



<http://kentarchaeology.org.uk/research/archaeologia-cantiana/>

Kent Archaeological Society is a registered charity number 223382

© 2017 Kent Archaeological Society

Archæologia Cantiana.

THE FAMILY OF GULDEFORD.*

BY THE REV. CANON R. C. JENKINS.

IF the district of East Kent is interesting to us, from its representing the scene of our earliest recorded history, and bringing back to us the memories and traditions of that proud isolation which our county once enjoyed, as the most ancient of the kingdoms of the Heptarchy—if the country of North Kent claims our interest, on the ground of the close and early connection in which it places us with the Metropolis, and from the manner in which it fills up the intermediate portion of our history, and that of the eminent families who were connected with its feudal period—that important division, in the county, which we traverse during our Tenterden Congress, has the distinctive advantage of introducing us to the most stirring and eventful period in the annals of our country; a period from which the domestic and social history of England may be said to begin. This period is as marked in its architectural features, as it is in the spiritual and ecclesiastical changes it witnessed; and is covered by the reigns of the only family of our kings which has a native name and an English origin. The records of the Tudor dynasty, which, unlike any previous one, was English, not only in its origin but in its many and varied alliances, bring before us almost a romance

* A Paper read at Tenterden, on July 28, 1880.

of history ; carry us into almost every scene of English life, whether public or private, from the grand pageant of the Field of the Cloth of Gold, to the progresses of Elizabeth from house to house among her people ; and present to us the first and grandest type of that strange and composite social system, which no other country has ever realised ; in which every class and every individual has his necessary and appointed place in the great framework of society ; which might well be likened to a splendid mosaic work, in which the rarest stones and the brightest colours are blended with the humbler ground-work, whose subdued tints give them increased beauty by their very contrast, but in which every stone is equally necessary, both to the safety and the completeness of the work. It is thus that from this memorable period every class of society, and every member of it from the highest to the lowest, have found their proper place, without rivalry and without disturbance. The sanguinary and ruinous campaigns in France, and the still more fatal and fratricidal civil war which depopulated England, had almost destroyed all the ancient nobility ; whose memories are from time to time revived among us, in the titles called out of abeyance from among the descendants of their female heirs ; and, out of the social fabric thus shattered and all but destroyed, the first of the Tudors had to build up a new aristocracy and new counsellors. It seems as though the Weald of Kent was destined to be almost the seed-plot of this new plantation. In the mansions that surround us, some still in existence though retaining the venerable features of antiquity, others in ruins, and others again rebuilt to represent a later age and its higher requirements, we recognise the homes of some of the most historic families of the Tudor

period ; many of them the near relatives, and too often for that very reason the inevitable victims, of one of the greatest and yet, perhaps, the very worst of our kings. For we are in the country of the Boleyns, of the Guldefords, of the Sydneys, of the Auchers, of the Colepepers, of the Hales, the Roberts, the Mayneys, the Harlackendens, the Bakers, and a host of kindred families, whose memorials fill the churches around us, and whose public and private life is interwoven with that of the most touching and romantic period of our national history. I wish that I had but the grouping and colouring skill of the painter, or the descriptive power of a word-painting historian, or the fire of a dramatist, that I might bring before your imagination, as vividly as I could wish, the more illustrious of the members of these great historic houses ; but it would need almost the wand of a magician to conjure up the many scenes of stirring interest in which they took part, and the strange vicissitudes which were witnessed in their ever-changing fortunes.

But there is one family among the number which stands out from the rest more conspicuously than any other ; and whose name gathers around it some of the noblest memories and most affecting incidents of the period—that of the Guldefords of Hempsted in Benenden, and of Halden in Rolvenden ; eminent from a much earlier age than that which witnessed its connection with royalty ; illustrious in the person of the great Duchess of Northumberland, whose maiden name is read in that of the unfortunate Lord Guldeford Dudley, the husband of Lady Jane Grey, “ who were lovely and pleasant in their lives, while in their deaths they were not divided.”

The little parish of East Guldeford in Sussex, in

the near neighbourhood of Rye, a cheerless marshland, numbering about a hundred and fifty inhabitants, gave its name to this ancient house—a name which has almost perished as a patronymic, while it survives in that of the parish, which forms thus a “*magni nominis umbra.*” I do not find any mention of it in Domesday; and, if a conjecture may be hazarded in regard to its derivation, I might suggest that it marked the limit of the jurisdiction of the guilds connected with the Cinque port of Rye. Or, it might represent to us the ford at which a toll or payment was exacted, from those travelling from Kent into Sussex; an early form of the name being *Geldeforde*, which occurs in 1347.* In this case, its origin would be analogous to that of the village which gave name to the illustrious family of Zintzendorf, and to the castle which gave a still higher title to the imperial house of Hohenzollern.

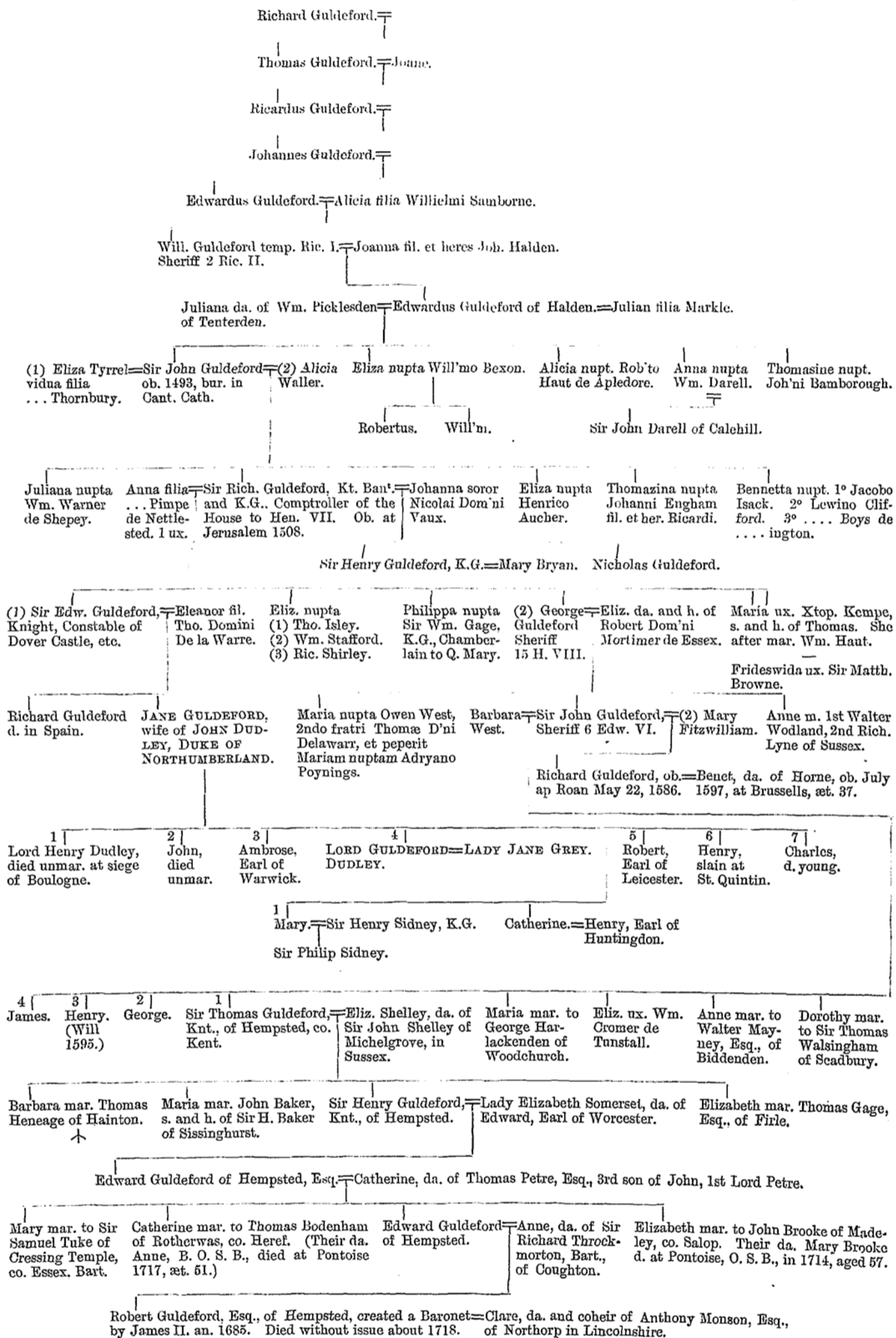
I shall not attempt to carry up the pedigree, of the family, to that period which every herald vaguely assumes to be the only possible starting-point, of every house which has made itself famous in English history; whether, in Shakespeare’s words, it was “born great, achieved greatness, or had greatness thrust upon it.”

The origin of the family is, fortunately, sufficiently remote, and venerable, to enable us to dispense with a reference to the fabulous list of the followers of the Conqueror. From Richard Guldeford, its earliest ascertained ancestor, who, according to the ordinary reckoning of descents, must have been born about the year 1186, the pedigree merely records the names of its successive links, until we reach the first member of it who gave it celebrity and a distinguished rank in the county—that of William de Guldeford, who

* *Arch. Cant.*, Vol. X., p. 122.

Pedigree of Guldeford.

(Add. MSS. 5507, fo. 250. Vis. Kent, 1619. Add. by Hasted.)
 (Continuation from Pedigrees of the English Ladies of Pontoise. *Herald and Genealogist*, vol. iii., p. 120.)



(From *Harl. MS.* 1982, fo. 115. Shropshire Pedigrees by R. Holme.)

Sir Jo. Guldeford = Dorothy, da. of John Copley by Anne,
 of Kent. Knt. daughter of the Lord Hoo.

Sir Thomas Guldeford.

1685, is believed to have become entirely extinct in the early part of the last century.

I must now ask you to concentrate your attention upon the elder branch, which was seated at Halden; that of Sir Edward Guldeford whose monument (we trust an imperishable one) is the south chapel of the present Church of Rolvenden, which he founded on April 14th, 1444. He married Eleanor, the daughter of Thomas Lord Delawarr, and had issue an only son, Sir Richard, who died in Spain childless; and here, as a passing observation, we may note the early connection of the family with Spain, which was begun by the half-brother of Sir Edward Guldeford, Sir Henry, who was created a Knight of the Garter, and distinguished himself in the wars of King Ferdinand of Spain against the Moors, being present at the taking of Grenada. For this service, he received from that monarch a picturesque addition to the arms of the family, in the form of a canton charged with the pomegranate (the apple of Grenada), which, as it was borne by his collateral descendants, was apparently given to his family as well as to himself. He died without issue in the 23rd year of Henry VIII. This intimate connection with the Spanish Court was, as we shall see hereafter, not unfruitful in its results to the family in the day of trial and misfortune. We revert, from this passing digression, to the family of Sir Edward, the elder half-brother of the Spanish crusader (if we may so term him), and our eye falls first upon that member of the family which forms the central point of interest and attraction, in its long and chequered history. The Lady Jane Guldeford, who became the heiress of her brother Sir Richard, was early married to one whose political intrigues and

exalted position placed him, from the first, in the most conspicuous and therefore the most perilous position; in the day when the life of the humblest peasant was safer than that of the most dignified courtier, however he might be loaded with titles and ensigns of nobility—for these became in truth mere *pondera ad ruinam* to men who, like John Dudley, Duke of Northumberland, were too near the throne to be for a single day beyond the peril of a fall. I think (and you will doubtless think with me) that we can hardly conceive a more touching picture than that of Jane Guldeford,—whose father, though he filled the high offices of Marshal of Calais, Lord Warden of the Cinque Ports, Constable of Dover Castle, and Master of the Ordnance, appears to have brought up his family in the quiet seclusion of country life, far from the struggles and intrigues of the city and the court,—suddenly brought out into the full glare of royalty, and passing on into a life of constant fear and anxiety, more terrible and unendurable than the overwhelming afflictions in which it culminated. The contrast between the tranquil scene, in which we have met to-day, and the great city with its seething multitudes; between the quiet country home and the gaieties of the court, is great even now. What must it have been then? But Jane Guldeford had a far higher nature, and a far more real nobility, than her powerful and ambitious husband. Of her earlier years, indeed, we know little or nothing; but as we gather the ripened fruits of her later life, we may well realise in imagination how bright and beautiful must have been its seed-time—how fair a spring must have preceded its autumn season. In her descendant, the great Sir Philip Sydney, we seem to read the character of his

ancestress; while the touching words of her will, as well as the constancy of her life during the storms which fell upon her, help us to fill up a portrait hardly equalled in beauty by that of any of her contemporaries. But we proceed to note, briefly, the strange vicissitudes which made her name so memorable, and connected it so closely, with the annals of her country; first making mention of her children, through one of whom that connection was made at once so near and so fatal. Henry, the eldest son of the Duchess, fell at the siege of Boulogne, less fortunate than his companion in arms, Sir William Hardres, who (as many here present will remember) escaped in safety from the scene of that fruitless victory, receiving one of the gates of the town as the trophy of his bravery and success. The second son, John, died unmarried—Ambrose, the third, acquired the Earldom of Warwick—Robert was the famous Earl of Leicester—Henry was slain at St. Quinton—Charles died young—Mary was married to Sir Henry Sydney, and was the mother of the Sir Philip Sydney of a later and brighter day—and four other daughters married into the houses of the greater gentry of the period. I reserve for the last, in this illustrious roll, the name which is to all of us more familiar than any, that of the Lord Guldeford Dudley (wrongly called in our popular histories Lord Guilford Dudley); whose fatal ambition and untimely end connected the name of his mother's house with the most touching and romantic period of our history. Having thus placed before your eye the members of that great house, which was destined so soon to share the fate of the kindred houses of Suffolk and Somerset, and but for its perpetuation in distant and female lines to be

utterly extinguished, I will proceed to direct your attention to the circumstances which led on to the *denouement* of this tragedy of real life. And here I will derive my narrative from a remarkable tract, published in the year 1553, by an eye-witness—a foreigner, and probably one of the German or Flemish exiles who had taken refuge in England, under the protection accorded by Edward VI—a tract of which a copy, presumed to be unique, was possessed by my late friend Mr. Inglis (whose library was so well known as probably the richest in England in such rarities), and was by him translated and printed. This writer, after describing the death of Edward VI under circumstances which could not but lead to the suspicion of poison, proceeds thus :—

“The suspicion, as well as the chief repute of so great a crime, fall upon John Dudley, Duke of Northumberland, whose father was beheaded by Henry VIII, and whose son Guldeford was at this time married to Jane, grand-daughter of Mary, youngest sister of Henry VIII, and daughter of Frances, Mary’s eldest daughter. This John Dudley, after the death of his father, being deprived of all succession, property, and dignity, addicted himself to the military profession, in which he proved himself a valiant man, surpassing others; being noted everywhere, and at last also becoming endeared to the King himself, who created him first a Baron, afterwards an Earl, and at last (as he was one of the twelve guardians of the young King appointed by his father) made him Duke of Northumberland. Having thus obtained the highest offices, without trouble; being agitated by vindictive feelings against the royal children, on account of their father; and being stimulated by the motive of transferring the royal dignity to himself and his own family; he first of all caused the Duke of Somerset (the uncle of King Edward), who was called the Protector, to be convicted under a false charge of treason; making the young King believe that he was legally put to death. This most faithful guardian of the King being thus removed, the said Dudley doubted not that when he had given Jane in marriage to his son, the kingdom, by some colour or pretence of legitimate succession, might easily be transferred to his daughter-in-law upon the death of Edward VI.”

After describing the circumstances of the death of the King, which left no doubt of poison, the secrecy observed during his illness, and the suspicious haste of his funeral, our writer, who, it must be remembered, was an eye-witness of the scenes he describes, proceeds thus :—

“The King being now removed from among the living, the Duke of Northumberland convoked a council of the leading men; he set forth the magnitude of the dangers that usually attended a protracted interregnum, and proved that after Mary and Eliza, royal daughters indeed, but born in marriages doubtful, suspected, and prohibited, the succession to the crown reverted to his daughter-in-law Jane, as well by right of legitimate birth as by the laws of the kingdom. There were not wanting some (for the wits of the English are very acute) who sufficiently understood what the advice and endeavours of the Duke tended to, namely, that his son, who had married Jane, being raised to the regal eminence, the whole government of England might be easily transferred to the Dudleys; nor was it to be concealed that the event would lead, not only to a nefarious massacre of the royal children, but also to the oppression of many others. Indeed, the Duke had already sometimes given vent to words full of threatening and terror, as of expelling foreigners out of every part of Britain and cruelly slaughtering many. Thus Jane was declared Queen, and publicly proclaimed forthwith on the 10th day of July, not indeed without contumely towards the royal daughters, but without the applause of the nobles or of any individual among the people. It is the custom in England for the people to approve the solemn proclamation of a new King or Queen by the acclamation, ‘God save the King or Queen.’ As nothing of the kind was to be heard here, and men’s countenances were sorrowful and averted, it was easily conjectured that what was passing was little approved by the people. Jane was now in the London palace called the Tower, attended indeed by no great retinue, but was introduced by a certain solemn pomp, her mother Frances holding up the train of her robe. In the meantime Mary, the eldest daughter of Henry VIII, perceiving what was going on in London, had removed from that place and retired into the interior parts of the kingdom. Here so great a multitude of people suddenly flocked about her, that in a short space of time it grew to the amplitude of a complete army. But the Duke of Northumber-

land, having heard that the forces of Mary daily increased by the concourse of the people to her from all quarters, resolved to make war upon her as quickly as possible. Having therefore left the care of the Tower of London to the Lords of the Council, he marched out of London on the 14th of July with an army and a train of artillery. Meantime the nobles of the city, who had hitherto dissembled their sentiments through fear of the Duke, proclaimed on the 19th of July Mary, eldest daughter of Henry VIII, Queen of England. The Duke, readily conjecturing how this game was likely to end, took his counsel according to the time. Turning to his adherents and feigning a grievous sorrow, he said, 'Is this the fidelity of colleagues who were privy to all my transactions? But be it so, we can cast the same sheet-anchor:' and forthwith he commanded Mary to be proclaimed with great pomp Queen of England, first in the camp and afterwards at Cambridge on the 20th of July.'

But this posthumous kind of loyalty, our author proceeds to shew, was paraded before the country in vain. Being taken, with his four sons, some nobles, and about twenty servants, he was brought ignominiously to London and imprisoned in the Tower on the 26th of July. After the accession of the Queen and the obsequies of Edward VI, which she ordered to be solemnised immediately, the writer of this remarkable tract, who, as a foreign Protestant, feared naturally that the asylum given to the exiles on account of religion would be inevitably withdrawn, passed over into the Netherlands, the last words of his narrative running thus:—

“After that, I departed from England; but remaining sometime at Bruges I saw a letter to our resident there, Herrmann Falco, doctor of laws, in which it was stated that the Duke of Northumberland with some of his accomplices had paid the forfeit of their crimes, shewing, in the terrible spectacle of their punishment and by their example, that the avenging eyes of God will not suffer any wickedness to be of long duration or to go unpunished.”

It would appear from the subsequent history that

the Duchess, herself, was not only innocent of any complicity in this treasonable attempt, to erect a throne for her daughter-in-law, but that (a fact which is still more notable) she escaped the terrible vengeance of that age of bloodshed, which (as now in Oriental kingdoms) made a holocaust of an entire family to atone for the guilt of one of its members. Her daughter-in-law was less fortunate; though, as we learn from every trustworthy historian, she was, in fact, equally guiltless.

But the tragic end of the Lady Jane, the helpless victim of the ambition and treason of her father-in-law, is too fresh in the memory of every Englishman to need it to be dwelt upon here. Her husband, the unfortunate Guldeford Dudley, appears to have fatally seconded the ambitious desires of his father. Perhaps, but for the proclamation which Northumberland rashly put forth in the name of his daughter-in-law, in which the illegitimacy of both Mary and Elizabeth was declared, the new Queen might have been tempted to spare almost the only innocent party, in this perilous attempt to grasp a crown over the heads of three at least who were prior in the succession. The Duke of Northumberland died, as he had lived, a traitor and a hypocrite to the very last. According to Bishop Burnett, he professed that he had been always a Papist, but the tardy profession could not save him. He exhorted the people to adhere to the Roman faith, and to reject that of a later date, which he declared to have caused all the misery of the previous thirty years. He exhorted them to cast out all the new preachers, by which he meant (as we gather from the tract quoted before) the foreign reformers whom Edward VI had so piously protected. It may be here

observed that the only blot on the character of our great reformer, Ridley, is his sermon at St. Paul's in vindication of Queen Jane's title, as she was then called. It is said that Queen Mary was greatly opposed to her death; and that Judge Morgan, who had pronounced the sentence, soon after went mad, and in all his ravings still called to take away the Lady Jane from him.

The effect of these successive calamities, upon the mind of the good and innocent Duchess, may be well imagined, but can be ill indeed described.

"She was, indeed" (as Lysons observes, after his description of her monument in the Church of Chelsea), "a singular instance of the vicissitudes of fortune. Having been the wife of one of the greatest men of that age, she lived to see her husband lose his life upon the scaffold; to see one son share his father's fate, another escape it only by dying in prison; and the rest of her children living but by permission. Amidst this distress, which was heightened by the confiscation of her property, she displayed great firmness of mind, though left destitute of fortune and friends, till the arrival of some of the nobility from the Spanish Court, who interested themselves so warmly in her favour that they prevailed upon the Queen to reinstate her in some of her former possessions; and she conducted herself with such wisdom and prudence as enabled her to restore her overthrown house, even in a reign of cruelty and tyranny. Her surviving progeny were no less remarkable for their prosperity, than their brethren were for their misfortunes. Ambrose was restored to the title of Earl of Warwick, and enjoyed many other honours and preferments; Robert was created Earl of Leicester, and became one of Queen Elizabeth's prime ministers, and her daughter Mary was the mother of Sir Philip Sydney."*

As the Duchess died in 1555, in the second year of Mary, she had but little time to set her house in order; far less to rebuild it. The co-operation of the great Spanish nobles, whose advent preceded so naturally the marriage of the Queen, might have been

* Lysons's *Environs of London*, under Chelsea, p. 64.

well anticipated, from the honourable place which several members of her family had filled in the settlement of that kingdom; and doubtless the influence of Philip himself was not wanting at such a moment. The Duchess lies buried in the Church of Chelsea, having died at her manor house there, her epitaph closing with the suggestive words,—

“After she had lived yeres 46 she departed this transitory world at her Maner of Chelse the 22nd day of January, in the second yere of the reigne of our Sovereigne Lady Queen Mary the first, and in an. 1555, on whose soule Jesu have mercy.”

It was indeed a “short life,” and we may well add “and full of misery,” and as a worthy sequel to it she charged her executors in her will in the words,

“My will is that little solempnitie be made for me, for I had ever have a thousand foldes my debts to be paid and the poor to be given unto, than any pompe to be shewed upon my wretched carkes: therefore to the wormes will I goe as I have before written at all poyntes as you will answer yt afore God.” She orders “such devyne service as her executors shall thinke mete with the whole armes of father and mother upon the stone graven.”

This last direction, which was carried out on her tomb, is not a little remarkable; it seems to indicate that the arms of her husband were forfeited by his attainder, and that she bore in her widowhood only the coats and quarterings of Guldeford and Delawarr.

The terrible blow, which had been struck at the very existence of the great family of the Dudleys, almost recoiled upon the throne of Mary. The cruel executions (eighty at a time), which followed the rebellion of Wyatt, were only closed by the solemn remonstrance of the House of Lords, conveyed by the Lord Paget; in which the vindictive Queen is suggestively reminded that “already too much blood has been shed. The noble house of Suffolk was all but

destroyed; and he said distinctly that if more blood were shed, he and his friends would interfere; the hideous scenes had lasted too long.* We may here gratefully remember that, among the latest descendants of the elder branch of the Guldefords, and of the illustrious family of the Dudleys, tracing through the unfortunate Duchess of Northumberland herself, is a nobleman who entertained our Society, with munificent hospitality, on a former occasion of our meeting in West Kent, Lord de Lisle and Dudley.

The last chapter of our narrative, or we might almost say the last act of our historic drama, leads us back into those quiet scenes of rural life, from which Jane Guldeford passed so early into the glare and tumult of a court, where the struggle for rank and power was so urgent, and the misery even of success so certain. We fall back, with a sense of relief, on the humbler path of the second branch of the Guldefords, which carried on its succession at Hempsted; in which that beautiful prayer of Arias Montanus was fulfilled:

“ Instar ut lymphæ in mare defluentis
Redde me, ut semper sequar ima, semper
Præbeam prudens humilem me, et alta
Summaque vitem.”†

George Guldeford, who kept his shrievalty at Hempsted in the 16th of Henry VIII, married Elizabeth, the daughter and heir of Sir Robert Mortimer by Isabella, daughter of John Howard Duke of Norfolk. Their son, Sir John Guldeford, allied himself anew with the family of Delawarr, and by his wife

* Froude's *Hist.*, vol. v., p. 384.

† “ Make me as stream descending to the sea;
Following, from pride and high ambition free,
The lowly pathway of humility,
Which leads us, Lord, to Thee ! ”

Barbara, daughter of Thomas Lord Delawarr, had three sons. Thomas, their heir, had the honour of entertaining Queen Elizabeth at his mansion of Hempsted, during one of her famous progresses, on August 10th, 1575. From Bedgebury in Goudhurst, the then seat of the Colepepers, the Queen proceeded to Hempsted, accompanied by the Lord Treasurer Burleigh, who, in a letter to Lord Shrewsbury from this place, describes the Queen's journey through the Weald of Kent as more perilous even than that she undertook in the Peak. The present made by Sir Thomas Guldeford to the Queen on this occasion was a bowl of silver, gilt, with a cover with her Majesty's arms crowned. He had by Elizabeth, daughter of John Shelley, Esq., of Michelgrove (the ancestor of the poet), an heir, Sir Henry, who married Lady Elizabeth Somerset, daughter of Edward Earl of Worcester, and their son Edward married the daughter of the Hon. Thomas Petre, third son of the first Lord Petre. Edward their son married Anne, daughter of Sir Robert Throckmorton, and dying in 1678 was succeeded by his heir, Robert Guldeford of Hempsted, created a baronet in 1685 by James II. He married Clare, the daughter and heiress of Anthony Thomson, Esq., but leaving no heir the baronetcy became extinct. The estate of Hempsted was sold under an act of Parliament in the reign of Queen Anne, to pay the debts of this last of the Guldefords, with whom the glories and the very name of this great historic house sank into oblivion.

It appears from the later alliances we have mentioned, as well as from the favour bestowed upon Sir Robert Guldeford by James II, so shortly before his exile, that the later generations of the family had

too well remembered the last words of the author alike of their highest glories and of their deepest misfortunes, and had returned to the church to which he so vainly attempted to lure back his own descendants. Our great authority on genealogical matters, Sir Bernard Burke, appears to doubt whether the race is actually extinct ; and we may well imagine that, like the Fogges, still grander in their earliest history, some distant scions of the house may yet be found in humbler life, illustrating in their lowlier fortunes those strange vicissitudes which attended it from the very beginning. However this may be, we may feel thankful that one at least of the historic mansions it occupied, through so many eventful generations, is now possessed by a family which will leave its mark in the records of the county, and of the empire itself ; and that the "*libro d'oro*" of our own century will still indicate Hempsted as the dwelling-place of statesmen, and men fitted, like the Guldefords of old, to serve their Queen and their country ; and, I may add, to be also the faithful protectors of that Church to which in the days of Elizabeth, the Warwicks, the Leicesters, and the Sydneys so nobly and faithfully ministered.