

THE TOLLEMACHES OF BENTLEY.

BY MRS. CHARLES ROUNDELL.

(Daughter of the late Wilbraham Tollemache of Dorfold Hall, Cheshire.)

The well-known couplet—

“Before the Normans into England came,*

“Bentley was my seat and Tollemache was my name.”

—is said to have been carved upon the manor-house at Bentley, near Ipswich, which was the ancient home of the Tollemache family.

It has been thought that the family can be traced back to a lord of Bentley in the sixth century; though no historical evidence can be produced for such a fact; and that the name of Tollemache was derived from two Anglo-Saxon words, *tal*, a reckoning, and *maca*, a controller of taxes. But the name in Domesday is “Toedmag,” which is not in favour of such a derivation.

The spelling of the name has undergone many changes; in early days it was Thalemasche or Talemasche; later it was Tallmash, then Talmash, and finally it was Tollemache. In the United States the name exists as Talmage.

There is said to be a record of a fine paid to the authorities at Ipswich by Hugh Talemasche in the reign of Henry the third, in acknowledgment of the freedom from taxes granted to himself and the villeins employed by him at Bentley.†

A branch of the Tollemache family apparently settled at Hawsted, near Bury St. Edmund's. One member of this family, William Talmache of Hawsted, left a widow

* Or, “When William the Conqueror reigned with great fame.”

† See *Suffolk Feet of Fines* by Walter Rye; Kirby's *Suffolk Traveller*, “Bentley;” 57 Hen. iii.; 14 and 15 Edw. i.; 23 Edw. i.; 4 Edw. ii.; 6 Edw. ii.; 7 Edw. ii.; 9 Rich. ii. The Grant is printed in the *Proceedings of the Suffolk Institute of Archaeology*, vol. iii., p. 356. See Gage's *Thingoe Hundred*, p. 426.

known as "the Ladye Cecilia," who died in 1281.* The accounts of the expenditure at this lady's funeral were kept by her son, William, assisted by her chaplain; and, considering the value of money in 1281, the sum required was very large. Masses and ringings for the repose of the lady's soul were ordered to continue for months. Each mass was to cost twopence, and every ringing (when everyone who heard the bells was expected to offer a prayer for the lady's soul) cost fourpence. The body of the Ladye Cecilia was embalmed by the *candelario*, or chandler, of Bury St. Edmund's, with "wax and divers spices," after which it was "attired with fine linen, and silk, and all other necessaries." Wax tapers were provided for those who joined in the funeral procession; some of the guests were supplied with black coats bordered with fur, others were given suits of cloth; and the Ladye Cecilia, with womanly forethought, gave special orders that the clothes of all poor persons attending her funeral should be mended at her expense. Her executors gave a funeral feast, for which they provided meat and game, fowls and geese, rabbits, salt-fish, fresh herrings, pike, carp, and eels, with a supply of wine and beer. Cups and dishes were supplied for the use of the mourners; bread was distributed to the poor, and fine flour was given to the rich to be made into rolls called mortarrels.

The Ladye Cecilia left two sons, and they acquired several manors near Hawsted. In 1393, Alice, daughter of William Talmache of Hawsted, married William de Bokenham, and she inherited Hawsted. Her son, John de Bokenham, had no children, and in the year 1448 he sold all his family property in and about Hawsted, "to one John Marshall for the sum of CX Pounds of good and lawful money."

Towards the middle of the fifteenth century John Tollemache of Bentley, married Ann Louth, daughter and heiress of Roger Louth of Sawtrey, in Huntingdonshire.

* History and Antiquities of Hawsted, by Rev. Sir John Cullum, Bart., F.R.S., 1784. See *Suffolk Feet of Fines*, 7 Edw. iii.

This John Tollemache and his wife, Ann, had one son whom they named Lionel, who was afterwards known as Lionel Tollemache of Bentley. He married Edyth Joyce, the heiress of Helmingham, and was the first of seven successive owners of Helmingham, all named Lionel, all but one of whom married heiresses.

The old hall at Bentley, and most of the Bentley estate, passed away from the Tollemache family at some period which is not distinctly known. There is a tradition that one of the owners of Helmingham gambled away every acre at Bentley which the plough could turn up, and this tradition seems to be confirmed by the fact that, until the year 1895, when the Hon. Stanhope Tollemache (son of the first Lord Tollemache of Helmingham), re-purchased Bentley, the only property there which still belonged to the family consisted of two large woods called Portland Grove and Plymouth Grove.* But the identity of the alleged gambler has never been ascertained.

There are no monuments in Bentley church connected with the Tollemache family. The name is only mentioned on the tomb of a gentleman called Tollemache Duke, who died in 1690; and of his son, a second Tollemache Duke, who died unmarried, aged twenty-three, in the year 1713.

* These were only granted to Lionel Talmage 36.Hen.viii., on the dissolution of the Priory of the Holy Trinity at Ipswich.