

might almost say—their sacred undertaking, and though this is but an humble offering, I shall feel very thankful if, in a county possessing so many higher objects of interest, our remote village has been able to contribute one trifling leaf to their legendary stores.

ARTHUR PHILIP DUNLAP.

MELFORD HALL.

THE manor of Melford was an antient possession of the monastery of St. Edmund's Bury, being enumerated in Domesday Book among the lands of St. Edmund; and many of the lordly abbots of that powerful house made the manorial hall their occasional retreat from the cavils of the brotherhood and the perpetual contentions incidental to the civil and religious polity of the age.

Jocelin de Brackland, the charming chronicler of the doings of the famous Abbot Sampson, relates that in the year 1163

“Geoffrey Ridell, Bishop of Ely, sought from the abbot some timber for the purpose of constructing certain great buildings at Glemesford; which request the abbot granted, but with a bad grace, not daring to offend him. Now the abbot making some stay at Melford, there came a certain clerk of the Bishop, asking, on behalf of his lord, that the promised timber might be taken at Ælmeswell; and he made a mistake in pronouncing the word, saying Ælmeswell when he should have said Ælmsethe [Elmset], which is the name of a certain wood at Melford. And the abbot was astonished at the request, for such timbers were not to be found at Ælmeswell. Whereof, when Richard the forester to the same town had heard, he privately informed the abbot that the bishop had the previous week sent his carpenters in a surreptitious manner into the wood of Ælmssethe, and had chosen the best timber trees in the whole wood, and had placed his marks thereon. On hearing this, the abbot directly discovered that the messenger of the bishop had made an error in his request, and answered that he would willingly do as the bishop pleased. On the morrow, upon the departure of the messenger, immediately after he had heard mass, the abbot went

into the before-named wood with his carpenters, and caused to be marked with his mark not only all the oaks previously marked, but more than a hundred others, for the use of St. Edmund and for the roof of the great tower, commanding that they should be felled as quickly as possible. But when the bishop, by the answer of his messenger, understood that the aforesaid timber was to be taken at *Ælmeswell*, he sent back the same messenger (on whom he dealt many hard words) to the abbot, in order that he might correct the word in which he had blundered, by saying *Ælmssethe* not *Ælmswell*; but before he had come to the abbot all the timbers which the bishop had desired were felled, and the abbot's carpenters had marked them. Wherefore all the bishop could do was to take other timber, and at some other place if he would. As for myself, when I witnessed the affair, I laughed and said in my heart 'Thus art is deceived by art'—*sic ars deluditur arte.*"

It appears from the Hundred Rolls of the third year of Edward the First (1275) that John Walraven, escheator to the king, destroyed the cattle and damaged the park at Melford, whilst the manor was in the king's hands after the decease of Edmund, abbot of St. Edmund.

A deed is preserved in the Harleian MSS. in the British Museum, made in the 26th year of Henry the Eighth, in which the last abbot of Bury, John de Melford, a native of the village, lets the manor of Melford called Melford Hall, with "the fedyngs of the common called Melford green", and the Little Park, for a term of 30 years, unto Dame Frances Pennington. In this curious lease it is covenanted that the said Dame Fraunces shall pay 4s. a year to the abbot, 4s. a year to the bailiff of Babergh Hundred, and 4s. a year "to the crosse berer of the seyd abbot for the staff-acre"; and shall reserve "unto the seyd abbott and his successors, on of the best chambers within the seid maner wyth ffree ingate and owtegate in to and fro the same at all tymes at hys pleasure duryng all the seyd terme of the seid lease," and "shall fynde at hir costs and charges the seid abbott or his officers comyng onys in the yeere to the courte and leete of the seid abbott at the seid manner to be kepte, sufficient met and drynk, with bedding in ther chambre, hey and otys for their horses, by all the seid terme, for that tyme beyng there at the seid courte and lete." On the part of the abbot and convent it is covenanted to do all needful repairs to the houses of the said manor; to permit Dame Fraunces to have 500 of wood yearly out

of the woods in Melford* and to have the feeding of the Little Park, "so that the same Dame Fraunces, nor her assignes, do non harm on to the spring."† On taking possession of the manor, the seid Dame Fraunceys was to have delivered to her "the chaffe and strawe of all the corne growyng of eleven acres of grownde," and the following "implements of house," which were to be redelivered at the expiration of the lease:—

Imprimis x colers of lether, ix payer of carte trace, wherof ij payer of body trace, ij payer of Thellbells, iij carte saddylls, on plough wyth all thyngs theronto belongyng, iij shares, iij culturs, ij carte ropes, a sede skeppe, iiij combe sekkes, ij busschells, on fflanne, oon ladder of xvj^{ten} staves, ij pycheforks, ij payer of harrowghs, iij long fformes, ij shorte formes, ij tabylls, ij payer of trescells, ij tomberells, on leed, a schippe, coffer, and halfe a pype.

Within five or six years from the date of this instrument the abbey of St. Edmund was dissolved, its last abbot had died of a broken heart, and the manor of Melford, with the other possessions of the abbey, had become vested in the crown. In the 37th year of Henry the Eighth it was granted to Sir Wm. Cordell, Kt., of whom little is known beyond what is recorded in the inscription on his monument in Melford church; thus quaintly rendered by Fuller:

Here William Cordal doth in rest remain,
Great by his birth, but greater by his brain:
Plying his studies hard his youth throughout,
Of causes he became a pleader stout;
His learning deep such eloquence did vent,
He was chose Speaker of the Parliament.
Afterwards knight Queen Mary did him make,
And counsellor, state-work to undertake;
And Master of the Rolls. Well worn with age,
Dying in Christ heaven was his utmost stage.
Diet and clothes to poor he gave at large,
And a fair almshouse founded on his charge.

* "In the time of the abbot and monks there were two parks of theirs in Melford, the one (which was of deer) being in that part of the parish which we call Melford Park Farm; anciently it was a wood, and went under the name of Elmsete, and contained 218 acres et

dimidium et 24 perticas."—*Bisbie MS.* 1664; *penes R. Almack, esq.*, to whose kindness I am also indebted for a copy of the lease to Dame Pennington.

† Probably that now known as the Conduit, on Melford Green.

His father, John Cordell, Esq., son of Robert* Cordell, Esq., of London, merchant, was the first of the family who settled at Melford†; and his mother was Emma or Eva, daughter of Henry Webbe, Esq., of Kimbolton, in Huntingdonshire. Sir William was brought up to the bar, and in 1553 became Lent Reader at Lincoln's Inn, of which house he was afterwards frequently Governor, and in the same year was appointed Solicitor-General, and had a grant of the dissolved hospital of St. Saviour at Bury. In 1557 he was appointed Master of the Rolls, and a Privy Councillor, with a grant of the privilege of twelve retainers. In 1558, being elected Knight of the Shire for Suffolk, in the last Parliament of Queen Mary, Sir William was chosen Speaker of the House of Commons, and received the honor of knighthood in the interval of the two sessions of which it consisted. In the first session of this Parliament‡ the queen's wants and the state of the nation were discussed by a committee of both houses, the speaker, with ten other members, having been invited by the lords for that purpose. This was not altogether the constitutional mode, but it does not appear that our speaker (consummate lawyer as we are told he was) objected to the proposal, for on the 4th of February a bill was read for the grant of a subsidy of two-fifteenths and tenths "as agreed upon by the Lords and Commons in Committee," which occasioned some debate, and it appears that the speaker was desired to see the queen and ascertain whether a smaller amount would not satisfy her majesty; for on the 10th of the month Sir Wm. Cordell acquainted the house "that he had opened unto the queen's majesty his commission touching the grant of the subsidy, which the queen thankfully took, giving those present hearty thanks, and all the realm." Our speaker acquitted himself well, for it seems that he induced the queen to accept a subsidy of one-fifteenth, which was all that was granted that session. The next session of this Parliament was

* Dr. Bisbie's MS., previously cited, states the grandfather of Sir William Cordell, to be "*Edmond Cordell, of Edmonton, co. Middlesex.*"

† In a deed of grant of a messuage, &c. 29, Hen. VIII., the original of which is

in Mr. Almack's possession, he is described as "*John Cordell, of Longmelford, yoman.*"

‡ Manning's Lives of the Speakers, 215.

remarkable for an Act which was intended to put the first restraint upon the liberty of the press, but the further progress of the bill, which had come down from the Lords, was stopped by the death of the queen.

In 1578 Sir William Cordell had the honour of entertaining Queen Elizabeth in his new house at Melford.

“There were,” says Churchyard, the chronicler of this progress, “two hundred young gentlemen, clad all in white velvet, and three hundred of the graver sorts, apparelled in black velvet coates, and fair chaynes, all ready at one instant and place, with 1500 serving-men more, on horseback, well and bravely mounted, in good order ready to receive the queen’s highness into Suffolk, which surely was a comely troope, and a noble sight to behold. And all these waited on the sheriff, Sir William Spring, during the queen’s majestie’s abode in those parties, and to the very confines of Suffolke; but before her highness passed into Norfolke, there was in Suffolke such sumptuous feasting and bankets, as seldom in any part of the world hath been seen before. The Maister of the Rolls, Sir Wm. Cordell, was one of the firste that begaine this great feasting, and did light such a candle to the rest of the shire, that many were glad, bountifully and franckly, to follow the same example, with such charges and costs, as the whole traine were in some sorte pleased therewith.”

He was one of the executors of Cardinal Pole’s will, with a bequest of 50*l.*; was also executor and a “beloved friend” of the great Earl of Dorset; and the Countess of Bath bequeathed him a ring of gold of the value of five marks.*

He was a friend of education and patron of learned men. He is supposed to have drawn up the statutes of St. John’s-college, Oxford, by desire of the founder Sir Thomas Whyte, who appointed him visitor of the same during life. In this capacity he procured the restoration of Dr. Willys, who was subsequently sent Ambassador to Muscovy by Queen Elizabeth.† Through his aid it is said that the first English atlas, undertaken by Christopher Saxton, was published in the reign of Queen Elizabeth; and William Lambarde had the honour of dedicating to him his famous book entitled “*Archaionomia*,” or System of Saxon Laws, translated into Latin, 1568; in which he acknowledges the many obligations and encouragements he had received from Sir William’s patronage in the

* Hist. Hengrave, p. 137.

† Egerton Papers, printed by the Camden Society, 159.

prosecution of that valuable work. Abraham Fleming also dedicated to him his translation of "the General Doctrine of Earthquakes." To Sir Wm. Cordell has been assigned the authorship of this apophthegm:—"There is no man that talks but I may gain by him, and none that holds his tongue but I may lose by him."

Sir Wm. Cordell married Mary, daughter of Richard Clopton, Esq., of Forehall, Melford, and dying without issue on the 17th of May, 1580, was buried in the chancel of Melford church. By his will he devised divers parcels of land and tithes for the support of the hospital for a warden and twelve brethren, which he had founded in Melford, and endowed with the lands which belonged to the dissolved hospital of St. Saviour at Bury St. Edmund's, and which afterwards received the royal grant of incorporation. He gave a life interest in his estates at Melford to his wife, then to his sister Jane, wife of Richard Alington, Esq., second son of Sir Giles Alington, of Horseheath, Cambs., for her life; and then entailed them on his brothers Francis and Edward, with remainder to the heirs of his sister Jane Allington, then a widow. Francis died before he had livery of it, and Edward without issue. Jane Alington died on the 4th January, 1602, leaving two daughters coheirs, Mary, who married Sir John Savage, of Clifton, Cheshire; and Cordelia, married to Sir John Stanhope, Kt., and was mother of Philip, the first Earl of Chesterfield. Melford Hall passed to Sir John Savage, whose son Thomas was raised to the peerage by the title of viscount, and his grandson John was advanced to the dignity of Earl Rivers. During the time that Melford Hall was the residence of Lord Savage, James Howell, the voluminous and entertaining writer, lived here as tutor in the family; and in his curious collection of letters has preserved the following pleasant account of the house and grounds at that time* :—

To Daniel Caldwell, Esq., from the Lord Savage's house in Long Melford.

MY DEAR DAN,—Though considering my former condition in life I may now be called a countryman, yet you cannot call me a rustic (as you would imply in your letter) as long as I live in so civil and noble a family, as long as I lodge in so virtuous and regular a house as any

* Howell's Letters, 10th Edit. 1737, p. 86.

I believe in the land, both for æconomical government and the choice company; for I never saw yet such a dainty race of children in all my life together; I never saw yet such an orderly and punctual attendance of servants, nor a great house so neatly kept; here one shall see no dog nor cat nor cage to cause any nastiness within the body of the house. The kitchen and gutters and other offices of noise and drudgery are at the fag end; there's a back gate for the beggars and the meaner sort of swains to come in at. The stables butt upon the park, which, for a chearful rising ground, for groves and browsing ground for the deer, for rivulets of water, may compare with any for its highness in the whole land. It is opposite to the front of the great house, whence from the gallery one may see much of the game when they are a hunting. Now for the gardening and costly choice flowers, for ponds, for stately large walks green and gravelly, for orchards and choice fruits of all sorts, there are few the like in England. Here you have your Bon Christian pear and Bergamot in perfection; your Muscatel grapes in such plenty that there are some bottles of wine sent every year to the king; and one Mr. Daniel, a worthy gentleman hard by, who hath been long abroad, makes good store in his vintage. Truly this house of Long Melford, tho' it be not so great, yet it is so well compacted and contrived with such dainty conveniences every way, that if you saw the landskip of it you would be mightily taken with it, and it would serve for a choice pattern to build and contrive a house by.

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Your's, J. H.

May 20, 1619.

During the civil wars Melford Hall was the estate of Elizabeth, Countess of Rivers, the celebrated loyalist, and it shared the fate of her house at St. Osyth near Colchester; both being plundered by the rabble. The countess was at St. Osyth when the house was attacked, and hardly escaped after great insolence had been used to her person. The losses at both places were computed to amount to 100,000*l.* at least, and as if these calamities were not sufficient, the commissioners for sequestrating the estates of Catholics obliged the countess to compound for her lands at 16,979*l.* 9*s.* 10*d.*

The first Lord Rivers mortgaged the Melford estate to Sir John Cordell, Kt, merchant, of London; and his son, Sir Robert, having purchased the estate, it once again became the family seat of the Cordells. Sir Robert Cordell was created a baronet in 1660, but the title and the name became extinct on the death of his grandson Sir John, who was killed by a fall from his horse in 1704. Margaret, his

sister, carried Melford Hall to the Firebrace family, by marriage with Charles Firebrace, Esq., eldest son of Sir Basil Firebrace, Kt. and Bart., whose only sister Hester married Basil Fielding, 4th Earl of Denbigh. Sir Cordell Firebrace, their only son, was elected a knight of the shire for Suffolk in 1737, and continued to represent the county till his death in 1759. He married Bridget, relict of Edward Evers, Esq., of Ipswich, and third daughter of Philip Bacon, second son of Sir Nicholas Bacon, Bart., of Shrubland Hall, but dying without issue, the baronetcy became extinct, and the estate passed by will to his widow, who remarried Wm. Campbell, Esq., of Lyston Hall, in Essex, uncle to the Duke of Argyll, and died in 1782 at the advanced age of 80. In 1785 Melford Hall and its estates were sold under the will of Lady Firebrace to Sir Harry Parker, Bart., eldest son of Admiral Hyde Parker,* a member of a Devonshire race distinguished by its devoted adherence to the cause of Charles the First.

The first baronet was Hugh Parker, an alderman of London, who was 74 years of age when he received that honour in 1681, and 89 years old when he died without issue in 1696-7. Sir Henry Parker, the 2nd baronet, his nephew, married Margaret, daughter of Dr. Alexander Hyde, Bishop of Salisbury, and died in 1713. He built a handsome mansion on the family property at Honnington in Warwickshire, and rebuilt the church of the parish in which it was situated.†

Sir Hyde Parker, the 5th baronet, was distinguished by his gallant services in the Navy, and by his melancholy fate. He was in the memorable expedition against the Manillas, and had the good fortune to capture the Sanctissima Trinidad, a rich Spanish galleon, with a cargo valued at three millions of dollars, or more than half a million of our money. For his many glorious deeds he would probably have been rewarded by a peerage; but being appointed commander-in-chief of the fleet in the East Indies, he left Rio Janeiro on the 12th of December, 1782, and nothing has since been heard of him or his ship, which it is presumed was destroyed by fire. His second son embraced

* Ford's MSS., penes W. S. Fitch, Esq., Ipswich. † Kimber's Baronetage.

the profession of his father, and was with him in many of his engagements. He received the honor of knighthood in 1779, for his services on the American coast, and had the great good fortune to be commander-in-chief at the glorious victory off Copenhagen in 1801.

The present owner of Melford Hall is Sir Hyde Parker, 8th baronet, who succeeded to it on the death of his brother, Sir William, in 1830. The hall, now occupied by John Michael Williams, Esq., stands on the east side of Melford Green, near the road, from which it is inclosed by a high wall and protected by a moat. The house, a red brick building in the Elizabethan style, forms three sides of a quadrangle, and exhibits the mitre-headed turrets, spacious embayed windows, and ornamented and inscribed spouts, which are characteristic of the houses of this class and period. In one of the rooms is a series of family portraits in the pannels, put in at the same time and with the purpose of connecting the new family of Cordell with the old. They are all inscribed, and represent :—

1. “Robert Cordell, Esquire, of London, merchant, son of William Cordell, Esquire, of Edmonton, in the county of Middlesex, whose son John settled at Melford, and was father to Sir William Cordell.” A three-quarters length, with a ship in the corner.

2. “Sir Thomas Cordell, of London, merchant, son of the above-mentioned Robert.” A three-quarters portrait, with peaked beard, ruff, and gown. In one hand are richly fringed gloves : the other rests on a table, on which is a skull. In a corner are the Cordell arms and crest.

3. “Sir John Cordell, citizen and merchant, son of the above-mentioned Sir Thomas, and father of Sir Robert Cordell, who redeemed the Melford estate out of the Savage family.” A three-quarters portrait, with peaked beard and ruff, and a red furred gown. In one hand a letter, on a table a packet, and in a corner a ship.

4. “Sarah, daughter of Robert Bunckworth, of London, merchant.” The lady is in a boddice with red and black stripes, a very large ruff, and a black cap. On a table are two roses, and round her neck is a gold chain four times folded.

5. "Sir William Cordell, Knight,* knight of the shire for the county of Suffolk, Speaker of the House of Commons 4 & 5 Philip and Mary, 1557, and Master of the Rolls to the said Queen and Queen Elizabeth." A highly animated portrait of the knight, with red hair and peaked beard; a ruff richly fringed, shirt sleeve, and slashed jacket. In his hand is a pedigree of the Cordell family.

6. "Mary, wife of the said Sir William, daughter and sole heir of Richard Clopton, Esq., third son of Sir William Clopton by Margaret his wife, third daughter and one of the heirs of Richard Bozem, Knight." A three-quarter portrait of a handsome lady, with dark hair, ruff, and laced cap. In her hand is a richly-bound book.

SAMUEL TYMMS.

KENTWELL HALL, MELFORD.

THE manor of Kentwell is mentioned in Domesday Book by the name of Kantawella, and its earliest known possessor was Trodo, a brother of the then abbot of Bury, in 1086. The de Kentwells, probably his descendants, were lords here till the beginning of the 13th century; but in 1251 it was in the king's hands, and was granted by King Henry the Third to Lord William de Valence, whose niece and coheir married David Strabolgie, Earl of Athol, and Steward of Scotland; and he, it appears from the *Inquisitiones post mortem*, 1 Edw. III. (1326) held the manor for his life of the king *in capite* of the castle of Norwich, by paying a ward of the said castle 66s. at Easter and St. Nicholas. In the year 1333 it was granted by the earl to Sir Robert Gower† and his heirs. In 1338 the king confirmed to Sir Robert Gower in fee the manor of Kentwell, in the county

* There is a curious portrait of the Master of the Rolls, by Cornelius de Zeem, at St. John's College, Oxford.

† Charter in Harl. MSS. Brit. Mus. vol. i. 184-299, 19.