the intermediate sisters had no children, the Courtenays came very near to the succession to the Crown. So in the Tower Sir William remained, through the reign of the first Tudor monarch.

Henry VIII released his uncle from captivity, and intended to restore him to the earldom, which he had forfeited by his attainder. The letters patent were made out for this purpose on the tenth of May, 1511, but he was never "invested," and he died at Greenwich, of pleurisy, within a month of that date.

By the express commands of the King, he was buried with the honours of an earl, to which dignity his son Henry, the King's first cousin, succeeded, and the latter was further elevated to the Marquessate of Exeter, on the eighteenth of June, 1525. Fourteen years afterwards he was attainted, imprisoned in the Tower, and beheaded on the ninth of June, 1539.

His mother, the Princess Katherine, usually resided either at Colcombe Castle, in the Parish of Colyton, or else at Tiverton Castle, often in great poverty. There are still traditions in Devonshire as to the "quiet, proud, gentle lady," who used to walk about Tiverton with her little daughter Margaret, who, folks say, was choked by a fishbone in 1512, and lies buried at Colyton.

This tradition is supported by an inscription on the tomb at Colyton, of much later

date, which sets forth that the said "Margaret was the daughter of William Courtenay, *Earl of Devon*, and the Princess Katherine, and that she died at Colcombe, choked by a fishbone, A.D. 1512.

But Margaret Courtenay is mentioned in the will of her grandfather, which was proved in the Prerogative Court of Canterbury on the eleventh of July, 1509, and this lady is also mentioned by her mother in a document dated 1511 (3rd Henry VIII), and signed "Kath. Devonshire," in which she states that Margaret, her daughter, is now above thirteen years of age, and that she proposes "to procure for her a fitting marriage."

This was found for her, in the person of Henry, Lord Herbert, eldest son of Charles Somerset, Earl of Worcester; and she was living at Richmond, in attendance on the infant Princess Mary, on the second of July, 1520. She died before her husband, who married, secondly, Elizabeth, daughter of Sir Anthony Browne.

So we can only conclude that the inscription at Colyton is a mendacious inscription, and was invented to support the tradition about "little chokebone," as the "natives" call her, and which, like many other traditions about the Courtenays, can have had no foundation in fact.

Edward Courtenay, the only surviving son of the Marquess of Exeter, by his second wife, Gertrude Blount, daughter of the Lord Mountjoy, was only twelve years old at the time of his father's execution. The King kept him in the Tower, a close prisoner, during the remainder of his reign, and there he continued all through that of Edward VI.

When Mary came to the throne she was at once attracted by the personal appearance of her young kinsman, then twenty-six years old. The portraits of him still extant show that he must have been of tall and slight figure, with a typical Courtenay face, and that he had a very plentiful supply of natural light brown hair.

During the whole of his unhappy life, he had scarcely enjoyed two years of liberty, until the Queen first saw, and loved him; but Mary was eleven years his senior, whilst her sister, who came her to the Tower, was then only twenty years of age; it can scarcely be wondered at that Courtenay, whilst paying, as in duty bound, the greatest deference to the Queen, secretly preferred Elizabeth.

So that, although Mary at once restored him to his estates and created him Earl of Devon, "to him and his heirs male for ever," on the third of September, 1553, he seems to have carried on a private flirtation with Elizabeth, and to have actually pledged his faith to her.

Mary was indeed angry when she heard of this intrigue with her sister: had she not been, she could scarcely have been her father's daughter; and her indignation was

increased by the rising of the Carews in Devonshire, and by the accusations of Sir Thomas Wyat.

So Courtenay and Elizabeth were both committed to the Tower, and the earl saved himself by repudiating any idea of serious intentions towards the princess.

Mary never disgraced him, but she declined to see him again; and Elizabeth detested the very name of Courtenay ever afterwards.

The unfortunate youth asked permission to travel, and this was accorded him by the Queen. He went through France to Italy, and ultimately arrived at Padua, where he died, on the fourth of October, 1556. It has been always believed that he was poisoned on suspicion of being a Lutheran.

At his death, the estates at Tiverton, Okehampton, and elsewhere, were divided amongst representatives of the four daughters of Sir Hugh Courtenay, of Haccombe and Boconnoc, the nieces of Edward, the "Blind Earl."

By an Inq. P.M., 3rd and 4th Philip and Mary, these were found to be "Reginald Mohun, Alexander Arundell, John Vivian the younger, Margaret, wife of Richard Buller, and John Trelawny."

"Reginald Mohun" was great-great-grandson of William Mohun, of Hall, and of his wife, Isabell Courtenay. In the partition of property he acquired Okehampton Castle, and two-fourths of its manor. He was created a baronet in 1612, and his son, Sir John Mohun, was raised to the peerage, as Baron Mohun of Okehampton, on the fifteenth of April, 1628.

The fifth Lord Mohun was killed in a duel with the Duke of Hamilton, in 1712. He left an only daughter, Mary, who married the second Lord Doneraile, and was ancestress of the present peer.

"Alexander Arundell," of Talverne, was great-grandson of Sir John Arundell, and of Maud Courtenay. His grandson, Sir Thomas Arundell, married Bridget, niece of the aforesaid Sir Reginald Mohun, Bart., and their great-grandson, Robert Arundell, was the last male of this branch of the Arundell family. His representative, Elizabeth Lydia, wife of Mr. W. H. Shippard, declared herself to be the "senior co-heir of the line of Edward, Earl of Devon."

"John Vivian the younger" was the son of John Vivian and of Elizabeth, eldest daughter and co-heir of Thomas Tretherffe, who was the grandson of John Tretherffe and of his wife, Elizabeth Courtenay. The latter is called, in a pedigree entered at Heralds' College, 1531, "first daughter of Hugh Courtenay." John Vivian was the ancestor of Sir V.D. Vyvian, Bart., of Trelowarren.

"Margaret, wife of Richard Buller," was younger sister of Elizabeth Vivian, and



therefore the other co-heir of Thomas Tretherffe. She married, first, Edward Courtenay, of Wotton, by whom she had a son Peter, ancestor of the Courtenays long of Landrake. Through her second marriage with "Richard Buller," of Tregarrick, she became the ancestress of the Bullers of Shillingham and Downes; and General Sir Redvers H. Buller, V.C., K.C.B., of Downes, is tenth in direct descent from her.

"John Trelawny" was the great-grandson of a Trelawny of the same name, by his wife Florence Courtenay; their marriage settlement is dated 1468 (8th Edward IV). He married Anne Reskymer and was the grandfather of John Trelawny, of Trelawne, created a baronet on the first of July, 1628. The present baronet is thirteenth in descent from Florence Courtenay, and is now the only direct male heir of either of the four daughters of Sir Hugh Courtenay, of Boconnoc, the grandson of an elder brother of Sir Philip Courtenay.

But the male descendants of that Sir Philip Courtenay, of Powderham and Moreton Hampstead, sixth son of Hugh, Earl of Devon, and Lady Margaret Bohun, the first King Edward's granddaughter, were still flourishing in the riverside home of their ancestors in 1556.

During the preceding one hundred and sixty-five years they had preserved their estates and local position. They had intermarried with the Hungerfords, the Bonvilles, the Edgcumbes, the Pouletts, and with many of the most popular West Country families besides.

They had given sheriffs to Devonshire, knights to the Wars and to Parliament, bishops to Exeter and Norwich, and still occupied the social position to which their ancestry entitled them; their connection, moreover, with the elder line had been always remembered, and there had been constant intercourse between them and their kinsfolk at Tiverton; and when the news of the Earl's death came home from Italy, Sir William Courtenay, of Powderham, was "heir male" to Edward, his faraway kinsman, and the rightful inheritor of earldom.

But Sir William was killed at the siege of St. Quentin in the following year, 1557, and his son and successor, also called William, was at that time only four years old.

He grew up to man's estate, was High Sheriff of Devon, and he it was who is said to have drawn his sword upon the judge at Exeter, and to have threatened to "make his Lordship's body as red as his scarlet gown."

His first wife, and the mother of his family, was Elizabeth, daughter of Henry, Earl of Rutland; and he lived all through the reigns of Elizabeth and James, and far into that of Charles I.

For a good many years of his life he resided in Ireland, as one of the "undertakers" for the settlement of that country. He obtained a grant of Newcastle, with a large

quantity of the confiscated land of the Earl of Desmond, and thus laid the foundation of the great Limerick property which has since been enjoyed by his descendants.

He died in 1630, and never made any attempt to recover the earldom. It is not clear that he knew anything about his right to it. The estates, which had descended with it from the commencement of the twelfth century, had been dispersed, as I have shown, amongst Mohuns, Arundells, Tretherffes, and Trelawnys, and their descendants; and Elizabeth had a rancorous hatred for the memory of the last earl.

It is true that the Powderham property and its dependencies would have amply supported the dignity of the ancient title, had Powderham's lord acquired it; but this he failed to do, and James I, upon his accession, made Charles Blount, Lord Mountjoy, Earl of Devon, by patent, on the twentyfirst of July, 1603. This creation, however, fortunately became extinct again in 1606.

Sir William's son, Francis, predeceased him. His grandson, Sir William Courtenay, was created a baronet in 1644, but is reported to have disdained the title"; at all events, he never assumed it. He married Margaret, daughter of Sir William Waller, the Parliamentary general, by his wife, the heiress of Reynell of Ford; and thus acquired the Wolborough estates, which have since been developed into the extremely valuable property at Newton Abbot.

His grandson, however, styled himself "second baronet"; he was also Member of Parliament for Devon. By his wife, Lady Ann Bertie, he had two surviving sons, William, and Henry Reginald.

The first of these became Viscount Courtenay ten days only before his death, by patent dated the sixth of May, 1762.

The viscounty expired with his grandson, who never married, but whose claim to the Earldom of Devon, created by Queen Mary, was admitted by the House of Lords on the fifteenth of March, 1831, and it was found then that all his predecessors, from the time of Sir William, the hero of St. Quentin, had been really Earls of Devon, although the title had been dormant for the long period of two hundred and seventy-five years.

The earl died in May, 1835, when, although the viscounty became extinct, the greater honour, together with the baronetcy, passed to William Courtenay, his second cousin, son of Henry Reginald Courtenay, Bishop of Exeter, and grandson of Henry Reginald Courtenay, M.P., brother of the first viscount.

And thus this ancient earldom has fallen into the possession of its present owners; and nothing can be more singular than have been the vicissitudes of the Courtenay race, in its three lines of Edessa, of Constantinople, and of England. Whether the latter branch has any real connection with the two former, matters little now; the Eng-

lish Courtenays do not require the proof of such a connection to add lustre to their name, which long since became identified with the history of England, first as Barons of Okehampton, then as Earls of Devon, and as soldiers, as statesmen, as Royal councillors, as prelates, and as mates for the daughters of our proudest English nobles and for Royalty as well.

The fortunes and misfortunes of the English Courtenays are equalled only by those of their French namesakes; but, unlike the latter, the former have always been enabled to stem the tide of adversity, and to keep themselves on the surface of the most troubled waters. Often indeed have they been made to realise the signification of their famous motto, "Ubi lapsus quid feci?" but their falls have hitherto been invariably the precursors of fresh splendour, and, like Phoenix, they have "revived from their ashes" to continue the nobility of their illustrious name.

And they have always been popular with their fellow-men, always easy and light-hearted under the most depressing conditions of their varied fortunes; ever given, each in his generation, to hospitality and to acts of neighbourly kindness. "Truest friend and noblest foe."