

Ever by the side of her martial lord in his wars, she was blessed as the instrument of saving his life from the poisoned dagger of a treacherous agent of the "Old Man of the Mountains", if not, indeed, as tradition asserts, by heroically sucking the poison from the wound, yet by that tender care and assiduous attention to which the prince ever loved to attribute his recovery, and which obtained for her that endearing epithet of "*Ma chère Reine*", which is still perpetuated by the well-known "Charing Cross". Being seized with fever while on her way to join the king on the Scottish borders, she died at Herdeby, near Grantham, in her 47th year, in the year 1290, and was buried at Westminster Abbey. Her sorrowing lord accompanied the body throughout the mournful progress, and caused to be erected at every one of the nine principal resting-places of the body, a beautiful cross to her memory, two of which still remain, at Northampton and Waltham Cross, near London. Her elegant statue, on an altar-shaped tomb, cast in bronze by Master William Torel*, is a work of which any modern artist might be justly proud. It is said that with her originated the custom of using tapestry as hangings for walls, and coverings for floors; and the famous Cotswold breed of sheep is traditionally said to have been introduced by Queen Eleanor from her native Spain.

The Princess Joanna, the second child and eldest daughter of this truly royal couple, was born in the year 1272, at Acre, in the Holy Land, at a time when her father was scarcely recovered from his poisoned wound, and was named from the place of her birth and after her grandmother Joanna Countess of Ponthieu, daughter of that Princess of France whose betrothment to Richard Cœur de Lion involved Europe in a general war.

In the year 1290, being then in her 18th year, and renowned for her beauty and high spirit, she was given in marriage to Gilbert de Clare, surnamed the Red, Earl of Gloucester and Hertford, and Premier Peer of England.

This Earl commenced his career as the bosom friend of

* Believed to be the work of the celebrated Pietro Cavallini till Mr. Hunter, in a paper on the honours paid

to the memory of Eleanor (*Archæologia*, xxix. 191), shewed that it was the work of Torel.

the rebel Simon de Montfort Earl of Leicester, and having mainly contributed to the capture of King Henry and Prince Edward at the battle of Lewes, he received his knighthood there, at the head of the victorious army, from the hand of Leicester; but afterwards becoming jealous of his friend's power he procured the release of the royal prisoners and commanded the second division of the royal army at the battle of Evesham, which, led on by Prince Edward, triumphed over the Barons, and restored the kingly power to its former amplitude. Gilbert de Clare received a full pardon and gained the friendship of Prince Edward, who knew so well how to appreciate the military skill and daring of this powerful Baron. The King, however, not duly rewarding his services, he rejoined the rebel ranks; but a prudent compliance on the part of Prince Edward with all his demands on account of the victory of Evesham, caused him again to become "a good and loyal subject". He afterwards obtained the entire confidence of King Henry, and being appointed one of the regency, and sworn peace-preserver, for the absent Edward, he proclaimed that Prince successor to the crown of his father, and on his return in 1274, gave the King and his retinue a magnificent entertainment, at his favourite castle of Tunbridge, in Kent.

In his youth he espoused the Lady Alice de la Marche, daughter of Guy Earl of Angoulême, and niece to the King of France; but that Princess having the heavy misfortune to be deprived of reason, he obtained a divorce in 1285, four or five years before his marriage with the beautiful Joanna.

At his second nuptials he gave up the inheritance of all his castles and manors, as well in England and Wales, to his royal father-in-law, to dispose of as he might think proper; and the King entailed them upon the Earl's issue by his daughter, and in default upon the Princess, her heirs, and assigns, should she survive the Earl.

The wedding was solemnized with great pomp, on the morrow preceding the calends of May, at the monastery of the Knights of St. John, at Clerkenwell; and in the spring of the following year the Countess of Gloucester gave birth to a beautiful boy at Tewkesbury, to the infinite joy and pleasure of Queen Eleanor. The royal parents

are recorded to have welcomed their first grandchild with the greatest delight, and as a mark of their respect for his father to have commanded that his name should be Gilbert. In the following year the Earl and Countess kept their Christmas with great magnificence at their Castle of Clare.

The union existed only a few years, the Earl dying at his Castle at Monmouth, in the year 1295, leaving issue Gilbert the Third, then between four and five years of age, and three daughters, Eleanor, Margaret, and Elizabeth.

The youthful widow mourned but a short season, for one of her late lord's esquires, Ralph de Monthermer, having found favour in her eyes, she entered into a clandestine marriage with him. This was a grievous blow to her father as it was the first instance of a *mésalliance* in the royal house of Plantagenet. The King, in consequence, seized upon her lands and castles; and sent the husband a prisoner to Bristol Castle. He was afterwards released, and summoned to Parliament, by the title of Earl of Gloucester *jure uxoris*, from 1299 to 1306. Through the mediation of Anthony Beke, the celebrated Bishop of Durham, and on account of de Monthermer's great bravery in the Scottish wars, a reconciliation took place between the King and his daughter, and the fortunate "groom," as he is contemptuously called by some historians, became a great favourite with his father-in-law, who heaped riches and honour upon him; giving him the whole of Annandale, and creating him Earl of Athol. The King and Princess survived this restoration to favour but a short time, Edward dying on the 7th of July 1307, and Joanna of Acre a little later in the same year. She died, says Weever, at her Manor of Clare, and was buried in the Church of the Friars there; but a curious dialogue, between a Friar of the House and a Secular, which is supposed to have taken place at the tomb of the Princess, and is printed by the same author, implies that she was buried in a chapel there, built by her in honour of St. Vincent, "to whom she had singular affection." Her funeral was conducted with great pomp, and attended by King Edward the Second and most of the principal nobles of the kingdom.

Her eldest son, Gilbert de Clare, the third Earl of Gloucester, after a short but distinguished life, fell at the battle

of Bannockburn in 1314, in the 23rd year of his age, and leaving no issue by his Countess Maud de Burgh, daughter of John, Earl of Ulster, who died the following year, the illustrious line of the de Clares became extinct; and the Earldoms of Gloucester and Hertford, with the Honor of Clare, and other great estates, became divided among his three sisters.

The eldest daughter of Joanna, named Eleanor after her royal grandmother, had the honour of Gloucester for her share, and was married to Hugh le Despenser, the second unfortunate favorite of her uncle, Edward the Second. Having prevailed on the King to resume in his favour the grants of some of the castles in Wales, formerly occupied by Gilbert de Clare, but lately bestowed on the Mortimers, that rebellion ensued, which aided by Queen Isabella, "fair daughter of France", but foul Queen of England, and supported by the popular hatred of the favoritism by which the King had reigned, led to the destruction, by horrid cruelties, of both the monarch and his favorite. After the execution of Despenser in November, 1326, the Countess Eleanor, with her children, was imprisoned in the Tower till the following February; when she obtained her liberty and took to her second husband, William de la Zouch, of Mortimer, She survived him two years, and died in 1337.

The second daughter, Margaret, was also given in marriage by her uncle to one of his favorites—the companion of his youth, Piers de Gaveston, "the Adonis of the English court", whose knightly prowess and graceful manner excited the envy, and his bitter raillery the enmity, of the bold rude barons of England, who, disgusted with the odious favoritism by which the weak and ignoble Edward sought to reign, raised the standard of rebellion. Having fallen into the power of the Earl of Warwick, whom he had nicknamed "the Black Dog of Arden", that noble accomplished his prophetic retort, that "he would make him feel the Black Dog's teeth", by beheading him at Blacklow Hill, near Warwick, a spot to this day called Gaveshead. By this marriage Margaret had an only daughter Joane, who died young. She took for her second husband Hugh de Audley, and on the death of her sister Eleanor succeeded to the lands of the Earldom of Gloucester.

Hugh de Audley was then created Earl of Gloucester, but died without male issue, in 1347. From the Lady Margaret de Audley, their sole daughter and heiress, who married Ralph, Lord Stafford, is descended the illustrious hero of Waterloo.

The youngest daughter, Elizabeth, had the honor of Clare for her inheritance. She cemented the alliance between the de Clare and de Burgh families, by marrying John de Burgh, son and heir to the Earl of Ulster, whose sister had been married to her brother Gilbert, the last Earl de Clare. She bore her lord one son, William, at whose death the Earldom of Ulster became extinct. Her granddaughter Elizabeth re-united the family to the royal line of Plantagenet by marrying Lionel, third son of King Edward the Third, who, having thus become possessed of the Honor of Clare, was created Duke of Clarence. Through this alliance the House of York derived that claim to the throne which led to the long and bloody wars of the Roses. The Lady Elizabeth de Clare subsequently married Theobald de Verdon; and at his death Roger d'Amory; and added fresh lustre to her descent and alliances by re-founding Clare Hall, in the University of Cambridge, and by improving the buildings and decorations of the House of Friars at Clare. The rhythmical dialogue before mentioned thus alludes to this lady and her marriage with De Burgh :

"so conioyned be
 "Ulstris armes and Gloucestris thurgh and thurgh
 "As she with our wyndowes in housis thre
 "Dortour, chapiter house, and fraitour, which she
 "Made oute the ground, both plauncher* and wal."

The secular stranger having enquired "And who the rofe?" is answered "She alone did al".

The two sons of Joanna of Acre by her marriage with Ralph de Monthermer were named Thomas and Edward. Thomas was killed in a sea-fight with the French in the year 1340, in the life-time of his father, but left a daughter, who carried the Barony of Monthermer to the Montacute family, whence descended the celebrated king-making Earl of Warwick.

Edward, the second son, was summoned to Parliament

* Timber work; Fr. *planche*, a plank. word is still occasionally used in East Shakspeare has "a planched gate". The Anglia.

as a Baron in the eleventh year of King Edward the Third, but never afterwards, and nothing further is known of him or his descendents. Weever, who calls him the eldest son, says that he was buried by the side of his mother in the Priory Chapel at Clare.

These few notices show in how short a time the chief line of this powerful family became extinct after its attainment of the highest honours. And it has been justly observed that "if a striking instance be wanting of the instability of human grandeur—the evanescent nature of human power, it may be found in the depth of humility into which the chief line of the Clares, Earls of Gloucester, the Bohuns, Earls of Hereford, and the Staffords, Dukes of Buckingham, sank before it was utterly extinguished". Roger Stafford, representative of these illustrious houses, and descended from the blood-royal of England, was compelled by the arbitrary government of Charles the First to surrender his claim to the Barony of Stafford, because he had no lands or means to support its dignity; and Jane his sister, great grand-daughter of the mighty Edward, Duke of Buckingham*, was the wife of a joiner of Newport, near Shiffnal, in Shropshire, where she was living his widow in 1637, and her son was by trade a cobbler—thus, says Burke, the great-great-grandson of Margaret Plantagenet, daughter and heiress of George, Duke of Clarence, and the last member of that royal and illustrious house, sunk to the grade of a mender of old shoes†!

S. TYMMS.

* Edward Stafford, K. G., Lord High Constable of England. Having excited the hatred of Cardinal Wolsey, he was accused of a design on the King's life, and being found guilty of treason on the oath of a false retainer, was beheaded on Tower Hill, May 17th,

1521. When the Emperor Charles V. heard of the event he is said to have exclaimed "A butcher's dog has killed the finest buck in England."

† This statement, though generally received, is considered by modern authorities to be very questionable.