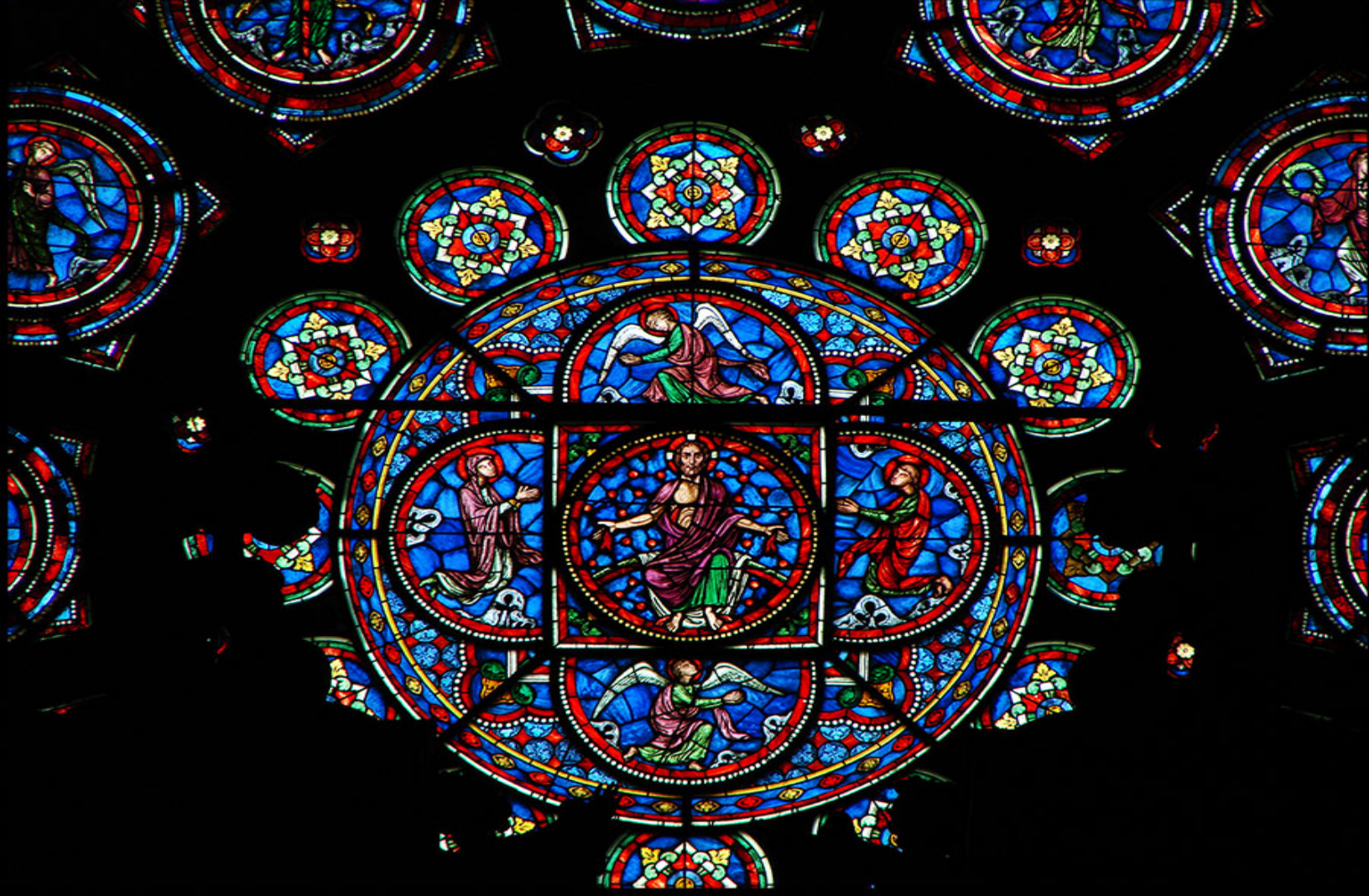

James Franck Bright

The History of Medieval Monarchy in England

(449 to 1485)

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From the Departure of Romans to Richard III

e-artnow, 2022
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PREFACE

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The object of this book is expressed in the title. It is intended to be a useful book for school teaching, and advances no higher pretensions. Some years ago, at a meeting of Public School Masters, the want of such a book was spoken of, and at the suggestion of his friends, the Author determined to attempt to supply this want. The objections raised to the school histories ordinarily used were —first, the absence of historical perspective, produced by the unconnected manner in which the facts were narrated, and the inadequate mention of the foreign relations of the country; secondly, the omission of many important points of constitutional history; thirdly, the limitation of the history to the political relations of the nation, to the exclusion of its social growth. It was at first intended to approach the history almost entirely on the social and constitutional side; but a very short trial proved that this method required a too constant employment of allusions, and presupposed too much knowledge in the reader, to be suitable for a book intended primarily for schools. It was therefore resolved to limit the description of the growth of society to a few comprehensive chapters and passages, and to follow the general course of history in such a way as to bring out as clearly as possible the connection of the events, and their relative importance in the general national growth. This decision, though taken against his inclinations, the Author can no longer regret, as the social side of our history has

been so adequately treated by Mr. Green in his *History of the English People*, of the approaching publication of which he was at the time quite ignorant. On the same grounds of practical utility, it has been thought better to retain the old and well-known divisions into reigns, rather than to disturb the knowledge boys have already gained by the introduction of a new though more scientific division.

The Author has not scrupled to avail himself of the works of modern authors, though, in most cases, he has verified their views by reference to original authorities. In the earlier period the works of Professor Stubbs, Mr. Freeman, and Dr. Pauli; in the Tudor and Stuart period those of Froude, Ranke, and Macaulay; in the later period the histories of Miss Martineau and Lord Stanhope have been of the greatest assistance. Greater stress has been laid upon the later than the earlier periods, as is indeed obvious from the divisions of the work. With regard to the starting-point chosen, it may be well to explain that the English invasion was fixed upon, because it so thoroughly obliterated all remnants of the Roman rule, that they have exerted little or no influence upon the development of the nation—the real point of interest in a national history. It is hoped that the genealogies of the great families will assist in the comprehension of mediæval times in the history of which they played so large a part, and that the maps supplied will suffice to enable the reader to follow pretty accurately, without reference to another atlas, the military and political events mentioned. A brief and rapid summary for the use of beginners was originally projected to preface the work, but the brevity required by a book of this description rendered

such an addition impossible without injury to the more important part. An attempt has been made to replace it by a very full analysis, which, in the hands of a careful teacher, has been proved by experience a useful method of teaching the main facts of history.

OXFORD, 1875.

INTRODUCTION

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The history of civilization can be traced in great lines which have more or less followed a similar direction throughout all Europe. The interest of a national history is to observe the course which these lines have followed in a particular instance; for, examined in detail, their course has never been identical. The period occupied by what we speak of as English history is that, speaking broadly, during which the great mediæval systems—feudalism and the Church—have by degrees given place to modern society, of which the moving-springs are freedom of the individual, government in accordance with the popular will, and freedom of thought. The object of a History of England is therefore to trace that change as it worked itself out amid all the various influences which affected it in our own nation. The peculiar circumstances of the Norman conquest prevented the complete development in England of either of the great Continental systems. Neither the feudal system nor the system of the Roman Church are to be found in their completeness in England. The separation of England from the Empire, the entire destruction of the Roman occupation by the German invaders, prevented that contact between German and Roman civilization from which Continental feudalism sprang. And though, if left to itself, the civilization of the early English would have ripened into some form of feudalism, it was caught by the Conquest before the process was completed. The Normans brought with them, indeed,

the external apparatus of the completed system; but in the hands of their great leader, and grafted upon the existing institutions of the country, it assumed a new form. The power of the King was always maintained and the power of the barons suppressed, while room was left under the shadow of a strong monarchy for the growth of the lower classes of the nation. In the same way, the Church was always kept from assuming a position of supremacy, and its subordinate relations to the State maintained. The establishment of this new form of government may be held to occupy the first period of our history since the Conquest, lasting till the reign of John. During that time the barons, who had more than once attempted to establish the same virtual independence as was enjoyed by their fellows abroad, were taught to recognize the power of the Crown. The legislation of Henry I. and Henry II., and the establishment under the latter of a new nobility dependent for their status upon their ministerial services, coupled with the incorporation of the national system of justice with the feudal system of the conquerors, united all classes of Englishmen and consolidated the nation, but in so doing raised to an alarming degree the power of the Crown. The miserable reign of John, and the tyrannical use he made of the power thus placed in his hands, called attention to the dangers which beset the administrative arrangements of his father. The total severance of England from France, which took place in his reign, and his rash quarrel with the Church, completed the work of national consolidation, but placed the united nation in antagonism to the throne. The nobility, which in other countries were the natural enemies of all

classes below them, were thus forced to assume the lead of all who desired a reasonable amount of national freedom.

The struggle to harmonize the relations which should exist between the Crown and the subject occupies the second period of our history. It assumes several forms; sometimes the dislike of foreigners, sometimes a desire for self-taxation, sometimes it seems little more than an outbreak of an over-strong nobility. But whatever its form, the fruits of the struggle were lasting. The rival claims of King and nation, acknowledged and regulated by the wisdom of Edward I., gave rise to that balanced constitution which in its latest development still exists among us. But it would seem that this great advance in government had been somewhat premature. In other nations institutions resembling our Parliament sprang into existence, and faded away before the power of the Crown, an effect which can be traced chiefly to the strong line of division separating the commonalty from the nobles. Without support from the nobility, and in all its interests in direct antagonism to it, the commonalty, after supporting the Crown in the destruction of the baronage, found itself in presence of a power to which it was unable to offer any resistance. Several causes already mentioned had in England weakened the sharp definition of classes, but there was a great risk even there of a similar failure of constitutional monarchy. It was as the leader of the nobility that Henry IV. first rose into importance in the reign of Richard II., and subsequently obtained the crown. The limitation of the franchise in the reign of Henry VI., and the consequent subserviency of Parliament, were steps towards the elevation of an

aristocratical influence, which, had it grown till its suppression by the Crown was rendered necessary, would have reproduced in England the historical phenomena visible in France. Fortunately the nobility were not at one among themselves. The various sources from which they derived their origin, the close family connections, and personal interests, split them into factions, which, taking advantage of a disputed succession, brought their quarrel to the trial of the sword with such animosity that the nobility of England was virtually extinguished.

But while this faction fight, and the great French war which preceded it, attract the attention chiefly during the third period of the history, a quiet advance of great importance had been going on, sheltered by the more obvious movements of the time. The same spirit which had found its expression in the establishment of the Constitution, had indirectly, if not directly, influenced every class of the nation. The exclusive merchant guild had given place to the craftsman’s guild. The wars in France, the alienation of property fostered by the legislation of Edward I., the Black Death, which had robbed the country of at least a third of its labouring hands, had sealed the fate of serfdom, and established in England the great class of free wage labourers. The same alienation, the gradual increase and importance of trade, and the formation and introduction of capital, had formed a middle class of gentry, from which the successful merchant was not excluded. Nor had this political growth been unaccompanied by an advance of thought. The failure of the crusades, the last great exhibition of material religion; the Franciscan revival; the

philosophy of Bacon and his successors; the bold declaration of independence on the part of Wicliffe, and the grasping and repellent character of the Roman Court, had shaken the Church to its foundations. The storm which had shaken the surface of English society had left its depths unmoved and undisturbed by the great work of extermination proceeding overhead; these processes of growth had been gradually continuing their course during the whole of the third period. Thus, then, when Edward IV. emerged from the troubles of the Wars of the Roses as King of England, his position, though it might seem very similar to that of a king who had triumphed over his nobility, was yet considerably modified. The nobility were no doubt gone, but it was not the Crown which had crushed them. The Church, indeed, threw all its influence on the side of the Crown, but it was in the consciousness of the insecurity of its position in the hearts of the people that it did so. The King and his Commons stood face to face, with no intermediate class to check their mutual action, but the Commons were already free, and headed by a rapidly rising body of wealthy secondary landowners or merchants. Nevertheless, the immediate effect of the destruction of the nobility was completely to check constitutional growth, and to establish a government which was little short of arbitrary.

The Italian statecraft, which the influence of the Renaissance rendered paramount, for the moment increased the tendency to absolutism; and in the reign of Henry VIII., though a shadow of popular government yet remained, the will of the king was little short of absolute. What may be called the fourth period of our history is

occupied by the establishment of this arbitrary power, and the gradual awakening of national life, under the influences of the Renaissance, and of the circumstances which accompanied the Reformation, which tended to modify it in the reign of Elizabeth. When Protestantism and the vigorous young thought of the reawakened nation became linked indissolubly with the fortunes of the sovereign in her national war against Spain, the mere necessity of the union tended much to put a practical limit to the arbitrary character of the new monarchy. It was the miscomprehension of the necessity of this union between king and people which produced the contests which occupy our history during the reign of the Stuarts.

Bred in the theory of monarchy by Divine right, the logical offspring of feudalism, when separated from the Empire and the Church, the Stuarts were willing to accept the arbitrary power of their predecessors, but would not acknowledge the necessity of harmonious action with the people, on which alone, as things then were, such arbitrary authority could rest. The middle class of gentry had been increasing in power and influence till they were now in a position to assume that leadership in the nation which the destruction of the nobles had left vacant. And behind them there was the bulk of the people, whose Protestantism, the religious character of the late national struggle, and the love of truth engendered by the Renaissance, had raised to enthusiastic Puritanism. The constitutional life, checked for a time by the Tudor monarchy, again sprang into existence. In the struggle which ensued it was the enthusiastic party which ultimately triumphed, and its leader, Cromwell, is

seen mingling his conscientious efforts at the establishment of constitutional government with a religious fervour too great to be sustained.

But his rule, freed from those parts for which, as yet, the gentry at all events were unprepared, established, definitely and for ever, the necessity of recurring sooner or later to the constitutional principles of the fourteenth century. In the Revolution of 1688 those principles triumphed. But they triumphed in the hands no longer of a great enthusiastic leader, but of a party, which found its chief supporters in a limited number of noble houses, whose aristocratic pride was injured by the arbitrary power of the sovereign, and whose influence in the formation of Parliament promised them political superiority under the establishment of parliamentary government. From that time till the present the scene of the contest has been changed. A party struggle of some thirty years gave place to the unchecked predominance of parliamentary rule. And the last period of our history has been occupied by the efforts of the excluded nation to make their voice heard above that of a nominal representation, consisting in reality of the representatives of a dominant class, under the influence either of the great Whig families or of the Crown.

GENEALOGIES OF THE LEADING FAMILIES

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(*The founder of the family a kinsman of William I.*)

DE BOHUNS (HEREFORD, ESSEX, NORTHAMPTON).

(The founder of the family a kinsman of William I.)

DE BOHUNS (HEREFORD, ESSEX, NORTHAMPTON).

Henry de Bohun = Maud, daughter of Geoffrey Fitz-Peter, Earl of Essex.
1st Earl of Hereford. Hereditary Constable of England. One of the Guardians of the Charter. Taken prisoner at battle of Lincoln. Died 1220.

Humphrey, 2nd Earl of Hereford. Made also Earl of Essex by Henry III. Godfather to Prince Edward. On Barons' side. Taken prisoner at Evesham. Restored to favour. = Maud, daughter of Earl of Ewe.

Humphrey = Eleanor, daughter of Eve and William de Braose.
Commanded on Barons' side at Lewes. Taken prisoner at Evesham. Died 1266.

Humphrey, 3rd Earl of Hereford and Essex. Restored to favour by Edward I. Fought in Scotland. Refused to fight for Edward I. Compelled him to ratify the Charter. Died 1298. = Maud, daughter of Ingelram de Fines.

Humphrey, 4th Earl of Hereford and Essex. Fought for Edward I. and II. in Scotland. Taken prisoner at Stryvelin; exchanged for Bruce's wife. Refused to obey Edward's order not to fight Despenser. Joined Lancaster's insurrection. Killed at battle of Boroughbridge, 1322. = Elizabeth, daughter of Edward I.

1 | 2 | 3

John = Alice Fitz-Alan, daughter of Earl of Arundel.
5th Earl of Hereford and Essex. Died 1335.

Humphrey.
6th Earl of Hereford and Essex.

William = Elizabeth, daughter of Badlesmere, widow of Edmund Mortimer.
Fought at Cressy. Made Earl of Northampton, 1337. Died 1360.

Humphrey = Joan, daughter of Richard, 9th Earl of Arundel.
7th Earl of Hereford, Essex, and Northampton. Died 1372.

Eleanor = Thomas of Woodstock, sixth son of Edward III., who thus became Constable.

Mary = Henry IV., who thus became Earl of Hereford, Essex, and Northampton.

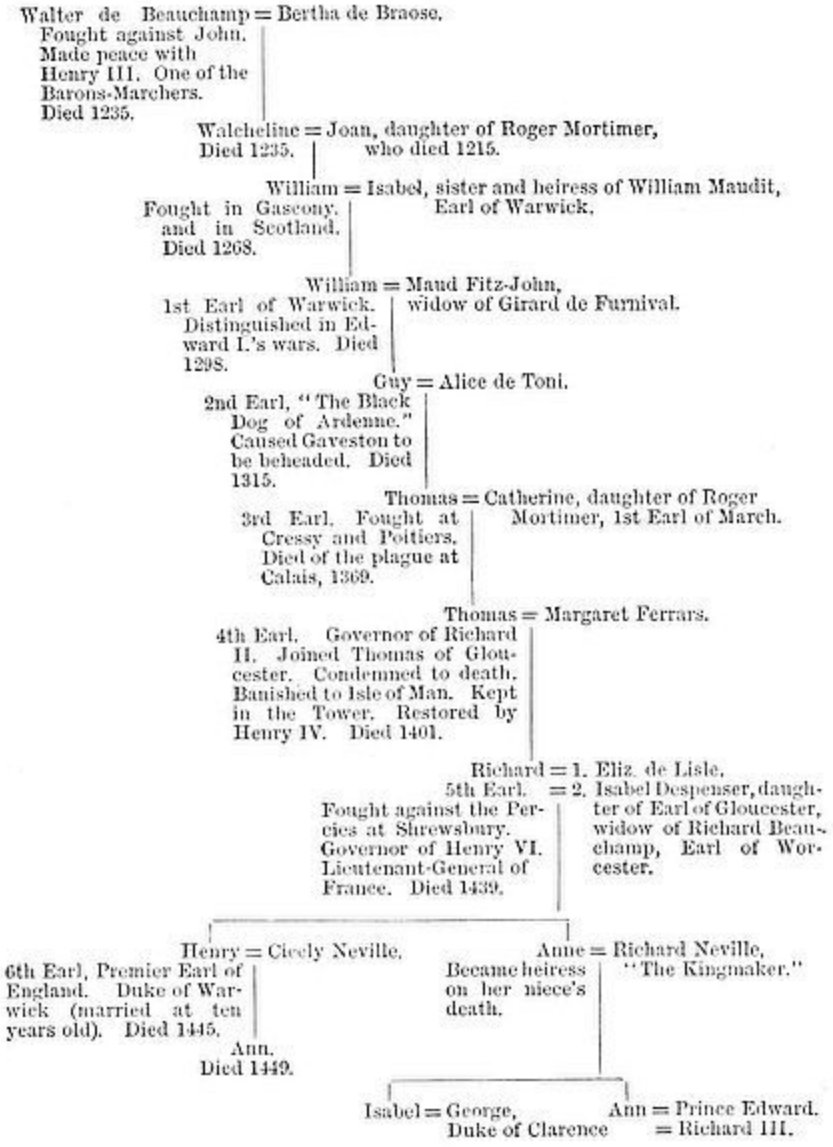
(*Family founded at the Conquest.*)

BEAUCHAMP (WARWICK).

(*Family founded at the Conquest.*)

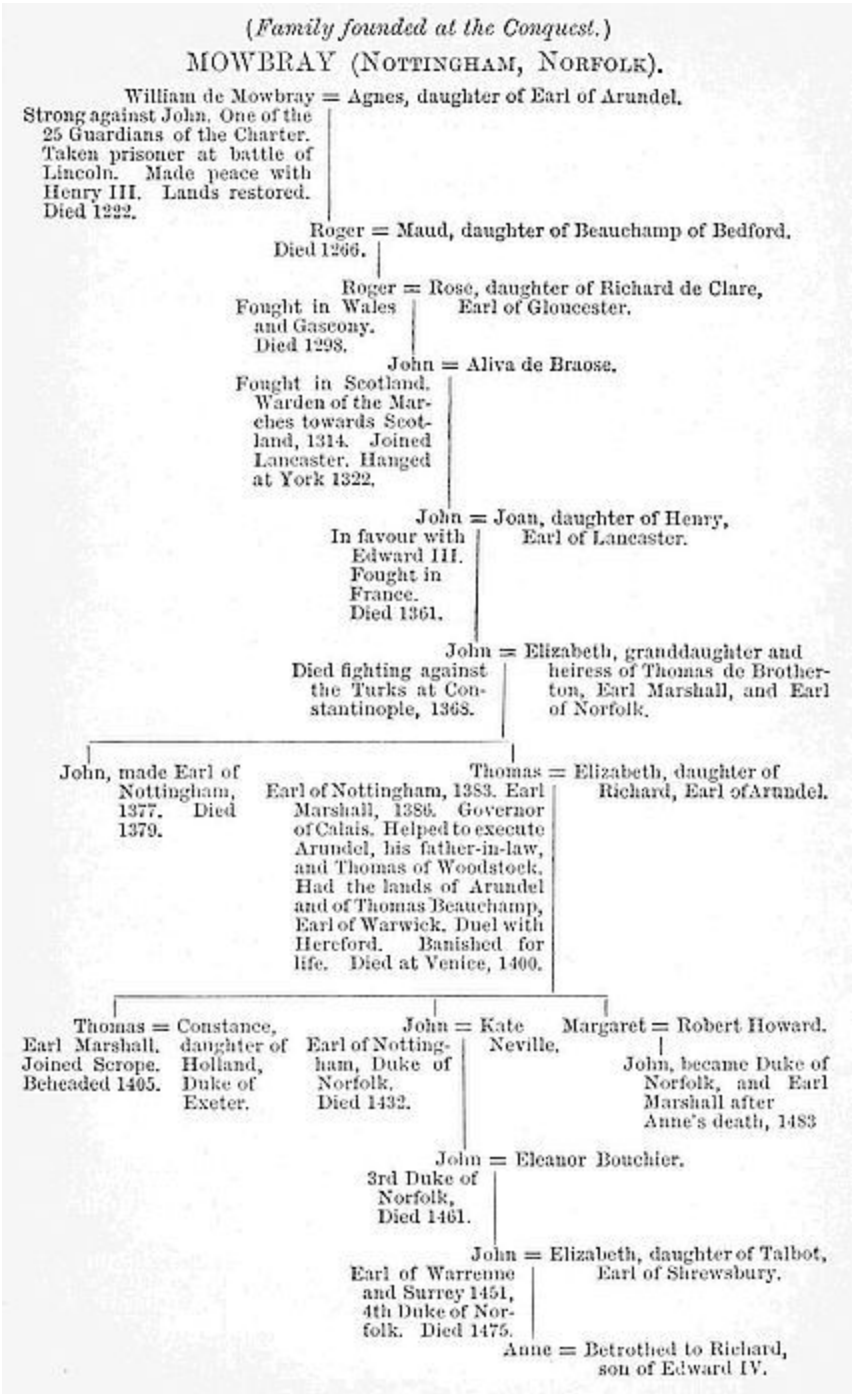
BEAUCHAMP

(WARWICK).

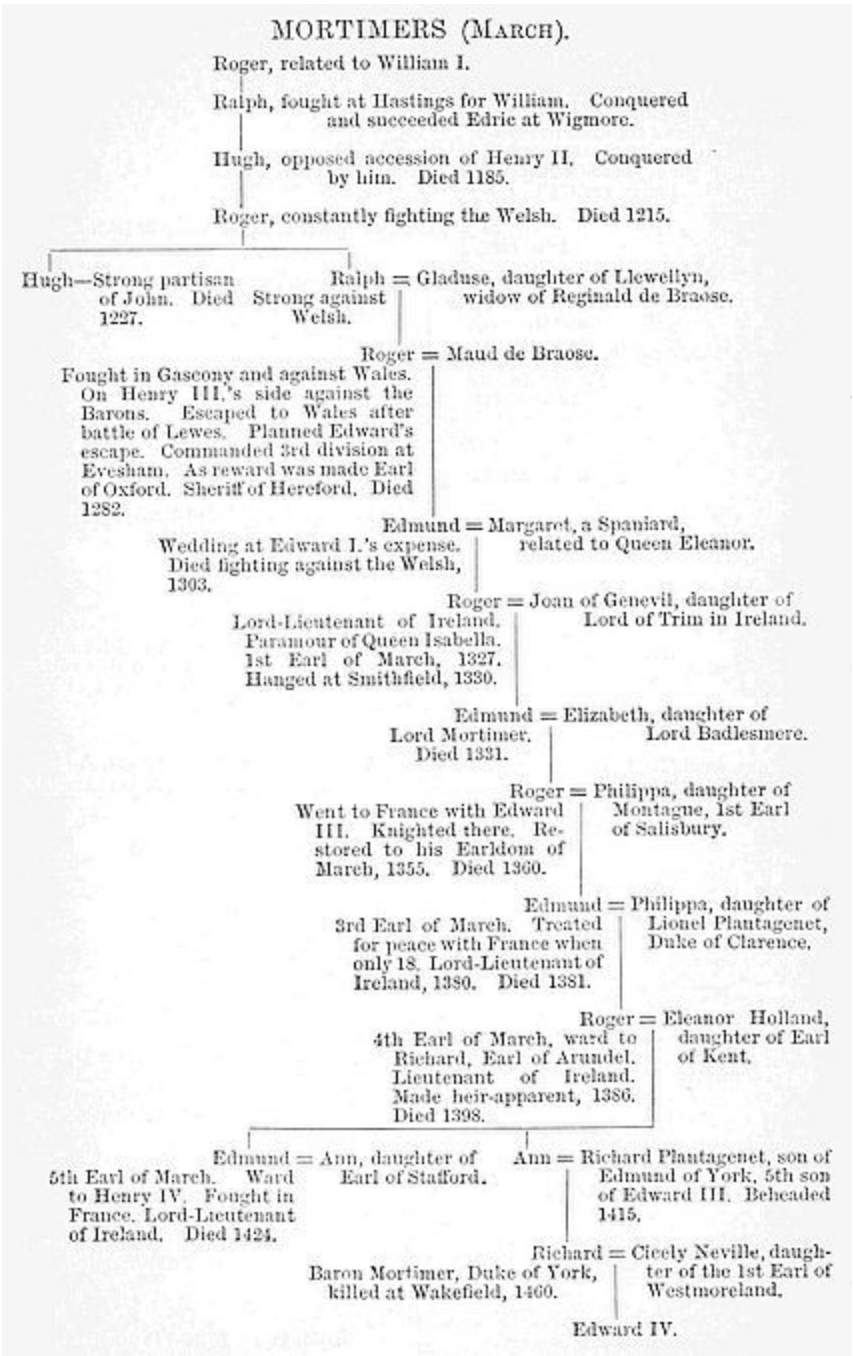


(*Family founded at the Conquest.*)

MOWBRAY (NOTTINGHAM, NORFOLK).

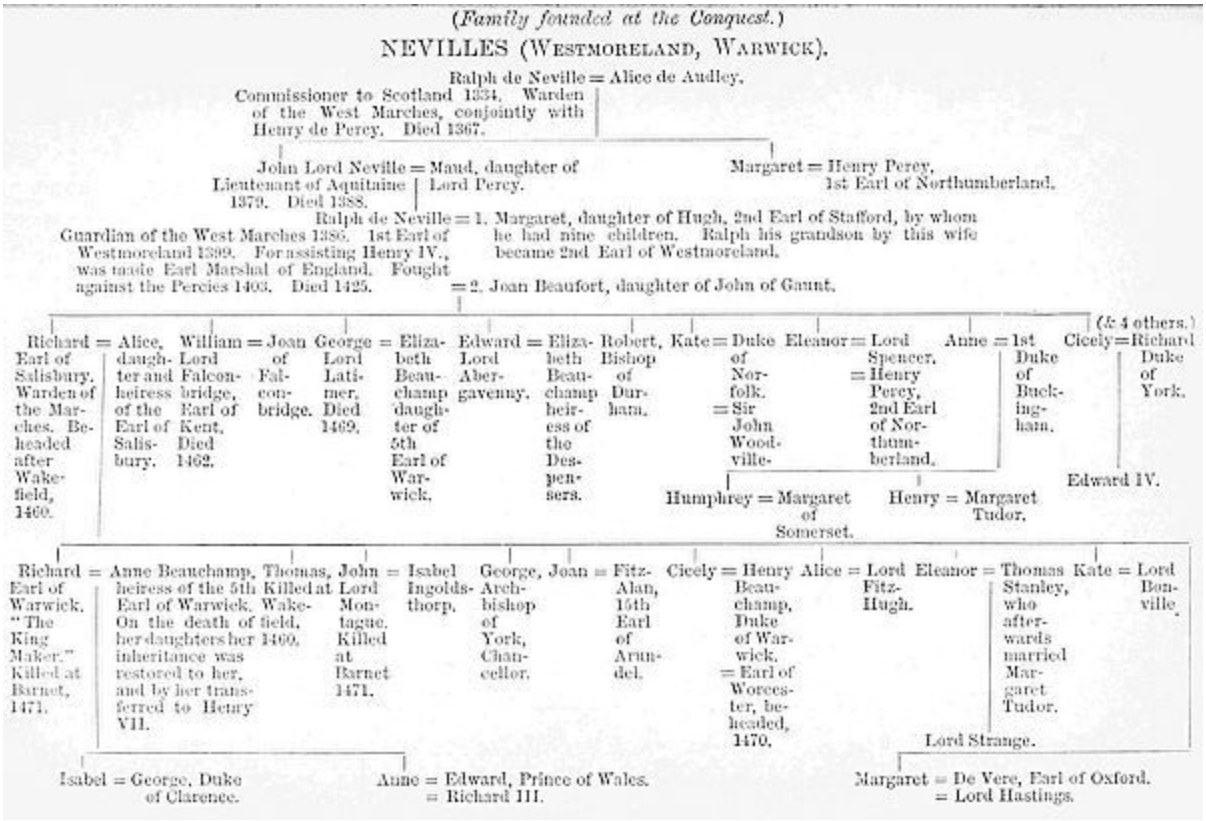


MORTIMERS (MARCH).

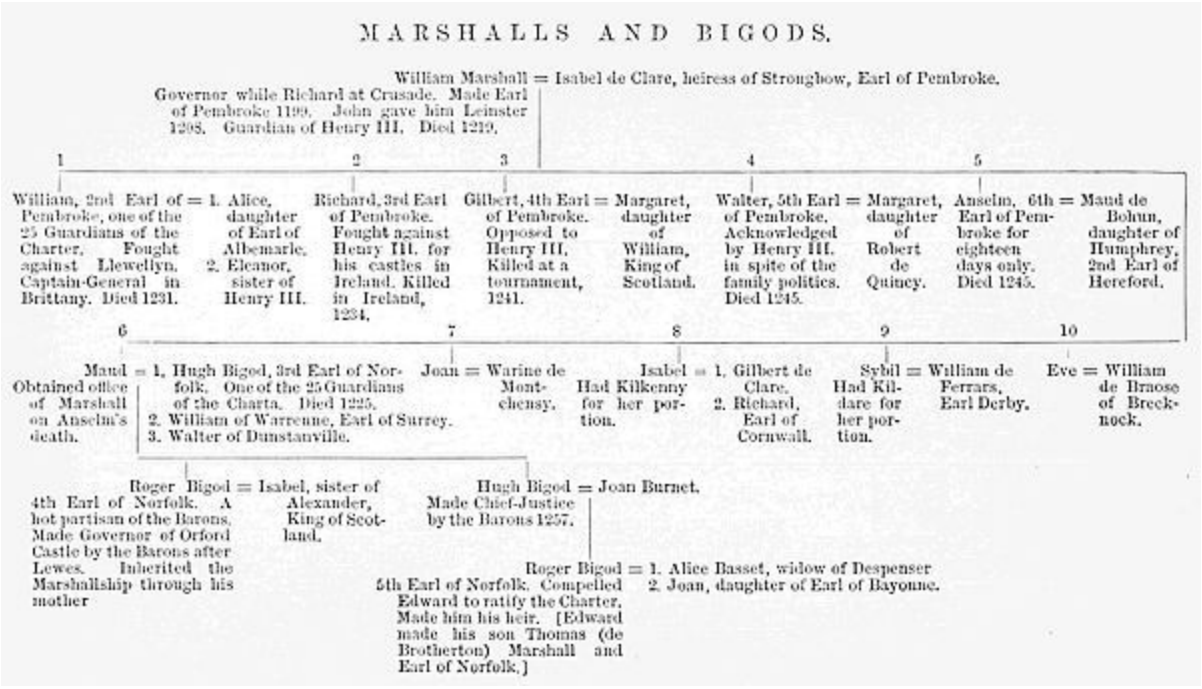


(*Family founded at the Conquest.*)

NEVILLES (WESTMORELAND, WARWICK).

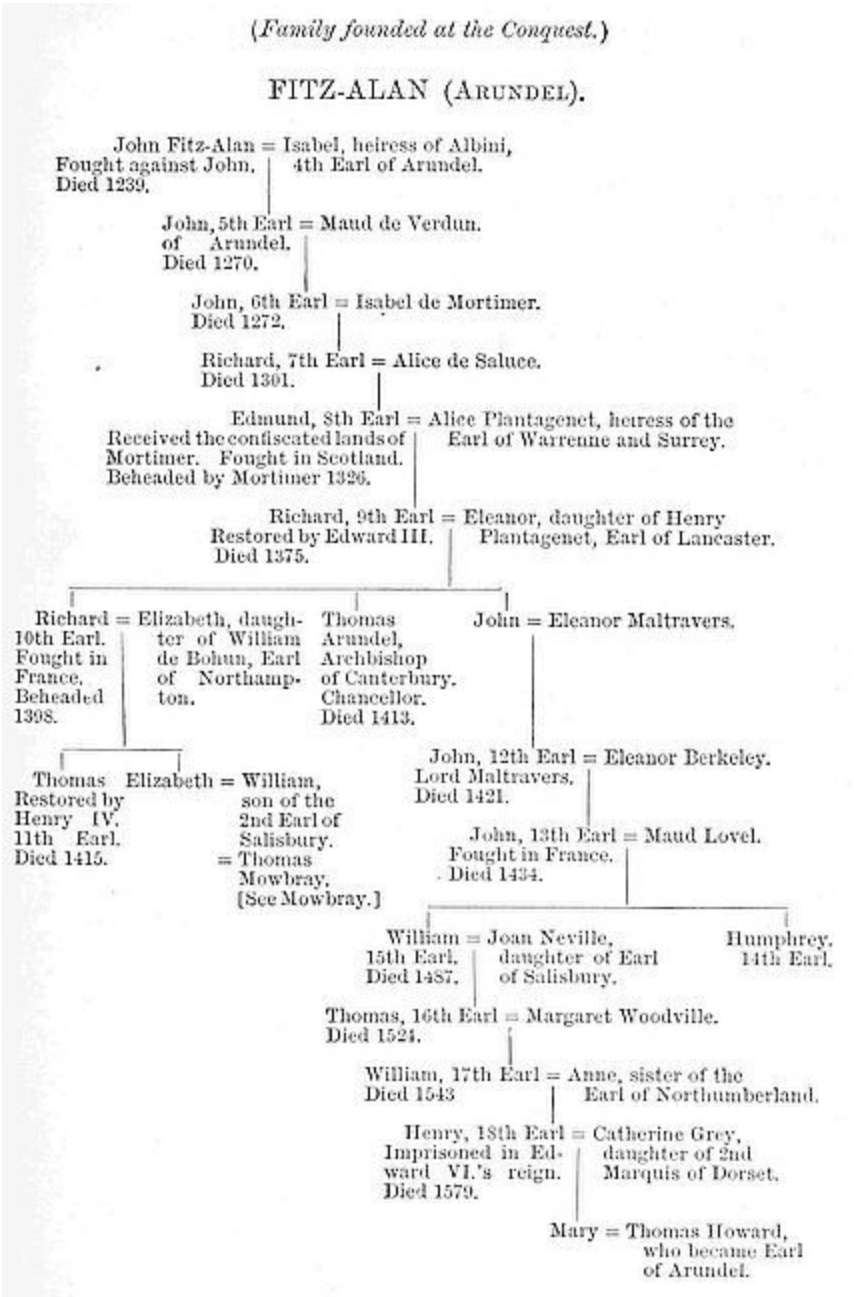


MARSHALLS AND BIGODS.



(*Family founded at the Conquest.*)

FITZ-ALAN (ARUNDEL).

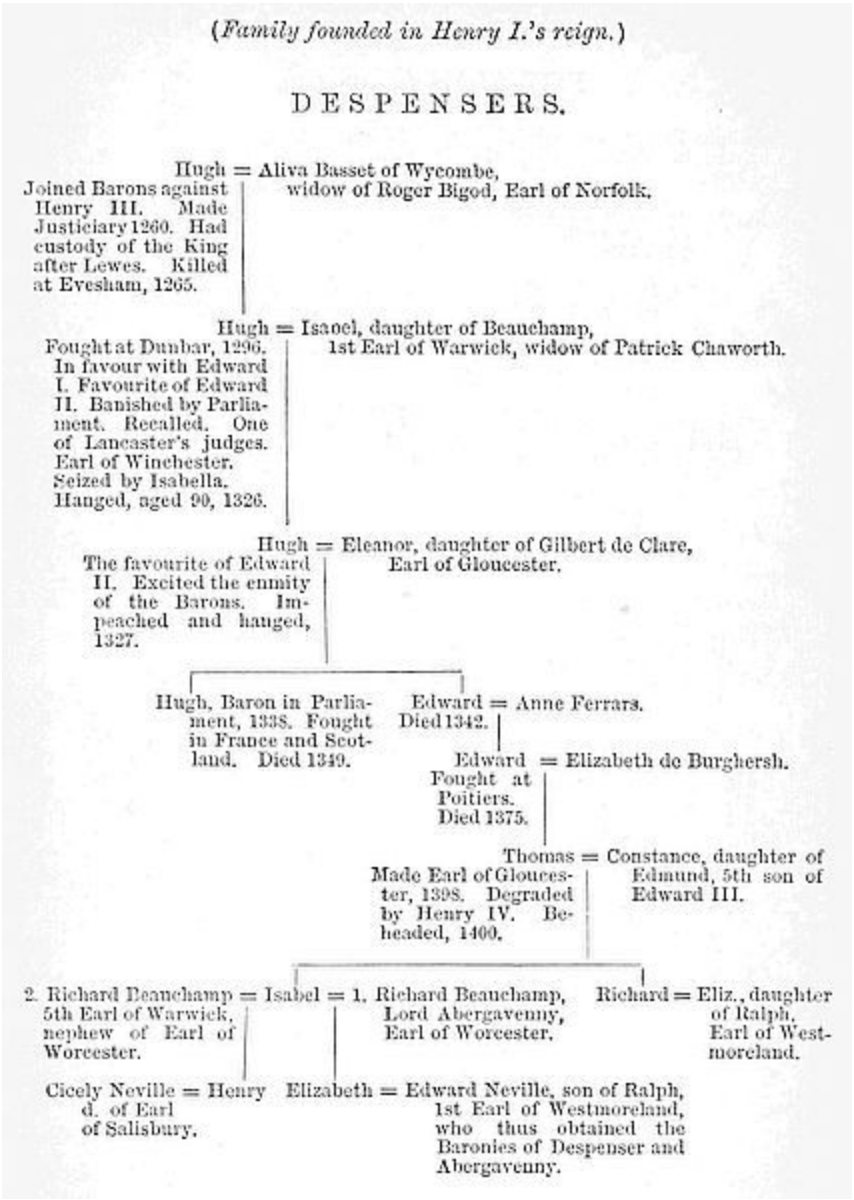


(*Family founded in Henry I.'s reign.*)

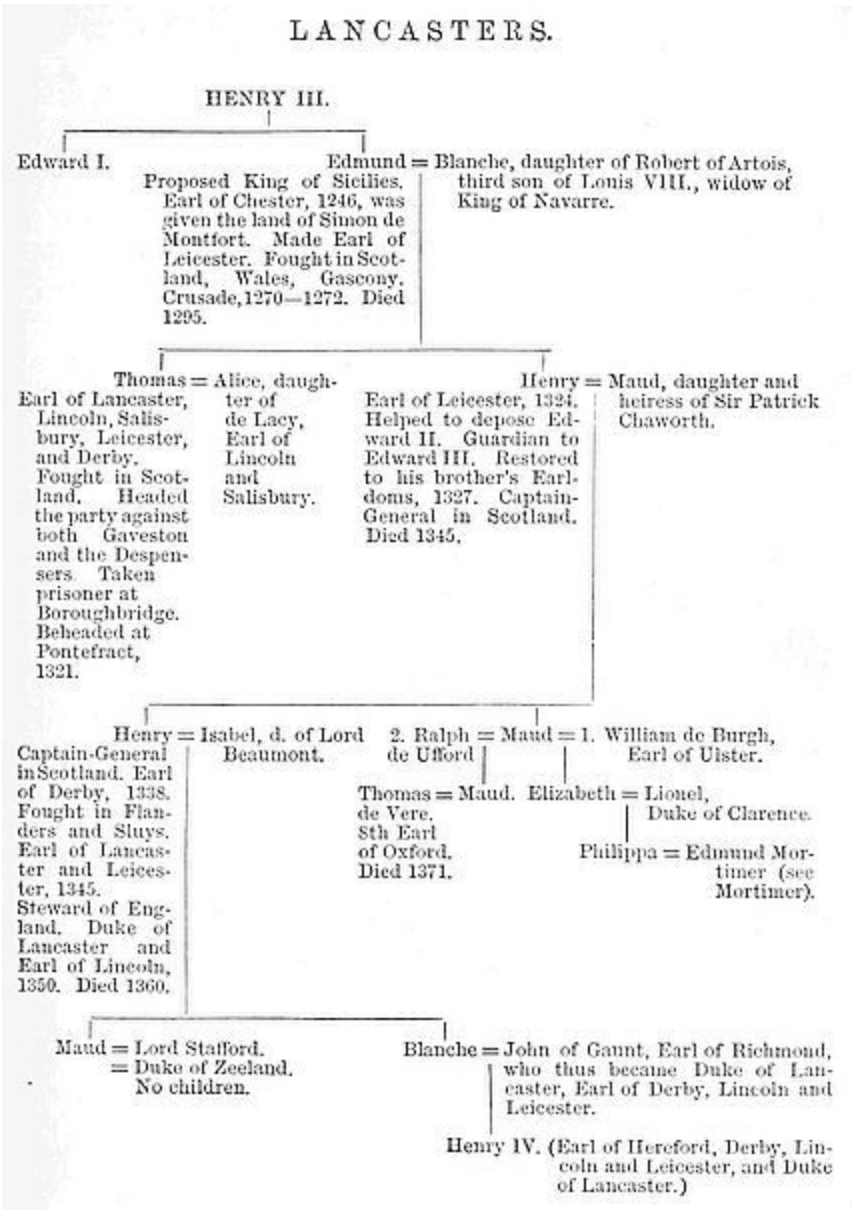
DESPENSERS.

(*Family founded in Henry I.'s reign.*)

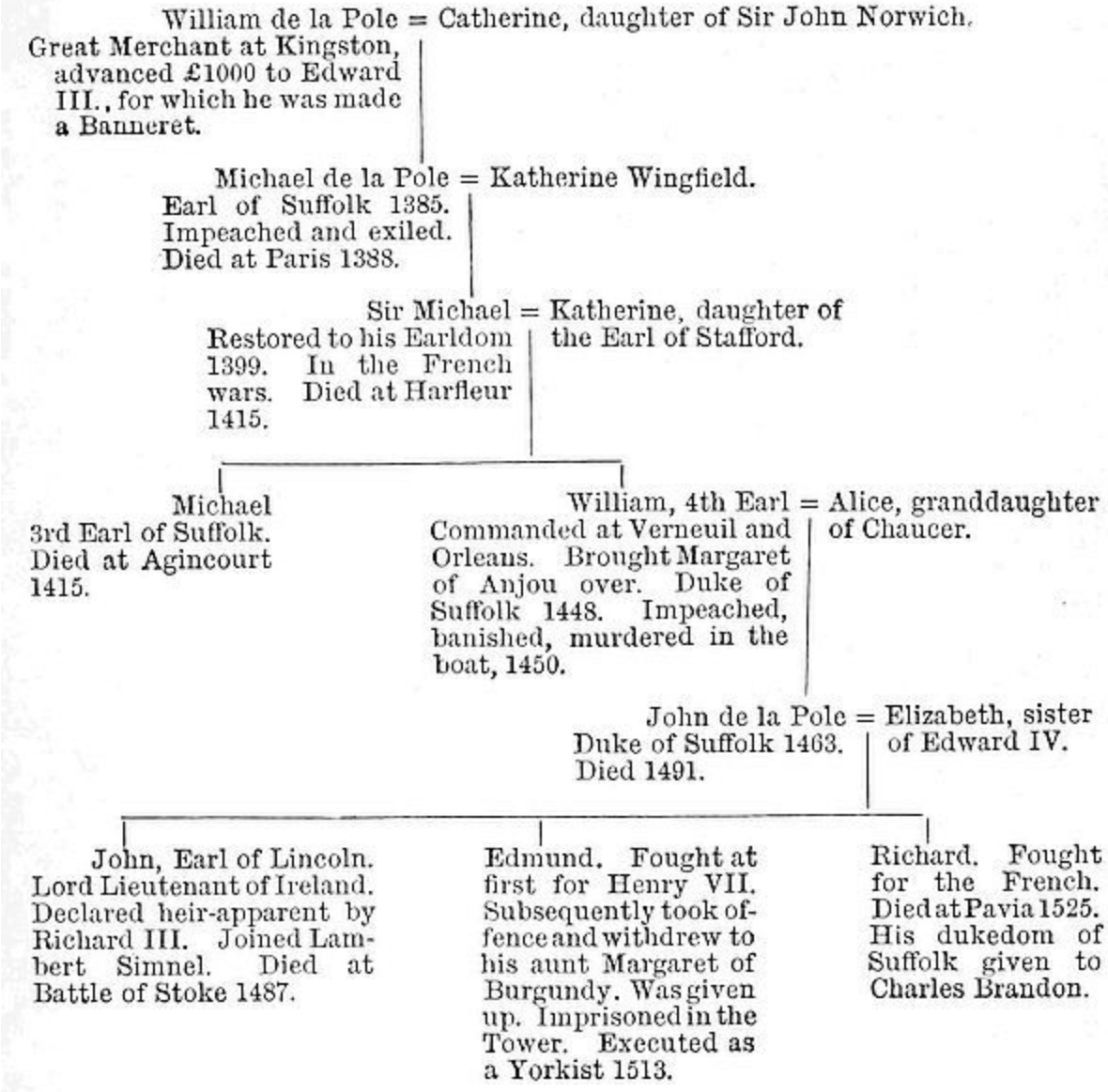
DESPENSERS.



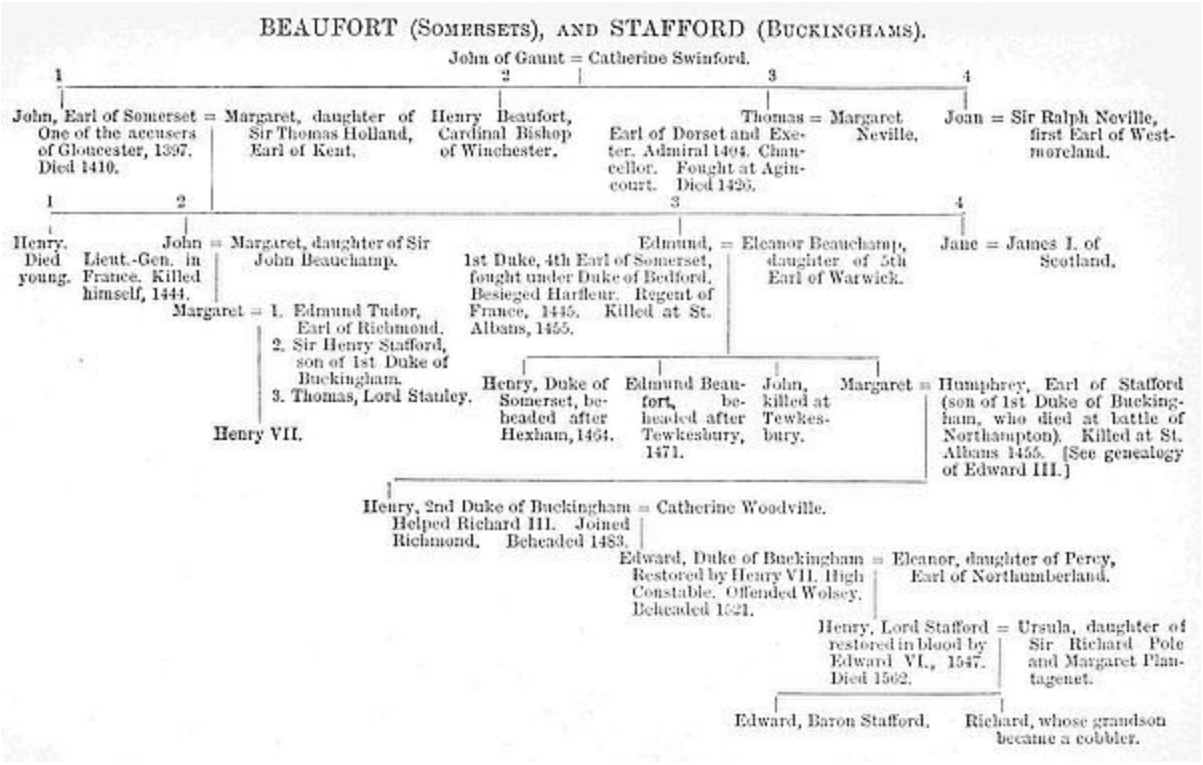
LANCASTERS.


LANCASTERS.
HENRY III.
Edward I.
Edmund = Blanche, daughter of Robert of Artois, third son of Louis VIII., widow of King of Navarre.
Proposed King of Sicilies. Earl of Chester, 1246, was given the land of Simon de Montfort. Made Earl of Leicester. Fought in Scotland, Wales, Gascony. Crusade, 1270—1272. Died 1295.
Thomas = Alice, daughter of de Lacy, Earl of Lincoln and Salisbury.
Earl of Lancaster, Lincoln, Salisbury, Leicester, and Derby. Fought in Scotland. Headed the party against both Gaveston and the Despensers. Taken prisoner at Boroughbridge. Beheaded at Pontefract, 1321.
Henry = Maud, daughter and heiress of Sir Patrick Chaworth.
Earl of Leicester, 1324. Helped to depose Edward II. Guardian to Edward III. Restored to his brother's Earldoms, 1327. Captain-General in Scotland. Died 1345.
Henry = Isabel, d. of Lord Beaumont.
Captain-General in Scotland. Earl of Derby, 1338. Fought in Flanders and Sluys. Earl of Lancaster and Leicester, 1345. Steward of England. Duke of Lancaster and Earl of Lincoln, 1350. Died 1360.
2. Ralph = Maud = 1. William de Burgh, Earl of Ulster.
de Ufford
Thomas = Maud. Elizabeth = Lionel, Duke of Clarence.
de Vere. 8th Earl of Oxford. Died 1371.
Philippa = Edmund Mortimer (see Mortimer).
Maud = Lord Stafford. = Duke of Zeeland. No children.
Blanche = John of Gaunt, Earl of Richmond, who thus became Duke of Lancaster, Earl of Derby, Lincoln and Leicester.
Henry IV. (Earl of Hereford, Derby, Lincoln and Leicester, and Duke of Lancaster.)

DE LA POLES.

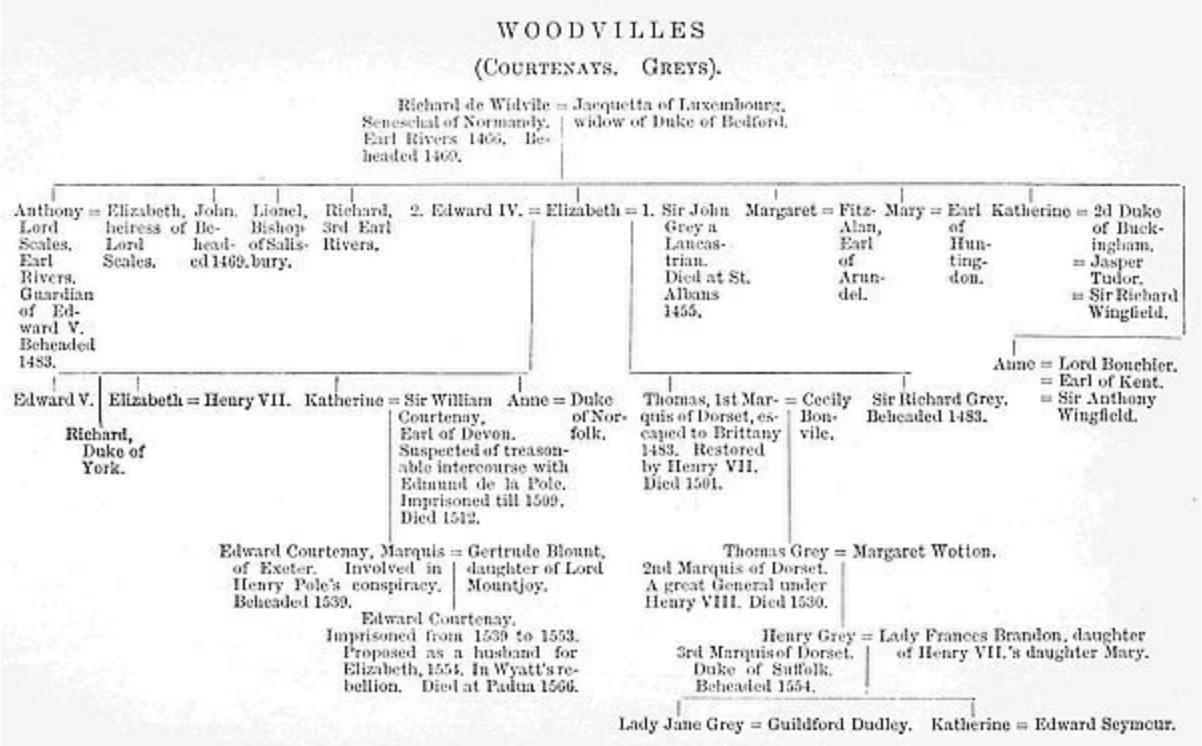

William de la Pole = Catherine, daughter of Sir John Norwich.
Great Merchant at Kingston, advanced £1000 to Edward III., for which he was made a Banneret.
Michael de la Pole = Katherine Wingfield.
Earl of Suffolk 1385. Impeached and exiled. Died at Paris 1388.
Sir Michael = Katherine, daughter of the Earl of Stafford.
Restored to his Earldom 1399. In the French wars. Died at Harfleur 1415.
Michael 3rd Earl of Suffolk. Died at Agincourt 1415.
William, 4th Earl = Alice, granddaughter of Chaucer.
Commanded at Verneuil and Orleans. Brought Margaret of Anjou over. Duke of Suffolk 1448. Impeached, banished, murdered in the boat, 1450.
John de la Pole = Elizabeth, sister of Edward IV.
Duke of Suffolk 1463. Died 1491.
John, Earl of Lincoln. Lord Lieutenant of Ireland. Declared heir-apparent by Richard III. Joined Lambert Simnel. Died at Battle of Stoke 1487.
Edmund. Fought at first for Henry VII. Subsequently took offence and withdrew to his aunt Margaret of Burgundy. Was given up. Imprisoned in the Tower. Executed as a Yorkist 1513.
Richard. Fought for the French. Died at Pavia 1525. His dukedom of Suffolk given to Charles Brandon.

BEAUFORT (SOMERSETS), AND STAFFORD (BUCKINGHAMS).



WOODVILLES

(COURTENAYS. GREYS.)



ENGLAND BEFORE THE CONQUEST

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Departure of the Romans.

The dominion of the Romans in Britain had been complete. The country, as far as the Frith of Forth, had been brought under Roman civilization. But in England, as elsewhere, the continuance of that form of civilization had produced weakness; and the unconquered Britons of the North, known by the name of Picts, broke into the Romanized districts, and pushed their incursions far into the centre of the country. On all sides, the nations outside the Empire were breaking through its limits and threatening its existence. The danger which threatened the very heart of the Empire, from the advance of the Goths into Italy, compelled the Romans in 411 to withdraw their legions from Britain, and leave the inhabitants of the island to fight their own battles with the Picts. When these enemies formed an alliance with the pirates of Ireland, known by the name of the Scots, and with the German pirates of the North Sea, known as English or Saxons, the civilized Britons were unable to make head against them, and found it necessary to seek for aid among the invaders themselves They therefore made an arrangement with two Jutish chiefs or Ealdormen, Hengist and Horsa, to come to their assistance. The German rovers consisted of three nations—the Saxons, the inhabitants of Holstein, who had advanced along the coast of Friesland; to the north of them the Angles or

English, who inhabited Sleswig; and still further to the north, the Jutes, whose name is still perpetuated in the promontory of Jutland.

The Jutish settlement in Kent. 449.

The Saxons in Sussex. 477-495.

The Angles in East Anglia. 520.

The first landing-place of the Jutish allies of the Britons was in the Isle of Thanet, separated at that time by a considerable inlet from the British mainland. Their aid enabled the Britons to drive back the Pictish invaders. But their success, and the settlement they had formed, enticed many of their brethren to join them, and their numbers were constantly increasing. Increase of numbers implied increased demand in the way of payment and provisions. Quarrels arose between the new-comers and their British allies. War was determined on. The inlet which divided Thanet from the mainland was passed, and at Aylesford, on the Medway, a battle was fought, which, though it cost Horsa his life, put the conquering Barbarians into possession of much of the east of Kent. The victory was followed by the extermination of the inhabitants; against the clergy especially the anger of the conquerors was directed. The country was thus cleared of the inhabitants, and the new-comers settled down, bringing with them their goods and families and national institutions. This process was repeated at every stage of the conquest of the country, which thus became not only a conquest but a re-settlement. The Jutish conquest of Kent was followed, in 477, by an invasion of the Saxons, who, under Ella, overran the south of Sussex, and

captured the fortress of Anderida near Pevensey; and in 495, by a fresh Saxon invasion under Cerdic and Cymric, who passed up the Southampton water and established the kingdom of the West Saxons. A momentary check was given to the advance of the conquerors, in 520, at the battle of Mount Badon. But almost immediately fresh hordes of Angles began conquering and settling the East of England, where they established the East Anglian kingdom, with its two great divisions of Northfolk and Southfolk. Between that time and 577, the date of a victory at Deorham, in Gloucestershire, the West Saxons had overrun what are now Hampshire and Wiltshire, Oxfordshire, Berkshire, and the valley of the Severn, reaching almost as far as Chester; while the Angles, entering the Humber and working up the rivers, established themselves on the Trent, where they were known as Mercians or Border men, and formed two Northern kingdoms, that of Deira in Yorkshire, and that of Bernicia, extending as far as the Forth. The capital of this last-named kingdom was Bamborough, founded by Ida, and called after his wife Bebba, Bebbanburgh, or Bamborough.

The junction of these two kingdoms under Æthelfrith, about 600, established the Kingdom of Northumbria; thus was begun the process of consolidating the several divided English kingdoms. This tendency to consolidation is marked by the title of Bretwalda, which is given to the chief of the nation dominant for the time being. The name had been applied to Ella of Sussex, to Ceawlin of Wessex, and was held at the time of the establishment of the Northumbrian power by Æthelberht of Kent. There were thus two pre-eminent powers among the English—Northumbria, under its

king Æthelfrith, claiming supremacy over the middle districts of England, including the Mercians and Middle English; and Kent, under Æthelberht, paramount over Middlesex, Essex, and East Anglia; while a third kingdom, that of Wessex, though large in extent and destined to become the dominant power, was as yet occupied chiefly in improving its position towards the west. Beyond these lay the district still in the possession of the Britons. The possessions of this people were now divided by the conquest of the English into three—West Wales, or Cornwall; North Wales, which we now call Wales; and Strathclyde, a district stretching from the Clyde along the west of the Pennine chain, and separated from Wales by Chester, in the hands of the Mercians, and a piece of Lancashire in the hands of the Northumbrians.

Conversion of the English. 597.

It was while the kingdoms of Northumbria and Kent were thus in the balance that the conversion of the English to the Christian faith began. Æthelberht of Kent had married Bercta, the daughter of the Frankish King of Paris. She was a Christian; and Gregory the Great at that time occupying the Roman See, which was rapidly rising to the position of supremacy in the Christian Church, took advantage of the opening thus afforded, and despatched a band of missionaries under a monk named Augustine to convert the people. In 597 they landed in Thanet. By the influence of the Queen they were well received, and established themselves at Canterbury, which has ever since retained its position as the seat of the Primacy. The Kings of Essex and East Anglia followed the example of their superior