

THE TOLLEMACHES OF HELMINGHAM

Helmingham has been occupied as a dwelling-place from the earliest times. Romano-British, perhaps even Celtic, skeletons have been discovered there in great numbers; and close to one of these skeletons lay a coin of Vespasian, the Roman Emperor who reigned A.D. 70.

There are traces at Helmingham of a Roman villa, with its *hyprocaust*, or heating apparatus, and it is believed that after the Romans were finally driven out of East Anglia, a British farm was established within the present park.

Helmingham is situated nine miles north-west of Ipswich, and, according to Domesday Book, it was one of the estates granted by William the Conqueror to his brother Odo, the Bishop of Bayeux.

The first house or hall at Helmingham was built in the twelfth century, by one Bartholomew Creke; and this hall, with a considerable estate, came into the possession of William Joyce. Edith Joyce, the daughter and heiress of William Joyce, married Lionel Tollemache of Bentley, towards the end of the fourteenth century.

The arms of the family of Creke, a lion *rampant*, with those of Tollemache, a fret, are still to be seen on the ancient gate-house which overlooks the moat at Helmingham. Above the door is the wolf *salient* of the house of Louth (of which family Lionel Tollemache's mother was the heiress), with the three silver scallop shells borne by the family of Joyce, to which his wife Edith belonged.*

Creke Hall was demolished, and a new house, the present Helmingham Hall, surrounded then, as now, by

* The coats of arms alluded to above, may thus be heraldicry, described Creke, Or, a lion rampant azure, double-queued within a bordure gules—Tollemache, Argent, a fret sable—Joyce, Argent, on a chevron per pale gules and azure three escallops of the field.

its wide moat full of clear water, and approached then, as now, by its drawbridge, was built by Lionel Tollemache and his wife Edith, about the year 1512.

They had already built, at a cost of thirty pounds, the fine embattled tower, with a high indented parapet, of Helmingham Church. The beautiful peal of eight bells was placed in the tower by Wilbraham, sixth Earl of Dysart, who died in 1821.

The advowson of Helmingham Rectory is in the gift of the Lord Chancellor.

The first child of Lionel and Edith Tollemache was born about 1490. In 1513 Lionel Tollemache was High Sheriff of Norfolk and Suffolk (then one undivided county), and he filled that office a second time in 1531. He became a judge, an honour which is recorded on his tomb in Helmingham Church, and one which has never been attained by any of his numerous descendants.

In 1545, part of the property of the disendowed Priory of Black Canons at Dodneis, in the parish of Bentley, was granted to Lionel Tollemache. The entire possessions of this monastery had been appropriated by Cardinal Wolsey (himself a Suffolk man), and Lionel Tollemache now received the manor of Bentley, including the glebe lands and the large woods.

Edith Tollemache died in 1545. There is a portrait of her at Helmingham, in which she is represented in a black gown worn over a pale pink petticoat, and her dark hair is nearly concealed by a white coif.

Lionel Tollemache married a second time. His second wife was Elizabeth, widow of Sir Peter Tylney. It seems probable that Sir Peter belonged to the family of Tilney of Ashwellthorpe in Norfolk.

Lionel Tollemache, of Bentley and Helmingham, died in 1552 or 1553. There is a small portrait of him in the library at Helmingham, representing him as an old man with a white beard.

The effigy of this Lionel Tollemache (who may be distinguished from his many namesakes, as Lionel Tolle-

mache the Judge), appears on the lofty tomb which was erected against the north wall of the nave of Helmingham church, by his great-grandson in 1615. This striking monument, untouched and uninjured, remains still in its original place. Lionel Tollemache the Judge, and his four successive descendants are each represented by a coloured figure on the tomb. The Judge is kneeling, his hands clasped in prayer. His hair is long and curled, and he has a beard. He wears a white ruff, and the long black robe, which indicates his legal profession is partly covered by a dark cloak edged with gold. The Judge wears no sword.

Under his effigy are these lines :—

Baptized Lionel, Tollemache my Name.
 Since Norman Conquest of unsoyled Fame.
 Shews my Descent from Ancestors of Worth.
 And that my Lyfe might not belye my Birth
 Their Vertues Track with heedful Steps I trod,
 Rightfull to Man : Religious toward God.
 Trained in the Law I gained the Bar and Bench.
 Ne'er bent to kindle Strife but rather Quench.
 Gentle to Clients, In my Counsels just.
 With Norfolk's great Duke* in no little Trust.
 Sir Joyce his Heir was my fair faithfull Wyfe.
 Bentley my Seat, and Seventy Years my Lyfe.

The second Lionel Tollemache, the son of the Judge married Dorothy Wentworth, daughter and heiress of Sir Richard Wentworth of Nettlestead, in Suffolk. Lionel Tollemache was High Sheriff of Norfolk and Suffolk in 1567.

It was at one time believed that this Lionel Tollemache entertained Queen Elizabeth at Helmingham, and that she was godmother to his son, presenting the child with her own lute. But this visit has no foundation in fact. Queen Elizabeth did visit a place in Essex called *Hedingham* in 1561, but she never was a guest at *Helmingham*.

The lute which used to be shown as Queen Elizabeth's is undoubtedly of later origin, but there is no date on any

* Thomas Howard, second Duke of Norfolk, married in 1472 Elizabeth, daughter and heiress of Sir Frederick Tilney, of Ashwellthorpe.

part of it. The lute is preserved at Helmingham under a glass case, and looks like a large guitar. It once had ten strings, and the curious keys used for regulating them still remain. The lute is made of richly coloured dark wood, and this is inlaid with a lighter wood in intricate patterns. In the middle of the lute is a perforated ornament, and in the centre of this ornament there is a circle of very small rubies and pearls, arranged alternately. Round the sides of the lute is an inscription inlaid in the light-coloured wood: on one side the word CYM . BA . LUM: on the other DECA . CHOR . DON, in reference to the original ten strings. At the bottom of the lute is a very large cockle-shell of wood, with fluted ribs, and worked in high relief.

Lionel Tollemache died in his seventy-fourth year, and was buried at Helmingham, on the 20th of January, 1571. His effigy forms the central figure on the great mural monument in Helmingham Church. He is represented kneeling, dressed in a suit of black armour, slightly relieved with gilt decoration; his sword in its scabbard is suspended from his belt by long straps, with buckles at intervals. Above his figure is the Tollemache fret, impaling the coat of Wentworth of Nettlestead, *sable*, a cheyron between three leopards faces *or*. Under Lionel Tollemache's effigy are the lines:—

“Heir of my father's Name, Sir Name, and Seat,
Lands, Goods, and Goodness toward Small and Great.
By Heaven's dear Blessing on my best Endeavour
In his fair Footsteps did I well per-sever.
Amongste the Best, above the Most admired
For all the Parts my Race and Place required.
High Sh'riff of Suffolk once, of Norfolk twice,
For both approv'd right Gentle, Just, and Wise.
Frank House, frank Heart, free of my Purse and Port,*
Both lov'd and loving toward ev'ry Sort.
Lord Wentworth's Daughter was my lovely Phear,
And Four Score [six less] liv'd I Pilgrim here.”

There are two small portraits of this Lionel Tollemache at Helmingham. One of these represents him in a

* Department.

yellow coat laced with brown, and crossed over the shoulder by a scarf of dull red. In the other portrait, painted when Lionel was an elderly man, he wears a black velvet cap and white ruff.

A larger portrait of him is placed in the hall at Helmingham. In this he is represented as a child, wearing a gown of rich orange-coloured brocade, figured with silver. The gown is trimmed with silver lace, and it has a point-lace collar.

Lionel, the eldest son of Lionel Tollemache and his wife Dorothy Wentworth, became the third Lionel Tollemache in succession at Helmingham.

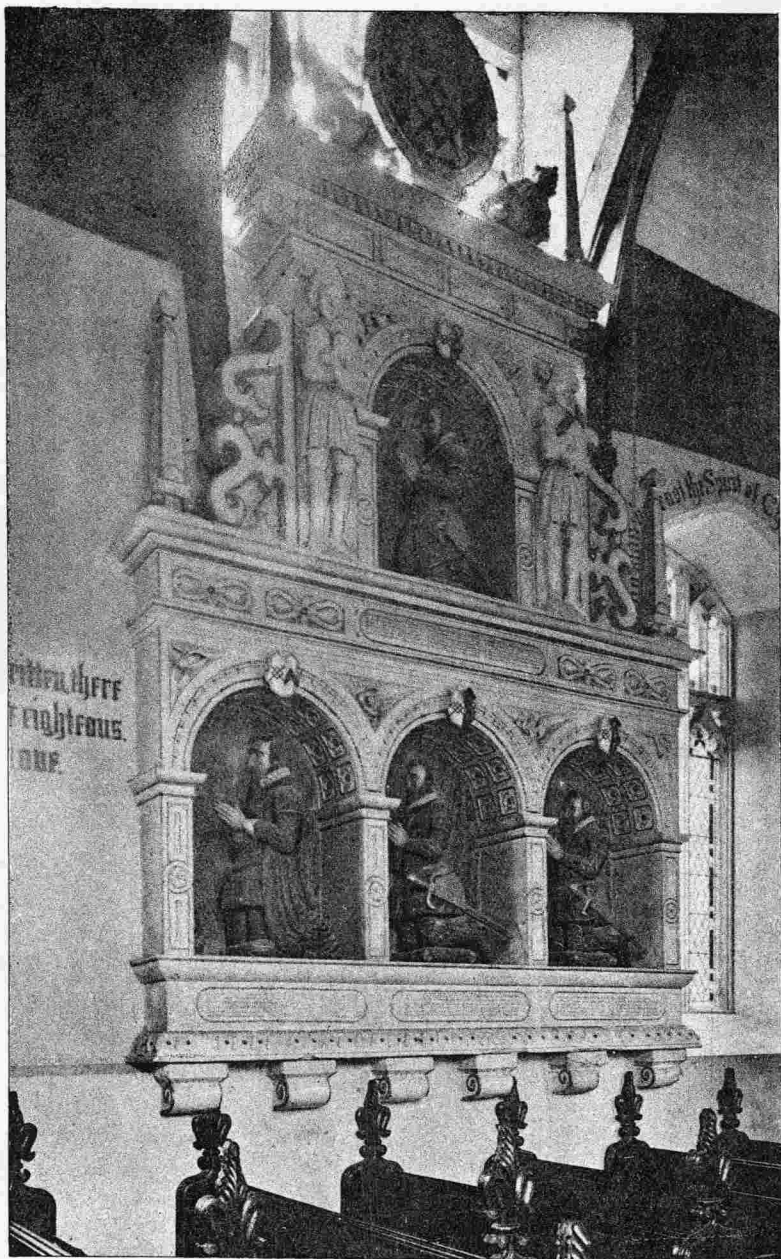
He married Susannah Jermyn, daughter of Sir Ambrose Jermyn, of Rushbrooke, in Suffolk. Susannah Jermyn does not appear to have been an heiress, and her father may have impoverished his family, as he twice entertained Queen Elizabeth at Rushbrooke, the moated house which he had, in honour of the Queen, built in the shape of an E.*

Lionel Tollemache served as High Sheriff of Norfolk and Suffolk, but he survived his father only four years, and died in 1575, at the age of thirty-nine.

There are two portraits of this Lionel Tollemache at Helmingham. One, taken when he was a young man, represents him with short hair, a slight moustache, and a small beard: he wears a black velvet cap and a narrow white ruff. The other portrait appears in a curious family picture, which is placed above the fireplace in the large hall. This picture, oblong in shape, was painted during Lionel Tollemache's childhood, and represents him with two of his little sisters and a baby brother.

The three elder children stand in a row, holding each other by the hand, and they are all dressed in yellow brocaded satin. The little girls wear caps, bibs, and aprons of the fine thread-lace, called bone point. Lionel's

* This theory of the E-shaped plan is open to question, the E shape is the old quadrangular plan with one side omitted, as at Christchurch, Ipswich, which is a perfect E, but was built before Elizabeth's reign and had originally a small low wing across from east to west, forming a courtyard inside. This was taken down after 1674.



INA-PHOTO, SPRAGUE ACC. LTD LONDON

TOLLEMACHE MONUMENT,
HELMINGHAM CHURCH.

yellow gown opens over an under dress of scarlet and gold; he wears a cap with a jewelled band, a lace collar, deep lace cuffs, large pearl earrings, and bracelets of yellow beads which look as if made of amber. The baby, wearing a lace cap and stiff ruff, lies in a cradle, which is covered with crimson and gold brocade.

It was this Lionel Tollemache who was supposed to have been the godson of Queen Elizabeth.

The portrait of Lionel's wife, Susannah Jermyn, according to an inscription upon it, was taken when she was forty-three. She wears a velvet hood lined with lace, a lace ruff, full sleeves, and a large necklace, which is passed twice round her neck.

Lionel Tollemache's effigy forms the third figure on the great monument. He is represented kneeling, in the same attitude as his father and grandfather; and he is in a suit of black and gold armour, with a long sword. Above his figure is the Tollemache fret, impaling the coat of arms of Jermyn, of Rushbrooke, *sable* a crescent between mullets, or spur rowels, argent.

Under Lionel's effigy are the lines:—

My Stile and State (lest any question should)
 My Sire and Grandsire have already told.
 My Fame and Fortune not unlike to theirs.
 My Life as fair as human Frailty bears.
 My Zeal to God, my Love to ev'ry Good,
 My Saviour knows, his Saints have understood.
 My many Vertues moral and divine,
 My lib'ral Hand and loving Heart to mine,
 My Piety, my Pity, Pains and Care,
 My Neighbours, Servants, Tenants, yet declare.
 My gentle Bride St^r Ambrose Jermyn bred:
 My Years lack Five of Half my Grandsire's Thread.

A fourth Lionel Tollemache, the son of Lionel Tollemache and Susannah Jermyn, succeeded his father in 1575. He married Catherine, only daughter of Thomas, Lord Cromwell, of Elmham in Suffolk, and his wife Mary Paulet, the daughter of John, second Marquis of Winchester.

This Lionel Tollemache was among the first of the baronets created by James the First in 1612, his creation, dated 22 May, 1612, being the twelfth in the newly founded order.

Sir Lionel died in the same year, 1612, and was buried at Helmingham.

It was Sir Lionel Tollemache, first baronet, who erected the large monument in Helmingham Church. He erected it in memory of his father, his grandfather, and his great-grandfather (the great-grandfather having been Lionel Tollemache of Bentley, who married Edyth Joyce of Helmingham).

Sir Lionel's effigy, in richly gilt armour, is placed by itself on the great tomb in Helmingham Church, surmounting the figures of his three ancestors. The date carved on the monument is 1615, three year's after Sir Lionel's death; so that it seems likely that the work was begun by him and finished later.

The Tollemache fret appears above the kneeling figure of Sir Lionel with the arms of Cromwell, of Elmham. Quarterly per fesse *indented* azure and or, four lions *passant* guardant counter-changed.

Under Sir Lionel's effigy are the lines:—

Here with his Fathers sleeps Sr Lionel,
 Knight, Baronet, all Honours worthy well.
 So well the Acts of all his Life expreste
 His Elders Vertues and excell'd their Beste.
 His prudent Bearing in his Public Place,
 Suffolk's High Sh'riff twice in sixteen yeares space.
 His Zeal to God, and, toward all Severity.†
 His Temperance, His Justice, His Sincerity.
 His Nature Mildness toward Great and Small.
 His Faith, His Love to Friends, Wife, Children, All.
 In Life and Death made him Belov'd and Dear
 To God and Man. Happy in Heaven and Here.
 Happy in Soul and Body, Goods and Name:
 Happy in Wedlock with a Noble Dame:
 (Lord Crumwell's Daughter): Happy in his Heir
 Whose Spring of Vertues sprout so young, so fair.
 Whose dear Affection, to his Founders' Debtor,
 Built them this Tomb, but in his Heart a better.

† i.e., uprightness.

Sir Lionel Tollemache and his wife Catherine had three sons, Lionel, Robert, and Edward; and four daughters, Mary, Susannah, Catherine, and Ann. The eldest son, Lionel, succeeded his father; Edward died unmarried; Robert married the daughter of a Staffordshire gentleman. Her name was Dorothy Lane; and she and Robert Tollemache had a son, whom, in the punning fashion of the time, they called Ptolemy Tollemache.

There are at Helmingham small portraits of both Edward and Robert, taken when they were young men. Both portraits are dated 1621, and on Robert's picture is the motto, "On God I rest."

Dame Catherine Tollemache, Sir Lionel's widow, survived him for eight years, during which time she lived at Ipswich. She was buried at Helmingham, and there is a marble tablet over the chancel-door of the church, which was erected in memory of her. The coat of arms on this tablet has ten quarterings, and the inscription beneath records of Dame Catherine that, "While She liv'd, for her Pietie toward God, Pity toward y^e Poore, and Charity in Releeving (through her Skill and Singular Experience in Chirurgerie*) y^e Sick & Sore Wounded, She was belov'd and honour'd by All. And is now miss'd and lamented in her Death."

"Which sayd Dame Cathren having been married by y^e Space of Forty yeares: she joyfully and in y^e Faith of Christ Departed from this Lyfe on y^e 24 Day of March anno 1620. And in y^e 63 yeare of her Age."

Sir Lionel Tollemache, second baronet, son of Sir Lionel Tollemache and his wife Catherine Cromwell, married Elizabeth Stanhope, a lady who is still known in the Tollemache family as "the Stanhope Heiress."

Elizabeth Stanhope was the elder daughter of John, first Baron Stanhope of Harrington in Northamptonshire. Lord Stanhope was the trusted adviser of Queen Elizabeth, and also of James the First, but his only son Charles, the second Baron Stanhope, fell into disgrace, was deprived of

* Surgery.

his property and banished. His sister Elizabeth was allowed to succeed to the landed property, Lord Stanhope himself retaining only the title (which became extinct at his death).

3? Sir Lionel Tollemache, second baronet, represented the Norfolk borough of Orford in more than one Parliament, and he was a member of the Privy Council in part of the reign of James the First, and in part of the reign of Charles the First.

Sir Lionel died on the sixth of September, 1640, in the forty-ninth year of his age.

There is a full-length portrait of Sir Lionel in the hall at Helmingham. He is represented in a doublet or wadded vest of black and silver, his hand rests on the hilt of his great sword, and a watch lies on the table before him.

Opposite to Sir Lionel's picture is the full-length portrait of his wife, Elizabeth Stanhope. Her fair hair is raised high over a stiff cushion, and her black velvet gown covers a very large hoop. Her ruff is of white lace, and the sleeves of her dress are elaborately embroidered.

The most beautiful monument in Helmingham Church is that erected in memory of Sir Lionel Tollemache, second baronet. It is placed opposite the great tomb built by his father, on which the inscription mentions Sir Lionel himself as "the heir, whose spring of vertues sprouts so young, so fair."

The monument has a double arch of black and white marble, enriched with gilding. Beneath the arch there is a life-sized recumbent figure of Sir Lionel wearing armour, many parts of which show traces of gilding. The head is supported by the right hand raised on the elbow: the feet rest against the winged horse's head, which is the crest of the Tollemache family. Sir Lionel's face still shows that it was once coloured; his hair is light-brown and long. On one side of the figure is the shield of Cromwell; on the other, that of Stanhope, Quarterly ermine and gules, whilst the Tollemache fret is placed on both sides.



MONUMENT TO SIR LIONEL TOLLEMACHE,
HELMINGHAM CHURCH.

The following lines are cut upon a square piece of black marble, which once lay above Sir Lionel's grave.

Wise Teares turn hither, Here's a Stone
 Would not be left to weep alone.
 It is a Marble of much Trust,
 And mourns for more than moderate Dust.
 His Person did all Praise combine,
 Honour and Vertue, Life and Line.
 Wisdome and Wealth, Fortune and Merit.
 Ample Power, but ampler Spirit.
 Both Church and State, both Rich and Poore,
 Both Peace and War, both Sea and Shore,
 Are reconcil'd here in one Sorrow
 And Mutuall Teares both lend and borrow.
 Joyne wth a Grief so great, so just.
 Learne well to weigh so worthy Dust.
 Lament his Death: or seek to find
 Store of such Lives left still behind.

Besides these simple lines there is a long Latin inscription on Sir Lionel's monument, strangely involved and even ungrammatical in its language. It has been carefully copied, and is here given for the first time exactly as it stands:—

Quid sit hoc Thesauri sancta quod cœli manus
 Infossum huic terræ servat si liberat scire
 Totum ecce tibi jussus est dicere.
 Conscii hujus lapidis haud e linguis dolor
 D. Lionellus Tollemache.
 Vir si quis alius publico aerei natus malo publico mortuus.
 Cujus
 in omni laudum decorumq[ue] lumine conspicuu[m] caput
 Ambabus manibus Pallas demulsit,
 Utraq[ue] lauru complexa est
 Equestris Ordinis erat
 Ordinisq[ue] qui a Baronibus proxime abest
 Vice Thalassiarcha Comitatus Suffolciæ
 Ex Deputatis locum tenentibus in Suffolcia unus
 Justitiarius ad pacem ex iis.
 Quorum quos dicimus
 Cui et commissa est Cognoscendi provincia et terminandi
 Demum
 Is erat qui dignus habitus est
 A duobus Regibus
 Jacobo. Caroloq[ue]
 Principum sagacissimis
 In secretioris Camerae servitium adhiberi
 Tot honoribus satur

Tot haud impar laboribus
 Tandem
 Jam negotiosa vitae militia defunctus
 A summo numine missionem impetravit.
 Et in has suburbanas cœli sepulchrates Ædes
 Emeritus milēs secessit.
 Et visus est mori
 Haud prius tamen
 Quam se sibi superstitem substituisset
 Unumq[ue] funus sūum vita toties iterata fefellisset
 Quot genuit liberos
 Quos omnino tredecim numeravit

1. Lionellu[m].	2. Elizabethm.
3. Catherina[m].	4. Anna[m].
6. Francisc[um].	7. Lionellum.
8. Joanem.	9. Margarettam.
10. Mariam.	11. Janam.
12. Dorotheam.	13. Brigittam.

Quos omnes suscepit
 Ex unica quam accepit uxore
 Elizabetha
 Natu maxima D. Johannis Stanhope
 Baronis de Harrington.
 cujus luctuosissimæ jam viduæ
 Pretiosus dolor
 Impatiens amor
 Suas huic Marmori mandavit lachrimas.
 Obiit Sep: 6 Au[n]o Dñi 1640.
 Ætatis suæ 49.

Sir Lionel Tollemache and his wife Elizabeth had thirteen children, as stated on the monument at Helmingham. Of these thirteen children, one son and seven daughters survived their childhood. The son, the sixth Lionel in succession, inherited Helmingham, and succeeded to the other estates which had been gradually acquired by the Tollemache family. He also inherited the Northamptonshire property of his mother, "the Stanhope Heiress."

Catherine Tollemache, Sir Lionel's third daughter, married Sir Charles Mordaunt, knight and baronet, of Massingham, in Norfolk. Sir Charles was a Royalist, and took an active part in the defence of the town of Lynn, in consequence of which his estate was sequestered. Sir Charles Mordaunt died in July, 1648, at the age of 33. One of his four sons was baptized Tollemache.

Sir Charles was buried at Massingham, and the inscription on his tomb closed with the following lines.*

“Here remains in civil trust,
His belov'd bewail'd dust,
Whose Goodness lives, secure from fear
Of finding any sepulchre.”

Sir Charles Mordaunt's widow, formerly Catherine Tollemache, married secondly Sir Charles Lee, of Billinglee, in Warwickshire, knight.

Jane Tollemache, Sir Lionel's eleventh child, married her cousin, Thomas Cholmondeley, of Vale Royal, in Cheshire. The couple were related through their mothers, the sister of Elizabeth Stanhope, Lady Tollemache, having married Sir Robert Cholmondeley, father of Thomas Cholmondeley. There is a portrait of Catherine Stanhope, Lady Cholmondeley, at Vale Royal.

Jane Tollemache died sixteen years after her marriage to Thomas Cholmondeley. She was buried in the little church at Minshull (generally called Church Minshull), near Middlewich, a manor belonging to the Vale Royal property. The church is small and without any architectural beauty, but over the north-east door, inside the building, there still remains a simple wooden tablet on which the following inscription is painted in blue letters:—

“In y^e midst of this Chancel lieth Interr'd y^e Body of Jane. Daughter of S^r Lionel Tolmache of Helmingham in y^e County of Suffolk Baronet And late y^e Wife of Thomas Cholmondeley of Vale Royal in y^e County Palatine of Chester Esquire. Who had Yssue Several Son'es and Daughters of whom Robert. Elizabeth. Jane. Mary. Anne. and Diana were only Living at her Death.

“She Dyed y^e 14 Aprill Año Dmi 1666.”

Above are the arms of Cholmondeley and Tollemache. Jane Cholmondeley died at the birth of her daughter Diana; the infant only lived four days, and mother and child were buried together on the 18th of April, 1666.

Sir Robert Cholmondeley, the father-in-law of Jane Tollemache, was the elder son of Sir Hugh Cholmondeley, and his wife Mary, the heiress of Holford, in Cheshire.

* See Collins (A.) The Baronetage of England.

After Sir Hugh's death Lady Cholmondeley purchased the Abbey of Vale Royal, and there she entertained James the First, in August, 1617. The King gave her the name of "The Bold Lady of Cheshire." After his visit she settled the Vale Royal property on her fourth son Thomas, the husband of Jane Tollemache, of Helmingham. Lady Cholmondeley's eldest son, Sir Robert Cholmondeley, married Catherine, younger daughter of John, Lord Stanhope, and sister of Elizabeth, Lady Tollemache, "the Stanhope Heiress." He was created an Irish peer, Viscount Cholmondeley, in 1661, and received an English peerage in 1689, as some recompense for "his sufferings, great by the plunder of his goods and the burning of his house."*

Lionel, elder son of Sir Lionel Tollemache and Elizabeth Stanhope, Lady Tollemache, succeeded his father as third baronet in 1640. Sir Lionel married Elizabeth Murray, elder daughter and heiress of William Murray, first Earl of Dysart, of Ham House. They had several children, and the further history of the family is given in the book called "Ham House, its History, and Art Treasures."† Sir Lionel Tollemache, third baronet, died in Paris in 1669. He was probably buried there, for there is no monument to his memory at Helmingham.

* Ormerod (G.) History of the Co. Palatine and City of Chester, ii. 452.

† Ham House, by Mrs. Charles Roundell, with chapters on the Library by William Younger Fletcher, F.S.A., and the Miniature Room by G. C. Williamson, LITT.D. G. Bell and Sons, 1904.