

A HISTORY OF THE HOUSE OF LYME

COMPILED FROM DOCUMENTS OF THE LEGH FAMILY
AND FROM OTHER SOURCES

BY W. BEAMONT

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P. PEARSE, SANKEY STREET.

1876.

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by Craig Thornber, October 2013

TO
WILLIAM JOHN LEGH, ESQUIRE
THIS ACCOUNT
OF THE ANCIENT HOUSE OF LYME
IS
WITH HIS PERMISSION
AND EVERY GOOD WISH,
INSCRIBED
BY THE AUTHOR

Editor's Introduction.

Beamont's book on the history of the Legh family at Lyme Park was published 40 years before Lady Newton's volume. Although it has a number of deficiencies, it covers the history up until the 1st Lord Newton, whereas Lady Newton's account ends in 1792. Beamont was a prolific writer on the history of Lancashire and Cheshire and particularly on the area around Warrington. Among his other publications are *The Annals of Warrington* in 2 volumes, *The Annals of Warrington and Bewsey*, *The History of Halton Castle, Norton Priory, Rocksavage and Daresbury* and *The History of Warrington Friary*. At the time of publication he was also preparing a history of Warrington Churches.

A History of the House of Lyme is not now readily available but still has some interest to those connected to Lyme Park. As a result, the opportunity has been taken to bring it to a wider audience. An electronic version of the book comprising images of each page was obtained on the Internet. This has been scanned using the optical character recognition program ABBYY Fine Reader 11, to produce a text version. The resulting document has been examined by spell checking but while this is valuable for normal text it cannot cope with some of the ancient documents quoted by Beamont in which there is archaic spelling. Some larger paragraphs have been split up for easier reading and extended quotations have been put into separate paragraphs and indented. For Beamont's own words I have made the spelling consistent throughout for Haydock and Shakespeare and made some small alterations to punctuation where this makes the meaning clearer. The book as published had neither a contents page nor an index. As the work is intended to be read on digital devices, I have not started each chapter on a new page. To aid navigation, a set of bookmarks is included, which can be accessed in a pdf reader.

Beamont started each chapter with a quotation, often in Latin. These serve more as a barrier than as an aid to the modern reader so I have replaced them with the name of the member of the Legh family covered in the chapter, using the form shown on the family tree in the National Trust handbook. Beamont was also fond of quoting extensively from Shakespeare's historical plays to illustrate the events of the time and where these are merely literary embellishments, I have omitted them. He also liked to speculate on what a historical character might have said using quotes from classical literature and these too have been removed. The footnotes given were in a highly abbreviated form and where I have been able to identify the sources, I have written them in full. Many of the sources are now rare antiquarian books such as Dr. Thomas Dunham Whitaker's histories of Whalley and Richmondshire. Sometimes he gives as his source 'History of England' without giving us the author but in other places he mentions histories of England by Froude, Hume, Oldmixon and Macaulay.

James Anthony Froude published his *History of England from the Fall of Wolsey to the Death of Elizabeth*, in 12 volumes (1856–1870).

David Hume's *History of England* was published in six volumes between 1754 and 1761.

John Oldmixon (1673-1743) wrote his *History of England during the Reigns of the Royal House of Stuart* (1730), *History of England during the Reigns of William and Mary, Anne and George I* (1735); and the *History of England during the Reigns of Henry VIII, Edward VI, Mary and Elizabeth* (1739).

Thomas Babington Macauley, (1800-1859) published in two volumes his *History of England from the Accession of James II* in 1848 followed by two more volumes in 1855 covering up to the death of William III.

Some Issues with Beamont's Account

Where necessary I have made editorial comments in square brackets to comment on passages that are no longer accepted.

Like Lady Newton, Beamont tried to explain how Sir Piers VII claimed that Piers Legh I was at Crécy when he asked the Norroy King of Arms to grant him an augmentation of honour in 1575. He identified Margaret Danyers as the daughter of Sir Thomas Danyers rather than the granddaughter, as indeed did Lady Newton. Sir Thomas Danyers, the hero of Crécy, married Margaret of Tabley and died in 1354. His son, also called Sir Thomas Danyers, married the heiress Isabel Baggiley heir of William Baggiley by Clemence his wife, who was the daughter and coheir of Sir Roger Dutton of Cheadle (commonly known as Sir Roger de Chedhill) and his wife Matilda. Sir Roger Dutton and Matilda had no male heirs and the estates were split between their two daughters. Agnes, the younger of the two, married Richard de Bulkelegh and inherited the northern part, known as Cheadle Bulkeley. Clemence, the elder daughter, married William de Baggiley, inherited the southern half and it was passed eventually to their daughter Isabel Baggiley. Sir Thomas and Isabel Danyers had one daughter Margaret who became the sole heiress of what her father and grandfather were free to bequeath. The Danyers lands went to male relatives. Beamont has Sir Thomas Danyer's of Crécy marrying twice, the second time to Isabel Baggily, who in fact married his son

Beamont's views on the date of building of the house are no longer accepted. He proposes that the frontage was built by or influenced by the early 17th century architect Inigo Jones. It is now believed to that the entrance on the north side is Elizabethan and influenced by the style of Old Somerset House in London. Classical architecture as expounded by Palladio requires that columns come in pairs whereas Lyme has two sets of three and set of four in the frontage with a column arising from the top of a pediment. Beamont also appears to be confused about the relative roles of Peter XII and Peter XIII in building the house.

Beamont was unable to find a date for the death of Peter X and as a result proposes that he was still alive when his son, Peter XI was killed following a duel in London in 1642. It is now accepted that Peter X died in 1624.

A final error that has been noticed (and there may be more) is that Beamont confuses Thomas Legh's two trips to the Middle East. He quotes from Thomas Legh's book on his first trip, which was before he became of age, claiming it is a later trip taken after 1815.

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Chapter 1

Sir Thomas Danyers, c. 1294-1354

[In reading this and succeeding chapters, it is important to note that Beamont assigns incorrectly Margaret D'Anyers as the daughter rather than the granddaughter of the Sir Thomas Danyers of Crécy fame. The mistake is understandable in that Sir Thomas had a son also called Sir Thomas who predeceased him by one year. Ed.]

An old family, like a great river, has many affluents after it leaves the springs at its source. The herald Randle Holmes told Sir George Booth at Dunham that he was connected with three hundred great families; and if we trace back the house of Lyme to the first notice of it, we shall find it to have had its origins in the union of two families, first that of D'Anyers, which from its first form to that of Daniel as its last, has more aliases than the year has weeks, and secondly that of Legh, which can be traced in Cheshire history nearly to the Conquest. Sir Thomas D'Anyers, the younger, knight, the Legh ancestor on the maternal side, and the eighth of his family in lineal succession, all of whom had borne the same Christian name, was owner of a small manor or domain of Bradley in Appleton in Cheshire, in the reign of Edward III. This was a time when all England was flushed with the hopes of conquering first Scotland and then France and the whole country ringing with the sounds of arms and armour. Sir Thomas, who must have been early initiated in war, in the year 1335, when he was not yet a knight, use as his seal, a cast of which is in the Warrington Museum, the family shield and around it four besants,¹ a singular if not unique ornament, which probably signified that he had been familiar with those fields of arms in the East where such coins were to be won.

In 1346, the King himself having determined to go to France and to take the Prince of Wales with him, the war fever rose to its full height, and tried soldiers were everywhere sought for to accompany the royal host. Sir Thomas D'Anyers, whose achievements were well known, was retained by the gallant young Prince, who then was only fifteen years of age, had just won his spurs, and had not yet from the colour of his armour gained the famous name of the Black Prince, to serve him as a knight bachelor. The terms on which he was engaged, and which bear no resemblance to a modern enlistment, are made known to us by a Norman French deed bearing the date 18 May, 20 Edward III (1346), according to which Sir Thomas was to serve in the war for a year, and when other knight bachelors ate in the hall, he was to have two squires in the hall to attend him, and he was to have wages for a chamberlain, namely, two pence per diem (day), and ten horses at hay and oats, and ten servants at wages, and he was to have xxli (£20) for his fee for a year, to be paid quarterly, according as he should be armed for war. He was to come at the cost of the Prince, either for peace or war, when he should be commanded, and was to have such robes of Prince's livery, as other bachelors had; and when he was sent to war in the Prince's service, his horses and arms being prized should be restored to him if any were lost.²

The knight had not been retained thus to let his sword rust for in less than two months the Royal host, and Sir Thomas with it, had landed in Normandy, where town after town fell before them. In the middle of July the rich city of Caen fell into their hands, when the Constable of France, the Earl of Tancarville, after having vainly endeavoured to defend it,

¹ [Besant or bezant: a circle of gold representing the gold coin of Byzantium or Constantinople, Ed.]

² Sir Peter Leycester, *Liber C.*, 265

being taken by Sir Thomas Holland and his company, their ransom was considered of such value that the King purchased it from the captors for twenty thousand nobles.³ Sir Thomas Holland, who afterwards by the Black Prince's marriage, became very nearly allied to him, we may reasonably presume was at this time in his retinue, and if so, Sir Thomas D'Anyers shared in the honour of capturing the Constable.

From Caen the King advanced still further into France, and on 25 August 1346, the great battle of Crécy was fought and won. Here, also, Sir Thomas D'Anyers was engaged near the Prince, and under his banner,

Who on the French ground play'd a tragedy,
Making defeat on the full power of France;
Whilst his most mighty father on a hill
Stood smiling to behold his lion's whelp
Forage in blood of French nobility (Henry V)

At Crécy where those dogs of war, the artillery, were first heard in battle, Sir Thomas must have heard their roar, and doubtless, like Hotspur, he did not relish an engine which was to supplant bodily prowess. It was well for so young a leader as the Prince that he had near him an experienced soldier like the Sir Thomas D'Anyers, who was found where the fight was thickest, and when the standard was in danger of being taken, it was he who rescued it and with his stalwart arm drove back the enemy. For this service and his share in the capture of the Earl of Tancarville, he was rewarded by the Prince's granting him an annuity of forty marks a year, to continue until he should provide him with an estate of twenty pounds a year in land to be held by him and his heirs forever.⁴ The besants on the hero's shield were perhaps only imaginary, but this reward was a substantial reality. But the laurels Sir Thomas D'Anyers had won, since they helped to shorten his life, had hardly been worth the purchase. War and its hardships had not failed to tell upon him, and make him old before his time, and in 28 Edward III (1351) at a comparatively early age he was carried to his grave. [Note that more modern scholarship has the hero of Crécy die in 1354 aged about 60. His son was born about 1313 and died in 1353. Ed.]

By the usual inquisition taken after his death it was found that he held in his demesne as of fee two acres of the Earl of Chester by service of barony according to the quantity of his land, he held also, conjointly with his late wife Matilda, the manor of Enhale of Hamon de Mascy, by the service of coming to the county court at Chester for six weeks and serving as a judger there before his lord the earl in all pleas and suits as well present as future, being a service in grand serjeanty at five marks, and that he held also the manner aforesaid the manor of Bradley in Cheshire with appurtenances of Sir Geoffrey de Werburton the elder, knight, by knight's service - and the jurors found that the same manor was worth ? per year and found also that the daughter of the said Sir Thomas was his next heir but they did not know her name.⁵

Sir Thomas had married twice, first to Matilda, whom he survived and secondly to Isabel, the daughter of William de Baguley and Clemence his wife. [It was Sir Thomas the younger who married Isabel de Baguley, not the hero of Crécy. Ed.] Isabel survived him and died 38 Edward III (1364). Margaret, the heiress whose name the jury did not know, was Sir

³ Froissart's *Chronicles*, 1. 157

⁴ *Cheshire Recognisance Rolls*, 21 Rich. II.

⁵ From the original in the possession of C. W. Potts, Esq.

Thomas's daughter by his second wife, and, if we are to trust an extent taken after her father's death, her inheritance was but a *château en Espagne*.

"The jurors found that the messuage with its enclosure which had belonged to Sir Thomas in Bradley with the gardens there was not worth anything - that the dove house was not worth anything, being destroyed by a weasel - that the fishery in the moat round the house was not worth anything, being destroyed by an otter - but that there were two carucates of land there containing sixty acres worth sixpence and acre."

Unlike Cincinnatus, the warrior had not been able to turn his sword into a ploughshare, and had suffered it to fall into decay. Margaret, who must have been very young at her father's death, seems to have been taken away from her mother in 33 Edward III (1359) by Sir John de Radcliffe, for on 17 June in that year the King issued a singular writ, directed to the Abbot of Whalley, Thomas de Lathom, Henry de Haydock and John Cokayn, which after reciting that John de Radcliffe had obtained a grant of her marriage, and was about to marry her within nubile years (she was then only ten years old), commanded the commissioners to inquire into the matter; and Sir John, at a later period, seems to have married her himself. But John de Radcliffe's young bride survived him, and her hand was afterwards sought by other not disparaging suitors. Before 18 April in 5 Richard II (1382) she had become Sir John's widow and had married Sir John Savage, and upon his death, a dispensation having been granted on 26 March 1388, for her marriage to Sir Piers Legh, she became his wife within a month.

Chapter 2

Piers Legh I, c. 1360-1399

Having in the former chapter given some account of Sir Thomas D'Anyers and Margaret his daughter and heiress, who by her marriage to Piers Legh became on the maternal side, as he on the paternal side, the founders of the House of Legh of Lyme, we propose now to continue the story of the House under its new name. The Leghs of Booths near Knutsford, were the parent house of several of the Legh name. John Legh of that house, having early in the reign of Edward III, married Ellen de Coruna of Adlington. The manor of that name, upon her death, devolved by the will and grant of Thomas de Coruna upon her son, Robert de Legh, who thus became the first founder of the house of Legh of Adlington.

Robert married first, Sibilla de Handford, and after her death Maude, the daughter and heiress of Thurstan de Norley, of the manor of that name, near Wigan, who shortly before her husband's death, in 1370, conveyed to him all her estates in trust for her own son, Piers Legh, her husband's fourth but her own eldest son, to whom upon his coming of age, in 1382, the estates were accordingly conveyed.⁶ We have no description of what Norley was at this early period; but in 1465, less than a century afterwards, Sir Peter Legh, one of Maude's descendants, drew out full particulars of this and all his other family estates, and has left the record of them in a great Latin volume which is still preserved at Lyme. [This was Sir Peter III, 1415 to 1478. Ed]. It would be too long to give all the particulars of Norley, which are contained in this book; but the following description of its manor house, which we extract

⁶ Rymer's *Foedera*. [Thomas Rymer, c. 1643-1713. He produced 16 volumes published from 1704 to 1713; a collection of all the leagues, treaties, alliances, capitulations, and confederacies, which have at any time been made between the Crown of England and any other kingdoms, princes and states. From Wikipedia, Ed.]

from it in a translated form, may be thought interesting as giving a general view of the arrangements of a country house in the time of our ancestors.

The house, which is said to have been once that of Sir Adam de Norley, Knight, consisted of a handsome hall with a lofty chamber transverse to it, and above the fire place another chamber under the first and convenient to it, and also one other chamber below the fire place, with a store room, buttery, pantry, kitchen, great shippon for twenty or more kine, a granary, an oven, orchards, garden, and a plot for pot herbs. The Latin word which we have translated oven is *ustrina*, which, however, may mean a house for singeing hogs.⁷ The state which could be kept in a house with so few rooms as this, where the retainers and domestics were numerous, must have been of a rude kind. The feasting of the lord with his retainers and domestics took place at a great table in the hall, where, as many of these often found a resting place on its floor of rushes at night, they might be said to be both at bed and board.

Maude, Sir Robert's second wife, survived her husband, and Piers Legh, who on her death succeeded to the Norley estate, was the child of his father's old age, and was very young when his father died. Forgery is not a crime only of modern date, for after her husband's death, we tell it with regret, Maude and one Thomas le Par, who perhaps had been more active in the matter than herself, six years after her husband's death in 49 Ed. III., were indicted for forging in the name of Adam de Kingesley, the trustee, a settlement of the Broome estate, within Lyme, in fraud of her husband's children. If it had succeeded her crime would have given her son Piers a considerable estate, besides his own. Piers, who was born about the year 1361, came of age in 1382, and on the 20th of September, in that year, Johanna, Princess of Wales, the widow of the Black Prince, (and once the Fair Maid of Kent), appointed Piers Legh and his brother John Legh her bailiffs of the manor of Macclesfield, and stewards of all her courts, as well those within the Hundred of Macclesfield as those within the forest there, in the place of Robert Legh, deceased, who had lately held those offices. Before the 6th March, 6 Ric. II. (1385), he and his same brother who had taken a lease from the Princess of the herbage of Hanley for ten years, at the rent of eighteen marks a year, were empowered by her, as a proof of her confidence in them, to transact for her some affairs with her other tenants. On the 11th Oct. 9 Ric. II. (1385), Piers Legh, who had held the office of deputy surveyor of the forest of Macclesfield, and steward of that manor or lordship, under Sir Michael Loring, knight, received the commands of King Richard II to surrender and give up such office to the King's beloved cousin, the Earl of Stafford; and shortly afterwards Sir Robert Legh, who had been the same earl's attorney, was required to give up to the same earl the offices which he held. In the following year, Piers Legh and his brother became farmers of the herbage of the forest of Macclesfield, and the Princess of Wales being dead, they then accounted for all moneys received by them on her account. On 10th May, 9 Ric. II. (1386), Thomas de Clyfford, son and heir of Roger de Clyfford, lord of Westmoreland, appointed "Peter at Lee" and his brother John to be his attorneys to receive for him and in his name the office of surveyor of the forests of Macclesfield and Mara (Delamere).

On the 4th August, 11 Rich. II. (1387), Sir John de Holland, the King's half-brother, having granted to Peter and John de Legh an annuity of Cs. [100 shillings, Ed.] each, to be issuing out of his manor of Northwich for their respective lives, the King upon this day gave his royal confirmation to the grant.

⁷ *Mamecestre*, III, 504

In the above year Robert de Vere, the King's unworthy favourite, whom he had created Duke of Ireland, having justly incurred the displeasure of both the nobles and the people, had fled into Cheshire, when, sharing the general indignation against him, it would seem that Piers Legh seized all his goods and chattels and conveyed them to Chester Castle. The King, who unhappily did not share the general feeling against his fallen favourite, resented what Piers had done, and by his warrant dated 21st Jan., 1388, commanded him, under a penalty of one thousand pounds, to restore and give up what he had taken. About the same time, Piers and his brother John, who had taken to farm two parts of the manor of Oulton Lowe, accounted to the Chamberlain of Cheshire for the rent; and Piers also joined Sir John Stanley as mainpernors for Robert de Legh and Henry de Townley.⁸ Mainprize differed from bail in this, that the mainpernors were absolute sureties for a man's appearance at the time appointed; but they could not, like his bail, commit him to prison if they distrusted his appearing to take his trial.

It will be remembered that in our account of Margaret, the daughter and heiress of Sir Thomas D'Anyers, she married first Sir John Radcliffe, and having become his widow before 18 April 1382, she then married Sir John Savage, who in 1386 paid relief for a moiety of Grappenhall in her right. But the times were disturbed, and Sir John Savage died probably in some of the public troubles about the year 1387, leaving his wife Margaret surviving him. In 1388, negotiations were set on foot for a marriage between her and Piers Legh, but as they stood within the prohibited degrees of consanguinity, though it does not exactly appear how, a dispensation which in such case was necessary was obtained for the marriage, and this dispensation, as such instruments are not common, we have translated from the Latin original, and here give in full:-

Dispensation for the marriage of Piers Legh and Margaret, widow of Sir John Savage, formerly Margaret D'Anyers:-

JOHN, by divine permission bishop of Hereford, and in the realms of England, Castile, Leon, Navarre, Portugal, and Aragon, and the parts of Gascony, Nuncio of the apostolic see, for the undermentioned matters, and duly empowered therein by the authority of the same see. To our beloved in Christ Piers de Lye and Margaret the daughter of Thomas D'Anyers, in the diocese of Coventry and Lichfield, health and benediction. We have lately received from our most Holy Father and Lord in Christ Lord Urban the Sixth, by Divine Providence Pope, a letter sealed with a real leaden seal attached to it by a flaxen cord after the manner of the Holy Court in these words:

"Urban, bishop and servant of the servants of God, to the venerable bothers William, our referendary, and the praiseworthy master of the schools of sacred theology in the apostolical palace, John bishop of Hereford, and John bishop of Aqua (Aquensis?) and likewise to our beloved son Walter de [illegible word], of the order of the blessed Mary of Mount Carmel, professor of the sacred page the Apostolic Nuncios in the kingdoms of England, Castile, and Leon, Navarre, Portugal, and Aragon, and the parts of Gascony, health and our apostolic benediction. Whereas we in the kingdoms of England, Castile, and Leon, Navarre, Portugal, and Aragon, and the parts of Gascony presently destine you our nuncios for certain great and arduous affairs, concerning us and the holy Roman Church, earnestly desiring that the faithful in Christ inhabiting the realms and parts aforesaid may give themselves up to promote more fervently the

⁸ Cheshire Records, *passim*

cause of God and the business of the cross in this and other matters, and shew by it more fully their devotion to us and the apostolic see, whereby they may know that from you greater favours may be obtained, and that to you for this time we have committed a dispensing power, by you, one or more of you to be exercised when any men and women of the kingdoms of England, Castile, and Leon, Aragon, Portugal and Navarre, and the parts aforesaid, who being related in the fourth degree of consanguinity, or affinity, are joined together, that notwithstanding the obstacle arising from such consanguinity or affinity, in the marriage ignorantly contracted between them, they may lawfully remain united (provided the women have not been forcibly carried away for this cause), and that others who have not yet contracted matrimony after this sort may lawfully contract and remain in it, and their issue born and to be born may be legitimate. But the faculty which we grant by these presents shall in no case continue beyond the end of one year from the kalends of June next ensuing. Dated at Genoa, VIIIth ides of November, in the eighth year of our pontificate, (16th Nov., 1386).”

Of which apostolic letter of our same lord and father the Pope the vigour, authority, and other privileges thereby granted, have been graciously enlarged for three years from the aforesaid kalends of June, and extended so as to include not only the fourth but the third degree, as is most manifestly declared and expressed in a bull of the same lord and father in this matter lately forwarded to us. Wherefore, we, understanding that you being related in the fourth as well as the third degree of consanguinity, are desirous to contract and solemnise matrimony between you together, whereupon our dispensation being as of our special grace and favour humbly sought, we, acknowledging your sincere devotedness to promote the said business of the cross, and inclining to your supplications in this behalf, to be allowed to solemnise matrimony and in it, the above obstacles notwithstanding, lawfully to remain, by virtue of the Apostolic letters, we do mercifully allow of it, and do moreover declare legitimate all the issue to be between you of the same marriage born. In testimony whereof we have caused to be affixed to this letter the seal which we use in the like causes. Given in the house of the Carmelite brethren at London, on the twenty-sixth day of November, 1388.

CHAPTER 3

Piers Legh I and Margaret Savage née D’Anyers

PIERS LEGH and MARGARET SAVAGE, the daughter of Sir Thomas D’Anyers, were married in the month of November, 1388, almost immediately after the dispensation was obtained, he being 27 and she 39 years of age at the time of the marriage. The Cheshire men are often mentioned in the chronicles of the time as the King’s loyal subjects; and Piers Legh, from his frequent employment in judicial and other offices in the north-eastern parts of the country, was evidently a person of importance.

On the 18th August, 1390, he was joined with others in two commissions, by one of which they were directed to hear and determine all felonies committed within the borough of Macclesfield, and by the other they were to deal in like manner with all felonies, misdemeanors, and breaches of the peace committed within the forest and Hundred of that

name; and Anne, the Queen Consort, having made him steward of her lands in the same hundred, he received her commands, on the 6th April, 1391, to make a survey and extent of the vill of Cheadle, and thereout to assign her reasonable dower to Margery, the widow of William Buckley, deceased. On the 25th May, 1392, he was ordered with Sir Robert de Legh, to give livery of seisin of all his lands, to John, the son and heir of William Lancelyn, on his coming of age, and about the same time he made up and rendered his accounts as one of the farmers and keepers of the herbage in Macclesfield park. His hands at this time must have been kept full of employment, for on the 2nd August following he and Sir Robert were commanded to arrest all malefactors and disturbers of the peace in the Hundred of Macclesfield, and on the 28th of the same month they were also appointed the King's justices for the same Hundred, and directed to hold three courts itinerant or *in eyre*, that is to say, they were to hold a sort of circuit in the hundred, which was the means of really bringing justice to the people at their own doors. On the 26th August, 1393, and the 22nd September, 1394, they had similar commissions to hold similar courts for the same purpose and in the same district.

The next year a new office awaited Piers Legh, he being then appointed on the 8th January, 1395, equitator or riding forester of Macclesfield forest, an office in which he was afterwards confirmed for life, and which meant that he was to lead the King in his hunting when he hunted in the forest. Writing on that now almost forgotten subject, our old forests, Manwood went very far back when to prove the great antiquity of forests he cited the words of the Psalmist, "All the beasts of the forest are mine." It is well known that in very early times to kill a beast of the forest was as severely punished as killing a man; and so rigidly were the forests kept that one writer pretends that bees were there forbidden to visit the flowers. At one time the forests of Needwood and Sherwood, the haunts of Robin Hood and his fellows, which occupied a large portion of Staffordshire and Nottinghamshire, extended almost if not quite to the forest of Macclesfield, which last from being within the county palatine of Chester, was under a jurisdiction separate from theirs. These were tracts set apart for the royal hunting and subject to their own peculiar laws.

On the 4th February, 1395, John Legh, who had been keeper of Macclesfield Park, made a report of its then state and thereupon resigned his office, upon which Piers Legh was appointed to succeed him. Two years afterwards the King having determined to regain the royal power of which he had been deprived by his uncle the Duke of Gloucester and his party, called a parliament to which the nobles coming armed, the King trusted his safety to his own body of Cheshire archers, consisting of two thousand men (amongst whom Piers Legh probably held a command) who instead of uniform wore all of them the badge of the White Hart. The Cheshire rolls contain the names of all these men, amongst whom were the chief persons of the county, who were called Archers of the Crown. It was probably in reward for services then rendered that in the following year, 1398, the King having granted Piers Legh an annuity of c.s. [100 shillings, Ed.] a year; on the 2nd of Jan., of the same year he and his half-brother John Savage were made park keepers of Macclesfield Forest for their respective lives.

Much about the same time also he and his same brother were commanded to put John Legh, of Booths, in possession of Sutton, a vill within the forest of Macclesfield. Except a receipt which he gave for his pension in 1399, this is the last mention made of Piers Legh in the Cheshire records. From what has been said it would appear that after his coming of age in 1382, to the above year when we no longer meet with his name in these records, the source from which up to this time we have principally derived our information, Piers Legh was almost every year receiving either employments or favours from the Crown. Having

exhausted this source we turn elsewhere for other particulars of his life, of which history has something to tell us. But before we proceed with it, it is desirable that we should clear up some stories about the actions and achievements in war, which the chroniclers and others have by mistake ascribed to him; and if it be true that we who are now alive are the ancients and our ancestors were only the moderns, and that *veritas est temporis filia* (truth is the daughter of time), we may hope to thread our way through the mystery which the chroniclers have raised respecting the presence of Piers Legh at Crécy or Poitiers; and in investigating this subject it will be best to take our authorities in reverse order, and beginning with the latest to go back to the oldest. "*Potius est petere fontes quam sectari rivulos.*"

In an old Lyme pedigree, it is said that Piers for his valiant service at the battle of Poitiers in France on 22nd September 1355, was rewarded by the Black Prince for his valour against the French, wherein he relieved the King's standard, and took prisoner the Earl of Tancarville, for which he was rewarded with the free gift of Lyme and Hanley. Except to show this writer's inexactness it is hardly worth while staying to notice that he misstates the date of the battle of Poitiers, placing it on the 22nd September, 1355, whereas it took place on the 19th September 1356, and that he could not mean our favourite Sir Thomas D'Anyers, who had been carried to his grave before either of these dates. Bearing upon this is a warrant of the Black Prince dated at Angouleme on the 25th April, 1370, and said to be addressed to Sir R. de Stafford, Sir Piers de Legh and John Hinxworth, granting 50 marks a year out of the Exchequer at Chester to John de Esquete for good services performed.⁹ If the writer in the *Archaeologia* has given the warrant correctly, Sir Robert de Legh, the father, who was a knight, which Piers Legh was not until long after, must be meant; indeed, before 6 Richard II no person of Piers' name occurs in the Cheshire records. Mistakes of names are not uncommon even in ancient records, and we may be almost sure that had Piers been in the French wars he would not have escaped being called as a witness among the other Cheshire men on the celebrated Scrope and Grosvenor trial in 1383, before the Earl Marshal. On the 11th June, 1575, Flower, Norroy King at Arms, in the course of his official visitation came to visit Sir Peter Legh, of Lyme and Haydock, an active descendant of Piers Legh, who was much employed in the public business of his time, and who understood and loved heraldry. Flower, whose visit was probably made at Lyme, entered Sir Peter's family arms, and as an addition to them, made him a grant of an escutcheon of honour, and in the patent granting it he made express mention of its being granted for the services rendered by his ancestor Piers, the first of the House, at Crécy. Holinshed, the Chronicler, a Cheshire man, who is the next to notice Piers Legh, and was probably acquainted with Sir Peter Legh and with Flower's visit to him, published his book in 1577, and in it he gives the following account of the battle fought before the gates of Caen in 1346:-

"When the Constable (of France) understood the good will of the people of the town (to go forth and fight the English outside the town) he was contented to allow them to follow their desire and so forth they went in good order, and made good face to put their lives in hazard; but when they saw the Englishmen approach in good order divided into three battles, and the archers ready to shoot, which they of Caen had not seen before, they were sore afraid and fled away toward the town, without any order or array, for all that the Constable could do to stay them. The Englishmen followed, and in the chace slew many and entered the town with their enemies. The Constable and the Earl of Tancarville betook themselves to a tower at the bridge-foot, thinking there to save themselves; but perceiving the place to be of no force nor able to hold

⁹ *Archaeologia*, xxxix. 358.

out long, they submitted themselves unto Sir Thomas Holland. But here he adds whatsoever Froissart doth report of the taking of this tower, and of the yielding of these two noble men, it is to be proved that the said Earl of Tancarville was taken by one surnamed Legh, ancestor to Sir Peter Legh, now living whether in the fight or within the tower, I have not to say; but for the taking of the said Earl and for his other manlike prowess shewed there and elsewhere in this journey, King Edward, in recompense of his agreeable service, gave to him a lordship in the county of Chester, called Hanley, which the said Sir Peter Legh now living doth enjoy and possess as successor and heir to his ancestor, the foresaid Legh, to whom it was so first given.”¹⁰

But Froissart, whom we shall next notice, was a contemporary chronicler, and played a part in many of the scenes which he describes, and he has given us the following account of the battle before the gates of Caen, which perhaps he saw. His words are:-

“When the French were put to flight, the English, who spared none, made great havoc among them, which, when the Constable of France, the Earl of Tancarville and those with them, who had taken refuge within the city gate saw, they began to fear lest they should themselves fall into the hands of some of the English archers who did not know them. Seeing, therefore, a knight named Sir Thomas Holland, who had but one eye (whom they had formerly known in Prussia and Grenada), coming towards them in company with five or six other knights, they called to him and asked him if he would take them as his prisoners? Upon which Sir Thomas and his company advanced to the gate, and dismounting ascended to the top with sixteen others, where he found the Constable and the Earl and twenty-five more who surrendered themselves to Sir Thomas.”¹¹

This author ascribes the capture of the Earl of Tancarville to Sir Thomas Holland, and makes no mention of Sir Thomas D’Anyers as having had any share in it, and yet as the former fought under the Black Prince’s standard, to which Sir Thomas D’Anyers was also attached, the presumption which arises is very strong that he was amongst the five or six knights who ascended the tower and received the Earl’s surrender. At all events, Froissart, a contemporary, is a better authority as to what took place than Holinshed, who, though he speaks so positively, wrote his account more than two centuries after the battle. But in the letters patent of King Richard II, which we are about to give, and which recite the grant made by the Black Prince, his father, shortly or perhaps immediately after the battle of Crécy, Sir Thomas D’Anyers’ services are recognized; and as this instrument more especially and above those already referred to shows the King’s favour to Piers Legh, it deserves to be given in full in a translation from the original record:-

Letters patent to Piers Legh and Margaret his wife, of a piece of land called Hanley.

RICHARD, by the grace of God King, &c—To all to whom these present letters shall come greeting. Know ye that whereas our beloved squire Piers de Legh and Margaret his wife, the daughter and heiress of Sir Thomas D’Anyers, knight, deceased, have shewn unto us that whereas our most honourable lord and father, whom God assoil, for the good and gracious services which the aforesaid Thomas had rendered him as well in taking prisoner the chamberlain De Tancarville as in rescuing our said father’s

¹⁰ Holinshed’s *Chronicles*, p. 376.

¹¹ Froissart’s *Chronicles*, I. 165.

standard in the battle of Crécy, by his letters patent had granted the same Thomas forty marks a year to be received from his manor of Frodsham in the county of Chester at the annunciation of the Blessed Virgin Mary and the feast of Saint Michael by equal portions, until our said father should provide him the aforesaid Thomas with twenty pounds a year in land in some convenient place to have and to hold to him and to his heirs for ever as in the said letters of our same lord and father is more fully contained, which said annuity of forty marks after the death of the aforesaid Thomas came to our hands (to pay) before by our same father the aforesaid twenty pounds or any part thereof, according to the tenor and effect of our father's above said grant had been provided, as the aforesaid Piers and Margaret have given us to understand. Wherefore of our special grace, and in consideration as well of that which has been said as of the good and gracious service which the said Piers hath rendered and will render to us. And because the aforesaid Piers and Margaret the said letters patent of our aforesaid father of the aforesaid annuity of forty marks to the aforesaid Thomas made as aforesaid, will give up to us in our Exchequer to be cancelled, we have given and granted to the same Piers and the aforesaid Margaret his wife a piece of land and pasture called Hanley, lying in our forest of Macclesfield in the county of Chester, which aforetime was let to farm for twenty marks a year, as we are given to understand. To have and to hold to the aforesaid Piers and Margaret his wife, and the heirs male of their bodies issuing of us, and our heirs by the service of six pennies to us and our heirs to be yearly paid at the feast of Saint Michael the Archangel for all services in satisfaction of the twenty pounds of land, and notwithstanding that the said place of land is in the soil of the demesne of our aforesaid forest; save and altogether reserving to us and our heirs all oaks growing in the same place of land, and also sufficient feeding for the deer (*ferina*) there, so much as to so much land within our forest aforesaid appertained. In testimony whereof we have caused these our letters patent to be sealed with the seal of our Exchequer at Chester. Dated at Chester, the fourth day of January, in the 20th year of our reign (1398). By writ of privy seal.¹²

In procuring the conversion of the annuity of forty marks which had been granted to the hero Sir Thomas D'Anyers into twenty pounds a year in land, Piers Legh and Margaret his wife showed their wise foresight and discretion; for the payment, had it continued to be a money payment, must have remained always forty marks, which, like all coins, would have been continually decreasing in value, a modern shilling now being but a third of a shilling at the Conquest, while the estate of Lyme Hanley, the foundation of their house, has ever since, from century to century, gone on growing and constantly increasing in value.

Having shewn how often Sir Piers Legh was employed in public affairs, and having shewn also that some of the actions of Sir Thomas D'Anyers have been erroneously ascribed to him, we resume, as we proposed, such account of his life as we shall be able to give from authentic sources. In 1399, Sir Piers granted to Sir John Vyvyan all the lands he had by his feoffment in Whernford, in the county of Stafford. Sir Piers had evidently been Sir John's Trustee of these lands.¹³

On the 19th May 1399, very shortly after we last heard of Sir Piers, Richard II, who was at Milford, about to sail for Ireland, addressed a precept to Richard Venables, Baron of

¹² From the original record in the Chester Recognizance Rolls, in the custody of the Master of the Rolls.

¹³ Lord Lilford's Deeds. The seal to this deed has IHS, and round it are these letters:- Sigillum Johan de Legh.

Kinderton, and others, commanding each of them to summon the archers of his hundred, and out of them to select eighty of them to attend him to Ireland.

We do not know whether Sir Piers was one of the selected body, though if he were chosen, it is probable that none would be more ready than he, to accompany the King; and it may have been on this occasion that he was knighted and became Sir Piers Legh.

There was a common Cheshire saying in Sir Piers' time which ran thus:—

“Dycon slep secury quile we wake, and drede nought quile we lyve sefton: for giff thou hadst weddet Perkyn, daughter of Lye, thou may well holde alone (or a love) day with any man in Chester schire, i'faith.”

Although Sir Piers could have had no daughter marriageable even at the time when the King lost his throne, the saying seems to prove that he enjoyed a very large share of the royal favour.

Hardly had the King set sail, when Northumberland whispers to a band of malcontents this intelligence:-

I have from Port le Blanc, a bay
In Brittany, received intelligence
That Harry of Hereford,
Well furnished by the Duke of Bretagne,
Is making hither with all due expedience. RICHARD II.

Owing to the tardy way in which news then travelled, Bolingbroke, almost before the King was made aware of his landing, had marched through the length of England. On the 19th July, 1399, the King issued his commission to the Earl of Salisbury, his seneschal of the Cheshire principality, committing to his government all and singular his lieges in North Wales, and requiring them to serve under his orders wherever he might direct; and this commission, if it was a consequence of Bolingbroke's advance, is the earliest intimation we have that the news of it had reached the monarch. Salisbury, who had landed in Wales before the 1st August, endeavoured to persuade the impatient Welsh commander to wait the King's arrival, but the superstitious Welshman insisted on disbanding his forces, because, as he says, “the bay trees have all withered,” which was in his eyes a sure warning of evil import. This omen was more ancient, and prevailed in other places and at other times than the Welsh commander could have known of. Dion Cassius says that the laurel, from which the festival crowns of the Caesars were woven, withered and decayed when Nero, the last of the Augustan race, died; and in 1629, before the great pestilence at Padua, when all the bay trees died, it was said that “Apollo, who wore the bays, and the nine sisters over whom he rules, were taking a mournful leave of that famous university.” But if the Welshman had waited he would have seen the dreadful omen which had frightened him reversed; for Holinshed, who tells us that the trees actually did wither, tells us also that after a time they revived and grew green again.¹⁴ There is some difficulty in telling the Welsh place where the King landed. Barkloughly, which Shakespeare makes his place of landing, has by some been thought to be Harlech, a famous castle, one of the governors of which in the Wars of the Roses used to say he had held a castle in France, till “all the old women in Wales had heard of it, and that he

¹⁴ Chronicles, 199.

would hold Harlech till all the old women in France should hear of it." The King at his landing was met by seven gallant Cheshire men - John Legh of Booths, Thomas Cholmondley, Ralph Davenport, Adam Bostock, John Done, Thomas Beeston, and Thomas Holford, each with seventy retainers. On the 14th August, the King was at Conway. Meanwhile Bolingbroke, who, after he had occupied Bristol, concluded that the King would attempt to reach Chester, where his chief strength lay, determined on marching thither. He took his route through Gloucester, Hereford, Leominster, and Ludlow, from which place he reached Shrewsbury, crying "Havoc and destruction on Cheshire and the Cheshire men," as he went along. Alarmed by this cry, Sir Robert Legh, whom the King had recently made Keeper of Oswestry Castle, at a salary of £10 a year, repaired with his brother John Legh to Shrewsbury, where they both made their submission to Bolingbroke. From Shrewsbury, Bolingbroke next marched to Prees, and from thence to Chester, which he entered on the 9th of August, and caused peace to be publicly proclaimed at the city cross. But the next day beheld a strange commentary on this proclamation. The news of his having put Bushy, Greene, and the Earl of Wiltshire to death, for opposing his designs at Bristol, had reached Chester before him, and the proclamation of peace was perhaps intended to allay the alarm of the citizens at his approach. If it was a mask, however, it was but temporary, and very soon fell; for on the day after his entry into Chester, Sir Piers Legh, by his command, was apprehended, and condemned, and being allowed but short shrift was hurried away to execution, where

That two-handed engine at the door
Stood ready to strike once and strike no more.

Whether he was tried, and if tried by whom and in what form, history has not told us, neither has she told us his offence. He may have had the command of the castle, or have attempted to raise an opposing force for his Sovereign which in any subject would have been lawful, even for a monarch *de facto*. Our great dramatist, describing Bolingbroke's policy, makes him in pursuing it:-

Cut off the heads
Of all the favourites that the absent King
In deputation left behind him here,
When he was personal in the Irish wars.

HENRY IV, Part II., act 4, s. 3.

In furtherance of such a design, and desiring to make the crown he aimed at more easy of attainment, "as guilt will pluck on guilt," Bushy, Greene and the Earl of Wiltshire had been put to death at Bristol; and he now determined to go a step further, and shed more blood. Sir Piers Legh was the King's loving and loyal subject, whom duty and gratitude alike bound to adhere to his Sovereign, and thus his "virtue proved his enemy." At all events, if Bolingbroke, in putting Sir Piers to death, had any good reason for it, he had done wisely, as he certainly had the power, to record it in his own justification, and as he has not done so we may well suppose that the despot's maxim—*stat pro ratione voluntas*, was his rule of action in doing it. Sir Piers, who at the time of his violent and untimely death was but 38 years of age, by one historian is said to have been the Chief Justice of Chester.¹⁵ But there was then no such officer, yet he certainly possessed judicial functions from time to time in one part of

¹⁵ Williams' *Chron. Traison et Moit Ric. II.*, 281-293

the county, and this may have led to the author's mistake. In writing his drama of *Richard II* we might almost have expected our immortal dramatist to allude to the tragic end of Sir Piers at Chester, as he has elsewhere alluded to the victims put to death at Bristol, and we might then have found in his pages another Cheshire name. Another poet, however, has availed himself of the subject, and has alluded to it in the following passage:-

Nor thou, magnanimous Legh, must not be left
In darkness, for thy rare fidelity
To save thy faith, content to lose thy head
That reverent head, of good men honoured.

Daniel's 'Civil Wars'

When another historian¹⁶ tells us that Bolingbroke shewed himself calculating as well as cruel in putting to death Sir Piers Legh, one of the King's servants at Chester, for no other reason but that he was faithful to his master his opinion was perhaps founded upon Bolingbroke's treating Sir Piers' body with ignominy after his death, and in placing his head upon the east gate of the city, where it remained until the Carmelites of Chester, as soon as they dared, took it down, and interred it with his body in their church—a pious act which should be remembered to their honour. In a later age, when both their house and the memorial which they placed over his remains had perished, his descendant, that Sir Peter who was the host of Flower, placed in the Lyme chancel of the church at Macclesfield, to which Cowper says his remains were removed, this inscription, which commemorated both him and his son:-

Here lyeth the body of Perkyn a Legh,
That for King Richard the death did die
Betrayed for righteousness,
And the bones of Sir Peers, his sone,
That with King Henrie the fift did wonne.
In Paris.

Dame Margaret, the wife of Sir Piers Legh, and their two sons, Peter and John Legh, survived him. Besides taking her father's property, she succeeded after his death as heir to his brother Sir John D'Anyers, to the half of Grappenhall, and to certain lands in Brome and Heatley, portions of which she gave up to her son and grandson in 4 Hen. IV. and 4 Hen. VI., and she died on Thursday, the Feast of the Nativity of St. John the Baptist, 6 Hen. VI. (1428), leaving her grandson, Peter Legh, then aged 13, heir of certain of her lands; and her son, Sir John Savage, heir of the rest.¹⁷ John Legh, her other son, who became the founder of the Leghs of Ridge, held eyres in 5 and 9 Hen. VI, and was escheator in 12 and 13 Hen. VI.¹⁸

¹⁶ *Hist. of England and France under the House of Lancaster*, 1852, p. 59.

¹⁷ Cheshire Inquisitions Post Mortem

¹⁸ *Hist. Ches.*, I. 58-59. [Probably Sir Peter Leycester's History of Cheshire, 1676, Ed.]

CHAPTER 4

Sir Peter II, died 1422

SIR PETER LEGH, of Lyme, at the time of his father's untimely end, was little more than twelve years old, and this his minority was a fortunate circumstance; for in that age, the same weapon that had felled the oak did not always spare the sapling. Dame Margaret was still weeping over her husband's fate and her bereavement by it, when to strengthen his infant fortune and bind the parent house of Adlington more closely to his interest, Bolingbroke by letters patent dated 2nd October, in the first year of his reign (1399), under his new title of King Henry IV, confirmed to Sir Robert de Legh an annuity of forty pounds a year, which the late King had granted him for life, and three years after he made him one of the forest justices in Eyre, and two years later he made him a grant of a further annuity.¹⁹ And towards the late King's friends the new King shewed himself wisely politic in another way also, for when the Parliament approached him with this petition,

“Que les graundes sommes d'ore et d'argent livez par le darrein roy as esquires maitres del wache de Chestreschire que soient repaiez a roy q'ore est,”

he replied,

“Pur ceo que le roy entende q'ils ne purront paier la somme comprise en cest petition, il voet q'ils luy ferront service pur un certaine temps a leur costages propres.”²⁰

On the 4th September, 4 Hen. IV. (1403), Dame Margaret (Sir Piers' widow), who seems to have lately succeeded to one-half of the Manor of Grappenhall, procured from the Prince of Wales (Falstaff's Prince Hal) a licence to enfeof John de Moston and Richard Reginald, two chaplains of her moiety of such manor to the intent that they might thereupon reinfef Dame Margaret thereof for her life, with remainder to Peter Legh, her son by Sir Piers Legh and the heirs of his body issuing, with remainder to John Savage the elder in like manner with remainder to Elizabeth and Blanche, sisters of the said John Savage in equal moieties, and the heirs of their bodies issuing.²¹

In Dame Margaret, his mother, Sir Peter had a wise and prudent counsellor, and he had the wisdom to follow her advice. In 1403, when he was about sixteen, she sought to ally him with the family of Haydock, one of which family, Sir Gilbert de Haydock, in 4 Ed. III, 1330, had founded and amply endowed a perpetual chantry in Winwick Church,²² for the souls of himself and his ancestors and of all the faithful deceased, and for the increase of divine love; and which same Sir Gilbert, on 1st Nov. 1348, had also purchased from Richard Pygas, prior of the Carmelite brethren and his convent at Chester, for forty marks, a perpetual chantry in their house there.²³ With this family, who were wealthy as well as religious, Dame Margaret sought an alliance for her son, and in due time, and with the consent of Sir Gilbert de Haydock (a descendant of the founder of the two chantries), and of Dame Margaret Legh, Sir Peter Legh was married to Johanna, the daughter and heiress of the last named Sir Gilbert de Haydock, and by a settlement in which Thomas le Mascy, of Tatton, Henry de Scaresbrek,

¹⁹ Cheshire Records.

²⁰ *Rotuli Parliam.* Vol. III., 439. 1. Hen. IV., 1399.

²¹ Cheshire Records.

²² *History of Winwick.*

²³ From the original at Lyme.

John Legh, of Booths, and others were the trustees, certain estates in Werington and Prescote, in Brome and Hayfield, and in Hadock were settled after the death of Sir Gilbert, and Dame Sibill his wife, and Dame Margaret Legh, widow, upon Sir Peter Legh and his wife Johanna and their issue.²⁴ This marriage was the beginning of that connection of the Leghs with Lancashire which afterwards proved of so much importance to them.

By an indenture of 20th May, 9 Henry IV (1408), between Piers, son of John Legh, of Macclesfield, of the one part, and Margaret, formerly wife of John Savage, and her son John Savage, and Sir William Stanley, knight, of the other part, after reciting that the said Margaret, John, and William had become bound in a statute merchant to pay the said John Fitz-Piers one hundred pounds on a certain day and at a certain place therein mentioned, it was witnessed that he the said Piers Fitz-John did thereby will and grant that if Peter Fitz-Piers de Legh, or any other in his name, should every year during the nonage of the said Peter Fitz-Piers pay unto the said Piers Fitz-John the sum of one hundred shillings; and if the same Peter, on his coming of age should make the said Piers Fitz-John for his life a good and sufficient estate of one hundred shillings land rent out of his lands at Brome, in Lymme, the said Piers Fitz-John did will and grant that if he should sell or let to farm the said rent, the said Peter Fitz-Piers should have the first offer of it at a reasonable price. And further that he the said Piers Fitz-John would release all the right and claim which he had or at any time might have in all and every the lands and tenements at Brome to the said Peter Fitz-Piers, and the heirs of his body lawfully issuing; and it was provided that if the said Peter Fitz-Piers should die before his coming of age, without leaving any such issue, and the said hundred shillings should have been paid during his nonage, then that the said statute merchant should in such case cease and be void.²⁵

On 24th Jan., 5 Hen. IV (1404), the King issued a commission to Sir Richard de Wynnynton and others to inquire in the Hundred of Edisbury "*per quem maris nusa fabulaciones et populi commotiones factae fuerunt et ad omnes et singulos quos infra hundred, predict, culpabiles invenerunt arrestand.*"²⁶ There were no doubt similar commissions, containing the same singular expression, "*maris nusa*," issued to other parts of the county, which seems to shew that the new King was not easy in his seat.

The Prince of Wales, who was now much in Cheshire, on the 26th July, 12 Hen. IV, 1411, made Sir Peter Legh a grant of a piece of land called Heggheghfield, within the forest of Macclesfield, with the office of forester of that forest for the term of his life, which land and office John Savage, Esq., who had held them for the term of his life under letters patent of the late King had surrendered that they might be granted to the said Sir Peter Legh; and for greater security this grant was confirmed the following year.²⁷ The Heggheghfield thus granted, as it closely adjoined to Lyme, was a welcome addition to that domain. Did the Prince in giving it intend it as some small offering towards expiating his father's fault in sending the father of Piers to the block. Some historians say that the Prince was anxious to make amends for many things into which policy or the necessity of affairs had betrayed his father, and he cherished all such as had distinguished themselves by their loyalty and attachment to the late King.²⁸

²⁴ Lyme deeds.

²⁵ Lyme deeds

²⁶ Cheshire Records

²⁷ Cheshire Records.

²⁸ Hume's *History of England*

In the year 1414, when the steeple of Macclesfield Church was built, there were placed upon it many shields of arms which were probably meant to commemorate the benefactors of the work. Among them are the Legh shields, which were probably placed there to shew the share Sir Peter had in it.

On Monday next after the feast of the exaltation of the Holy Cross, 2 Hen. V. (15th September, 1414), Sir Peter, calling himself, Peter Fitz Peter de Legh, by a deed dated at Broome, conveyed to Edmund Tebbut, chaplain, and John de Clayton, all the lands at Broome and Haytfield, in the parish of Lymme, which were formerly his father's. This deed, which was a little too early as a preparation for Agincourt, was probably made in view of or preparatory to some settlement of the Broome and Haytfield (or Heatley) estate, has a seal which has on it a cross and engrailed (or, if the term may be allowed, it is more like a cross fusilly), with the words "*sigillum Petri de Legh*" surrounding it.

After a troubled reign of nearly fourteen years, King Henry IV breathed his last on 20th March 1413. He found that his usurped crown, "although there was a lure in it," had many thorns in its ermine, and experience had taught him that a foreign war by employing his subjects abroad might divert their attention from home affairs and from looking too nicely into his title.

And here Shakespeare did but enter into the meaning of the dying monarch's injunction to his son, when he bade him not to let the English remain long in peace, which he said was apt to breed intestine commotions; but to employ them in foreign expeditions, by which he might acquire honour and attach his subjects to his person.²⁹ But owing to her distractions and her civil troubles, France at that time offered an opportunity, which was but too likely to tempt England to revive her former claims to that kingdom, where her efforts not long before had been crowned with glory and victory. When a country begins to think herself likely to be more than a match for a troublesome neighbour, it is not difficult to find an excuse for war, and accordingly a war with France became the general talk almost as soon as Henry V was crowned; and the fame of Crécy, Poitiers, and other well-foughten fields in France rang in all men's ears. Henry, not very reasonably, not only demanded in marriage the hand of the French King's daughter, with a large dowry, but also the restoration of Normandy, and all the other provinces which had not long before been recovered by the French arms from England. As these demands were not accepted, war was determined on forthwith, and active preparations were made for it.

At that time an English army was made up of armed bodies of men brought together by particular persons, who engaged with the King by indenture to serve in person each with a certain number of followers for a fixed time and on such terms as were agreed upon. Besides their indenture for this service, there was in some cases an indenture to pay money (called Prest money) in advance, and on account of the service to be performed; and there was also with such retainers as received pledges of jewels and valuables in security for the due payment of their wages and rewards, another indenture binding them to give up such pledges when the wages and rewards were paid. By an indenture such as that first mentioned, Sir Peter Legh, like many of his neighbours, probably engaged himself to join in the projected expedition to France. Of one of these indentures, made with Sir James Harington, and which, though made in England between the King and his English subject, was written like all the rest in the French language, we give a copy in English, as a specimen of an old enlistment. It

²⁹ Hume's *History of England*

differs widely as a matter of bargain from that which until lately prevailed in the English army where an officer paid a large sum of money to purchase his commission and the privilege of being marked out by his uniform to be specially shot at.

The following is a copy of Sir James Harington's indenture:-

"This indenture, made between our Sovereign lord the King of the one part and Sir James Haryngton of the other part, witnesseth that the said James is retained by the King to serve him for one whole year in the voyage which the King in his own proper person, if God should so please, is about to make in his Duchy of Guienne, or in his kingdom of France, commencing on the day of the muster to be made of the people of his retinue at the place, which on the part of the King shall be appointed, and of which he shall be apprised in the month of May next coming. The said James shall have with him in the said voyage for the said whole year, including himself, ten men at arms, and thirty archers, taking for himself and each man at arms two shillings a day; and if the said James in our said lord the King's company shall pass into the Duchy of Guienne he shall have for the wages of each man at arms forty marks, and for the wages of each archer twenty marks, for the said whole year. And if in the company of our said lord the King the said James shall pass into the kingdom of France, then he shall have for the wages of each man at arms twelve pence a day, and for each of the said archers six pence a day, during the year abovesaid. And in case the said voyage shall be into France he shall take for himself and each man at arms the accustomed rewards, that is to say, after the rate of one hundred marks for every thirty men at arms for a year, of which wages the said James going to the parts of Guienne shall be paid half of the first quarter on the making of this indenture, and the other half when he shall be at the said muster ready to pass into Guienne, if our lord the King shall go or send him thither. And if it come to pass that our said lord the King, after the said muster, shall not pass into his duchy of Guienne but shall sail to the parts of France, then the said James shall be paid so much as shall be owing to him of the said first quarter over and above the sum by him received as above, as well for himself and his men at arms as for his archers passing into France. And for securing payment of the second quarter our said lord the King on the first of June next coming will cause to be delivered to the said James in pledge jewels which he shall be satisfied are of such value as will extend to cover the sum to which the said wages or wages with rewards for that quarter will amount to. Which jewels the said James shall be held to restore to the said lord the King whenever he shall desire to redeem them, within one year and a half and one month after the depositing of the said jewels, or otherwise at the end of the said month it shall be lawful for the said James or other the person to whom he shall have delivered the said jewels to dispose of them without hindrance from the King or his heirs, according to what is contained in the King's letters patent under his great seal to the said James in that behalf made. And for the third quarter the said James for himself and his retinue shall be paid within six weeks from the commencement thereof the proportion of wages or wages with rewards for the country where they shall pass or be, at the time of that quarter. And with respect to the payment of the wages or wages with reward, as the case may be, of the last quarter of the aforesaid year, if at the end of half of the said third quarter our said lord the King shall not give the said James such assurance of the payment as he shall think reasonable, then at the end of such third quarter he shall be quit and discharged as against our said lord the King of the covenants in this present indenture contained thereon. And the said James shall be at the sea coast with his said men well mounted,

armed, and arrayed as to their rank belongeth, ready for the muster on the first day of July next following, and after his arrival there the said James shall be bound to muster the men of his retinue before such person or persons as it shall please our said lord the King to appoint or assign, as often as he shall have reasonable warning, during all such time as the said James shall be paid or hold surety for payment within the year aforesaid. And the said James, at the costs of our said lord the King, shall have shipment and reshipment for himself and his said men, their horses, harness, and victuals, in the same manner as others of the same rank going upon the said voyage. And if it happen that our said lord the King countermand the said James before his passing the sea, the said James shall be bound for the said sum to do service to our same lord the King in such parts as he shall please; with the above said men at arms and archers, at the rate of wages accustomed in those parts where our said lord the King shall appoint, except those, if any such there be, who shall die in the meantime. And if it happen that the King's adversary of France, or any of his sons, nephews, uncles, or cousins german, or the King of any realm whatsoever, or any lieutenants or other commanders of the King's said adversary of France, shall be taken in the said voyage by the said James, or any of his retinue, our said lord the King shall have his said adversary or others above said who shall be so taken and thereupon shall make satisfaction to the said James or other the captor who shall have taken them. And with respect to the other profits and gains of the war, our said lord the King shall have, as well a third part of those of the said James, as a third part of those of the men of his retinue taken in the voyage above said, that is prisoners' ransoms, and all gold, silver, and jewels, exceeding ten marks in value. In witness whereof, to one part of this indenture, remaining with the said James, our said lord the King hath set his privy seal. Given at Westminster, the 29th of April, in the third year of our said lord the King's reign."³⁰

The men at arms in this indenture were mounted horsemen, cased in armour and armed with spear and shield, while the archers, who by throwing the enemy into confusion, proved to be of the greatest service, wore only partial armour, and generally fought on foot. Sir Philip Leche, Sir Thomas Grosvenor, Sir William Stanley the elder, Sir William Stanley the younger, Sir John Savage, Peter Legh, Ralph de Davenport, John Kyngsley, Robert de Lye, John Manley, Robert Davenport, John Done, John Honford, and William Cholmley, all Cheshire men, sailed with the King to France, having all probably entered into an indenture with him in the form above given, though as we have not their indentures, we are unfortunately not able, except as to Sir Peter Legh, to state what number of men at arms and archers formed the retinue of each. The retinue of Sir Peter Legh, or as he is called Mons. Piers de Legh, consisted of Robert Orrell, Hugh de Orrell, Thomas Sutton, John Pygott, and George Ashley, who were probably all of them archers.³¹ The first two from their names came from the neighbourhood of Sir Peter's Norley estate.

Early in the month of August Sir Peter Legh, with his retinue, was at the muster at Southampton, and from thence the royal fleet, consisting of one thousand four hundred vessels, with the host on board, set sail on the 7th August.

On the 15th August the fleet having taken eight days to make a voyage which would now be made in a few hours, anchored in the Seine off Kidcaws. It was the King's first object to

³⁰ From the original in the possession of Lord Lilford.

³¹ Nicolas', *Agincourt Roll*. 128 & 351

secure the strong town of Harfleur, which after a regular siege surrendered to him on the 22nd September. During the siege a pestilence, said to be owing to an exhalation from the Marshes of Harfleur, broke out and carried off five thousand of the besiegers. The King, with his army thus greatly reduced, set forward on the 7th October on his advance into France; and on the 25th he fought and won the great battle of Agincourt, in which the French lost ten thousand men, and the English no more than one thousand six hundred. Sir Peter Legh, who shared in the glories of the day, was made a banneret on the field; and although wounded in the battle, he advanced with the King to Calais, returned with him to England, and with him probably entered London on the 14th November in that triumphal procession which turned the city wild with joy.

On the 4th Aug., 4 Hen. V (1416), Sir Peter Legh, with his kinsman Sir John Savage, was commanded to arrest all persons found clipping or washing the King's gold or silver money in the county of Chester.³² Had this access of crime been imported by the army from France? In 5 Hen. V (1417), Sir Philip Leche, Sir Thomas Grosvenor, John Manley, Robert de Davenport, (three of whose archers had fallen sick at Harfleur), William Chomley, Peter de Lye (Sir Peter Legh), Sir William Stanley the elder, John Done, Sir William Stanley the younger, John Honford, John Kyngsley, Sir John Savage, Ralph de Davenport, and Robert de Lye (Robert de Legh of Adlington),—received the sum of £481 15s. 9½ d., whereof £252 1s., was paid for the wages of 182 archers of the county of Chester who had been with the King at Harfleur, and in the battle of Agincourt, and who had been assigned in different numbers to the several persons above named.³³ Sir Robert de Legh (Sir Peter's kinsman) had died of the pestilence at Harfleur, five days after the surrender of the city, and his share of the above payment must have been received by his executors.³⁴ Very soon after the first payment there was another, in which Sir William Stanley received £23 3s. 5½ d., Sir Peter Legh £9 13s. 11½ d., and Sir Ralph de Bostock £9 13s. 11½ d., for their wages, at 2s. a day, and for the wages of divers men at arms and archers of their company, all having lately been with the King at Harfleur, and in the battle of Agincourt.³⁵ In his inspiring speech before the battle, the King had said to Westmorland:-

We few, we happy few, we band of brothers:
For he to-day that sheds his blood with me
Shall be my brother; be he ne'er so vile,
This day shall gentle his condition!

(HENRY V. a. iv. s. 3.)

Notwithstanding this royal promise it is to be feared that the expedition had not made some of the fighting men gentler at their return; for very soon after it, Sir William Atherton, who had indentured as a simple squire to serve the King with one lance and two archers in France, and had come back with knighthood on his back, took upon him probably in consequence of some private quarrel with his fellow soldiers in the war, to make a raid on the property of Sir Piers Dutton of Dutton, in Cheshire, and to carry off some of his horses and their furniture. Sir Piers having mustered his friends Sir Ralph Bostock of Bostock, Richard Warburton of Great Budworth, Thomas Warburton of Halton, the King's attorney for Cheshire (who, we should have thought, would have preferred right before might), John Done the younger of Utkinton,

³² Cheshire Records

³³ Cheshire Records.

³⁴ Cheshire Inquisitions *post mortem*

³⁵ Cheshire Inquisitions *post mortem*

John Manley of Manley, Hugh Dutton the elder of Halton, William Leycester of Nether Tabley, Sir Peter Legh of Clifton, and John Carrington of Carrington, without waiting for the tardy process of the law, retaliated upon the property of Sir William Atherton, and the result will be best told in the words of Sir Peter Leycester:-

“Great contention fell between Sir Piers Dutton and Sir William Atherton of Atherton, in Lancashire, insomuch that they made inroads and invasions one upon another; and the said Sir Piers and his adherents were all sued by Sir William Atherton for taking away forty of his oxen and forty cows out of his closes at Atherton, and for beating his servants. But this variance was composed between them by an award of John, Duke of Bedford, Earl of Richmond and Kendal, constable of England and regent of the kingdom, in the absence of Henry V, dated 9th April, 7 Hen. V (1419). Restitution being awarded on both sides, the horses and saddles taken by Sir William Atherton were to be restored to Sir Piers Dutton, and the cattle taken by Sir Piers were to be restored to the said Sir William.”³⁶

The honourable wound Sir Peter Legh had received at Agincourt, had not subdued his warlike spirit, for in 1418, having enrolled himself under the banner of Sir John Blount, a great soldier, who like himself had shared the glories of Agincourt, he joined the second host to France and sailed with it. The foray on Sir Wm. Atherton having probably happened before this second voyage, Sir Peter may have been present and have seen the King affianced to Catherine of France on the 20th of May 1420, before the high altar of the Cathedral of Troyes. If so, however, he must have come back to England soon after, for, in 1421 he was a party to a marriage settlement at home, but he soon afterwards returned to France, and having entered Paris with the King in that year, he died there on 22nd June 1422, of his wound received at Agincourt, going to the grave only a few weeks before his royal master. His death was supposed to be owing to the unskilful treatment of his wound, and his body was brought over to England and interred in the family chapel at Macclesfield. The warrant to seize his lands into the King's hands after his death bears date 8th August, 10 Henry V (1422). His wife, Johanna, and his four children, Peter (who succeeded him), Margery (who married Adam de Clayton), Margaret (who married Nicholas Blundell), and Blanche (who married John Yrland), all survived him. In the same year that she lost her husband, Johanna his widow, made John Domvyle (the same who had witnessed her husband's charter, in 1414), and Thomas de Byrkedale, her attorneys, to deliver to Robert del Bothe and William del Heath seisin of the lands mentioned in her charter to them³⁷. She afterwards married Sir Richard Molineux, of Sefton, and having survived her second husband several years, she died at Croxteth, and was buried at Sefton, where her tomb with this inscription still remains:-

*Hie jacet domina Johanna, quonda uxor
Petri Legh militis, et postea uxor Richardi
Molineux militis, quae fuit dna de
Bradley, Haydoke, et similiter tertia
Partis villar. de Werington, Mikille
Sonke, et Burtonwode ac eciam dna
Diversaru parcellaru terraru et
Tenement, infra villas de Newton,*

³⁶ *History of Cheshire*, I., and Lyson's *Cheshire*, 527. Sir Peter Leycester, lib c 146.

³⁷ Lyme Papers.

*Golborn, Lauton, Bold et Walton Le dale.
Quaj obiit in festo S.*

*Sulpitii Epi A. Dni MCCCCXXXIX.
Cujus anima: ppitietur Deus. Amen.*

CHAPTER 5

Sir Peter III, 1415-78

PETER LEGH, of Lyme, and Haydock, was born on the 4th June, 1415, and consequently at the time of his father's death, on 16th June, 1422, he had but just entered upon his eighth year. The tragic end of his grandfather, the death of his father, of his honourable wounds at an early age, and his own great expectations, made his birth an event of no small importance; and accordingly when upon attaining twenty-one he proved his age, it was thought necessary to record not only the date of his birth, but that he was born at Clifton, the seat of the Savages, near Halton, and that he was baptised at the Parish Church of Runcorn.³⁸ His father, as we have seen, had engaged about the very time of his birth to join the expedition to France, and recollecting how early both his own parents had died, he must have felt the parting with his wife and infant child so very soon after the latter's birth, a very trying and anxious event. But inclination gave way to duty, and in little more than three months he had passed scathless through the pestilence at Harfleur, and shared in the glories of Agincourt. After the lapse of a year or more from her husband's death, Johanna, the young heir's mother, married for her second husband Sir Richard Molineux, the head of a great Lancashire house, who is said to have fought by Sir Peter's side in France. It may have been in view of this marriage that dame Margaret the widow of Piers Legh, in the 4th Henry VI (1426), gave up to her infant grandson a certain portion of her Cheshire estates, to the remainder of which he afterwards succeeded upon her death, on 24th June, 1428. Sir Richard Molineux probably about this time purchased from the King the right of the young heir's marriage, that is the right of bestowing him in marriage on whomsoever he pleased, so that he did not ally him beneath his rank; and on the 24th July, 6th Hen. VI (1428), Sir Richard obtained from the Crown a grant of the custody of all the young heir's lands and tenements in Grappenhall, and elsewhere in the county of Chester, whereof dame Margaret died seised until the said heir should be of full age.³⁹

His mother's marriage with Sir Richard Molineux, a man of birth and station, while he was still of tender years, proved to be greatly to his advantage. For some time at least he would remain under her eye, while in the knightly halls of Croxteth he would have the advantage of seeing and knowing some of the best men of the time. The age was *annis quam libris peritius*, and men then sooner made acquaintance with the casque and the spear than with the three R's. A young man then often put on his armour, and went to the wars at fifteen; and Bossuet, even in a later age, and of another profession, was a canon of Metz at thirteen. We shall see, however, at a later period that Peter Legh made good use of such opportunities as he had of using the pen as well as the sword. In or about the year 1432, when he was sixteen years of age, Peter Legh, then styled "dominus" was one of the witnesses to the grant made

³⁸ Cheshire Inquisitions.

³⁹ Cheshire Records

by the Warrington friars to Sir John Bolde to have a perpetual mass in their church; and in the same year he married Margaret Molyneux, Sir Richard's daughter by his wife Ellen, the daughter of Sir William Haryngton of Hornby; and in 14 Henry VI (1436), having then attained 21, he proved his age in the usual way, and became master of himself and his fortunes, being then and long after called only an esquire.⁴⁰

The history of his ancestors had not been lost upon Peter Legh. Many benefits received had bound Piers, the first founder of the house, to Richard II, and his grandson Peter had an inherited predilection for the house of York; but in those critical times his whole conduct was guided by great prudence and circumspection, qualities not very common in that stirring age, when men's heads often paid the forfeiture of a false move. In the family deeds and charters of this time, Peter Legh's name very often occurs. By an inquisition on the death of John Boydell, in 15 Hen. VI (1437), it was found that he held lands "*de Petro filio Petri de Legh et Hugone de Redish per serv. mil.*" On 6th March, 21 Hen. VI (1443), he was witness with Sir Thomas Stanley and others to a release made by William Troutbeck; and on 1st November in the same year he was one of the arbitrators in a dispute on the part of Richard Southworth one of his Lancashire neighbours.

That Peter Legh was a person much relied upon is evident, not only from his being named in this Southworth arbitration, but also from his being one of the knights and gentlemen who joined in making the declaration of the ancient 10th and 15th chargeable within the county of Lancaster, with a note of the deductions therefrom as they were stated and set down by Sir Peter Legh, Sir Peter Gerard, Thomas Kighley, Esq., and others, by virtue of a commission directed to them in 25th Hen. VI. The knightly prefix to Peter Legh's name comes here too soon, though he really joined in the work.⁴¹

On 31st October 25 Hen. VI. (1446), he occurs as Peter Legh, senior, esquire, from which we infer that he had then a son of his own name, who was now growing up. This was in the first of three leases made to him by the Duke of Exeter of all the duke's manors for 30 years, at a rent of £19 a year. The Duke, though he had married a daughter of the House of York, had leanings towards the Lancastrians and was under the suspicion of both parties. The other two leases bore date 1st March, 30 Hen. VI, and 25th August, 35 Hen. VI.⁴² The principal manor house of the Leghs at this time was at Bradley, a former seat of the Haydocks and there on the 13th May, 1451, he had the misfortune to lose his wife, who died there and was carried to the Haydock family burial place at Winwick for interment. On the 14th March and 20th July, 28 Hen. VI (1450), in two separate powers of attorney he is called "Peter Legh, Esquire"⁴³ and in the next year he was made collector of the Lancashire subsidy. On or about 10th Oct., 30 Hen. VI (1451), he married for his second wife Elizabeth, the daughter of Edmund Trafford, and widow of Sir John Pilkington.⁴⁴ Mr. Legh's transactions with the Duke of Exeter had now drawn upon him the suspicions of the Court, who probably thought it strange that the Duke, so nearly allied to the Yorkists, should be so intimate with Peter Legh, whose leaning to the Yorkists was suspected; and on the 10th May, 32 Hen. VI (1454), the King addressed a letter to the sheriff of Lancashire, commanding him to deliver letters of Privy Seal to Thomas Pilkington and Piers Legh, squires and from another letter bearing date the following day, and addressed to the Duke of Exeter, it seems clear that Mr. Legh was

⁴⁰ Cheshire Records.

⁴¹ *History of Lancashire*, I., 532,

⁴² Lyme Papers

⁴³ Lyme Papers

⁴⁴ Lyme Missal

suspected by King Henry VI, "the Prince of Priests" as he has been called, to be of the Duke of York's party.⁴⁵ The King's warning by his privy seal sufficed to detach Mr. Legh from any further intercourse with the Duke of Exeter; for in the letters afterwards addressed to Thomas Pilkington and others he is not once mentioned. The Duke of Exeter forfeited, his estates, and Mr. Legh profited by so significant a warning. In or about the year 1455, Sir Ralph Radclyff, knight, and Peter Legh, squyer, presented a petition to the King praying him to restore to them the Manor of Ulnes Walton and other lands in Lancashire. Peter Legh, one of the petitioners, describes himself as "the son of Peter Legh, who was the son of Piers (the grantee of Lyme) who was the son of Maude de Norley, one of the heirs of Margery de Walton, from whose heirs the said land had been tortiously alienated to the Crown." The petition appears to have been successful, for the descendants of Peter Legh, the petitioner, were certainly in possession of one moiety of the lands in question at a date long subsequent to the petition, and were able to trace their title back to the time of King John or his son, when they were held by Warin de Walton, as appears by the Testa de Nevil (396).

On the 22nd May 1455, the partisans of the house of York, who had long been hoping to unseat their rivals, met at St. Alban's, under the leading of Richard Duke of York, when a bloody battle was fought, in which 5,000 Lancastrians are said to have fallen, with a very slight loss to the Yorkists. Peter Legh, though he no doubt wished the victors success, we have reason to think neither took part in the battle, nor openly espoused their cause. On the 4th September 36 Hen. VI (1457), we find him witnessing a family deed in which he is still called an esquire. The hollow peace which after the battle of St. Alban's had been made between the rival houses, continued until 1459; but in that year the old quarrel was renewed, and the Earl of Salisbury having raised the standard of the White Rose, marched from his castle at Middleham at the head of 4,000 men, and advancing through Cheshire by way of Congleton to Newcastle-under-Lyme, passed on from thence to Drayton, where he arrived on the 22nd September, 1459; and on the next day very near to that place encountered and defeated the Lancastrians under Lord Audley, in the battle of Blore, when, 2,400 of King Henry's adherents, and amongst them Peter Legh's brother-in-law Sir Richard Molineux, were left dead upon the field. Salisbury, on his advance to this battle, must have passed very near to Lyme; but it is not known that Mr. Legh either joined him or took part in the battle.

About the same year Peter Legh (calling himself Piers Legh) presented a petition to the infant Prince of Wales, who could be no other than the son of Henry VI, the Prince who was afterwards so barbarously slain at Tewkesbury, and whose spirit his murderer heard addressing him in his dreams to aggravate his remorse:-

Clarence is come, false, fleeting perjured Clarence,
That stabbed me in the field of Tewkesbury;
Seize on him, Furies, take him to your torments.

There appears to have been some attempt made by the council of the young Prince to reclaim the Lyme estate as being only held by Peter Legh, the petitioner, at a yearly rent; but he was not likely to be either ignorant of his rights or unable to support them, and as the petition recapitulated the circumstances in which the Lyme estate was so honourably acquired, we give it in full:-

⁴⁵ Privy Council Proceedings, Vol. VI., 180.

The Petition exhibited to Ed., Prince of Wales, Duke of Cornwall, and Earle of Chester, by Pieres Leigh, cosen and heire to Thomas Daniers.

That whereas, Rich, the 2d., by his Lres. patents [letters patents *i.e.* open letters. Ed.] under the seale of ye county palatine dated the 4th Jan. rehearsing in the same that where Peirs Leigh, Esqr., and Margt. his wife dau. and heire of Tho. Daniers, Esqr. (then dead) to him had shewed that whereas the most honorable Lord his father for ye good and free service that the said Tho. had done to his sd. father as well in takeing of the Chamblayne Tankervyle, as in releveing of the baner of his sd. father at the battle of Cressye. By his Ires, patents granted to the sd. Thomas, and his heires 40 markes yearly of and in his manor of Frodsham, in the county of Chester, untill his said father had provided to graunt unto the said Tho. and his heires, in place convenient, lands and tenements to the yearly valew of 20 li., the wch. Tho. by force of the sd. Ires patents of 40 marc was seised as is rehersed and so of the same died seised without any pvicon or grant of lands to him made, after whose decease the sd. yearly rent descended to the sd. Margret as dau. and heire to him the said Tho., wch Margt. and one Peires Leigh her husband, in the 21st yeare of Richard the 2d., received the sd. Ires patents to be cancelled in the Excheqr. at Chester, to the intent it would please K. Rich, the 2d. to graunt to the said Peires and Margt. his wife a place of land called Hanley, lying in the forest of Macclesfield, the wch. the sd. King granted to the sd. Pieres and Margt. and the heires males of their two bodies lawfully begotten, by force of wch., the sd. Peires and Margt. were seised of the sd. lands for their lives and dureing their heires males each one after others decease withouten any interruption to them or any of them made till now of late there was a scire facias directed to the sherriff of Cheshire comanding him by the same to levy of the goods and cattells of ye. sd. supplt. to the valew of 20 markes for the occupation of the sd. lands and pasture, to the great hurt of yr. sd. supplt. without yr. good and abundant grace, to him be shewn, beseeching yr. good grace to grant a supersedeas to surcease levying any sumes of the goods and cattells of yr. sd. supplt.⁴⁶

On the 2nd April, 38 Hen. VI (1460), he is a party to a release from his sister-in-law, Alice Downes, and is there still called an esquire. But Peter Legh's loyalty to the house of York, though it had slumbered, was not dead. It was no wonder that in times so critical, when one false step might be his last, he preferred to abide his time; but the next year, when the sun seemed to smile on the Yorkist cause, and forces were again gathering head and mustering at Sandal Castle, the Duke of York's seat, his former caution gave way, and he no longer held back, but joined the assembled Yorkists, and his valour won for him from his princely leader's hand the honour of being made a banneret in the battle at Wakefield, in which the Duke in the end lost both the field and his life.⁴⁷ On the 10th May, 1 Edward IV (1461), the King, by his letters patent, appointed the new banneret Sir Peter Legh governor and constable of Rhudlan Castle for life, with a salary of £40 a year and in the course of the next year he received £55 11s. 8d. on account of his salary.⁴⁸ In the 2nd Ed. IV (1462), he again joined the King's army, and very probably took part in the fight, at Towton, on 29th March 1461, in which Lord Clifford called "the black-faced" was slain, whom Shakespeare by a strange anachronism calls Clifford of Cumberland long before the period at which his family acquired that title.⁴⁹ Sir Peter having thus fleshed his sword, was not allowed all at once to

⁴⁶ Harlean Manuscripts, 2074, fo. 124

⁴⁷ Leycesters's MSS., *History of Cheshire*, I., 337, notes

⁴⁸ Cheshire Records

⁴⁹ Henry VI. part II., Act v., scene 2.

sheathe it. In the year after the battle of Towton another expedition to the north was planned, and he joined in it. We shall give the account of its setting out from Stowe's Annals, where Sir Peter's name appears in a new spelling, in addition to the many varieties of it which we have seen before. Stowe's words are:-

“King Edward beganne his journey towards Scotland on the feast day of Saint Andrew the Apostle, 1462, accompanied of Dukes, Earles, Barons, and Knights as followeth: the Dukes of Norfolke and Suffolke, the Earles of Arundell, Shrewsbury, Worcester, Kent, Westmorland, and Essex: the Barons, Lord Grey of Ruthen, Lord Hastings, Lord Grey of Codnar, Lord Grey of Wilton, Lord Anthony Scales, Lord Latimer, Lord Herberd, Lord Ferrers of Chartley, Lord Stanley, Lord Wenloke, Lord Grestoke, Lord Ogill, Lord Lomley, Lord Clinton, Lord Southwike, Lord Barnes, Lord Dacre of the South, Lord Dacre of the North, Lord Say, Lord Cromwell, Lord Cobham, Lord Leverforth, Lord Henry Buckingham, Lord Mortimer, Lord Fitzhugh, Lord de la Ware, Lord Powes, Lord Scrope of Bolton, Lord Dudley, Lord Sturton, Lord Burgaveny; Knights, Sir Peirce A'Leigh, Sir William Stanley, Sir William Storis, Sir Thomas Montgomery, Sir J. Canes, Sir Ralph Pigot, &c., to the number of fifty-nine Knights.—Margin: Dukes, 2; Earles, 7; Barons, 31; Knights, 59.

In 3rd Ed. IV (1463), Sir Peter Legh, as constable of Rhudlan Castle, received £60. 16s. for the wages of six soldiers, each at 4d. a day, continually abiding in the said Castle for the keeping and defence of the same;⁵⁰ and on the 20th August in the same year he was made escheator of the county of Flint, during the King's pleasure.⁵¹ In one of the Bold deeds, copied by Dodsworth, and dated 20th October, 4 Ed. IV (1464), he is alluded to and called Sir Peter Legh, knight; and in the act of resumption passed in the same year, “it was provided that neither that Act nor any other Act or Acts in that same Parliament thereafter to be made should in anywise avoid, revoke, or annul the letters patent made and granted by the King's redoubted fader of noble memory unto Perez Legh, knight, by the name of Perez Legh, esquier, of an annuity of XX li. yerely, to be receyved by the said Perez for terme of his life of the issues, profitez, and renewes of the lordship of Wakefield coming by the hands of the receyvour there for the time being, but that the said letters patentes should be good and effectuell.”⁵²

Having seen the House of York firmly reseated on the throne, Sir Peter Legh now laid aside his sword. Another knight, Sir Philip Sidney, in a later age, comparing together the uses of the needle and the sword, decides in favour of the latter, as we might expect a soldier would; for, says he, “it is the glory of the sword that with the same power which it gives a bad man for killing his father, it enables a good man to deliver his country.” He might have carried his comparison a little farther, and made it tripartite by introducing into it the pen also, which Sir Peter Legh proved himself able to use as well as the sword. In the year 1465 he began to compile a complete register of all his estates, which he prefaces by telling us the exact time when it was commenced, and adding to it this prayer:-

May Grace, with ray divine,
Deign on the scribe to shine.

⁵⁰ Cheshire Records

⁵¹ Cheshire Records

⁵² Rotul. Parliament, vol. v., p. 527.

The work, which contains a full and very minute account with every particular of the large property at that time belonging to him, forms a closely-written book of 333 pages, of the size of a small folio. It is in Latin, and is written throughout in the same hand, except a few occasional alterations, which are indicated by a different coloured ink, and show a little variation in the writing. The character of the writing resembles and yet differs from that in which the ordinary charters at that time were written. It has a kind of law character in undress, such as an educated gentleman at that time would almost necessarily be taught to use in writing formal instruments. It is strong, legible, and plain, and here and there such notes as the following which occur in it show that the writer had from time to time carefully examined his work. At pages 218 and 236, we read "*corrigitur istuc*," and at page 260 "*corrigitur hucusque*." It is bound in a strong binding, which is probably as old as the book itself, though the lettering on the back, "Manuscript relating to Lyme Estate," is evidently of a later period, being probably not more than a century and a half old.

With a particularity not often found in such cases, Sir Peter Legh, its presumed author, informs us that he began it on the third Tuesday in Lent (19th March), in the year 1465, and in the sixth year of King Edward IV. But in thus dating his work, he evidently reckons the year as beginning on 25th March, which according to the civil and ecclesiastical computation after the 14th century, it actually did; otherwise, as the King's reign, according to the historic mode of dating, commenced on 4th March 1461, his sixth year would certainly not have been 1465, but 1466. We can only reconcile the above year of grace with the regnal year by supposing the writer to have adopted the civil and legal, and not the historic mode of computation. And that he actually did so is proved by the heading of another part of the volume, which he says was written on 29th March, 1466, *anno regni* Ed. IV (1466). After the 25th March, the two modes of dating would always coincide.

Although we have no positive evidence by whom the book was actually penned, and consequently do not know with certainty whether it was actually the work of the knightly owner whose possessions it so minutely describes, or of one of the two chaplains whose names occur in it, and to whom the use of the ecclesiastical computation in dating it might seem more naturally to point; yet, on the other hand, there are strong reasons for supposing the knight to have been his own amanuensis. Here and there in the manuscript notices occur in it not immediately connected with its subject, and twice or oftener we meet in it with the expression "*ut ipse dicit*," while in an age when the statute of additions was in full force, and knighthood was punctilious of respect, he is constantly referred to as "the said Peter," or "the said Peter Legh," without any knightly addition. Hence there arises a presumption that Sir Peter penned the work himself, which presumption is almost made a certainty by the copies of some magistrates' forms at the end of the volume, which have been copied for his use. It was hardly to be expected that the composer of this Legh rent roll should write Latin like Cicero or Quintilian. In that age the breaking of Priscian's head did not subject the offender to a charge of assault and battery. Remembering this, therefore, we need hardly wonder at the offence occurring so frequently; and remembering also that in a later age even an university thought it necessary to condemn such errors as "*ego currit et Socrates legere*."⁵³ We are content to accept the book as it is.

A short account of the hall at Norley, as given in the manuscript, has already appeared in this history, and we shall now give a translation of the account given in the volume of the house

⁵³ Fosbroke's *Brit. Mon.* 249. [probably Thomas D. Fosbroke's *British monachism* 1802, Ed.]

of Bradley, the ancient seat of the Haydocks, which Sir Peter had inherited from his mother, and was residing in at the date of the manuscript:-

“The aforesaid Peter Legh holds the manor of Bradley, in the vill of Buttonwood, within the parish of Werrington, to himself, his heirs and assigns forever, that is to say, a new hall with three new chambers and a fair dining room, with a new kitchen, bakehouse, and brewhouse, and also with a new tower built of stone with turrets, and a fair gateway, and above it a stone bastille well defended, with a fair chapel, all of the said Peter's making, also one ancient chamber called the Knyghte's chamber, all which premises aforesaid, with other different houses, are surrounded by a moat with a drawbridge, and outside the said moat are three great barns, namely, on the north part of the said manor house with a great shippon and stable, with a small house for the bailiff, and a new oven built at the eastern end of the place called the Parogardyne, with all the members and demesne lands to the said manor house belonging or appertaining, with one large orchard, enclosed with hedges and ditches on the south part of the said place called the Parogardyne, with an enclosed garden beyond the old oven.”

The fair gateway (*pulchra porta*) of the above extract, with the bastille raised upon it, is now a picturesque ruin, which bespeaks the importance it had at the time when Bradley was a knightly residence. The prison upon it was doubtless the temporary place of confinement of those unhappy offenders who were awaiting judgment before the justice of Bradley. Its existence and that of the drawbridge (*pons tractabilis*) tell of times

When men built less against the elements
Than their next neighbours.

The manuscript gives us the rare information not only what was the date of this building, but that a considerable part of the mansion also was an addition made by Sir Peter Legh to “the Knyghte's auncient chaumber.” Building or repairing the buildings on his estate, which seems at times to have been one of Sir Peter's principal employments, or amusements, served to occupy him at home, and to give him a plausible excuse for not mixing in the stirring and dangerous scenes then so constantly occurring in the country. But if it kept him out of the camp, it did not keep him out of Courts also, for there, as is shown by entries of this sort, “*alia parcella pendet in lite et dissensione*,” the knight was not slow to defend himself. At times indeed he seems to have pushed too far the desire to keep his own, as this entry shews:—“*Est quadam via ducta per duodecim juratores quia invenitur quod dicta acra dicti Petri non fuit burgagium in antiquo tempore neque moderno*.” The manuscript, which began with an invocation for the Divine aid, shows in other places that its writer was a devout man.

In one passage⁵⁴ the writer asks the aid of the Virgin, and at the end of the volume is this consistent conclusion:—“*Et praedictus Petrus Legh, miles, modo proponit, gratia Dei mediante legare praedicta messuagia* (certain messuages which had been mentioned), *cum terris praescriptis, cantariae antecessorum suorum ecclesiae de Wynwick, capellae de Haydoc, in dicta ecclesia, ad orandum pro anima sua, uxoris, parentum, antecessorum et benefactorum suorum. Amen.*”

⁵⁴ At p. 141

All that large portion of the manuscript which is occupied with the family property in Warrington has appeared in full both in Latin and English in *Warrington in 1465*, one of the works printed by the Chetham Society; but we here give a translation of that part which describes the Lyme property:-

“Rental of Lyme, its manor and park, with Over Hanley and Nether Hanley, in the forest of Macclesfield, parish of Prestbury, and county of Chester, belonging to Sir Peter Legh, knight, at the feast of the Nativity of Saint John the Baptist and Saint Martin, in winter, written and limited on 29 March in the year of our Lord 1466, and in the sixth of King Edward IV, after the conquest. In the first place the said Peter holds the aforesaid manor of Lyme in the county of Chester to him his heirs and assigns forever, that is to say, one fair hall with a high chamber, kitchen, bakehouse, and brewhouse, with a granary, stable, and bailiffs house, and a fair park, surrounded with paling, and divers fields and hays contained in the same park, with the woods, underwoods, meadows, feedings and pastures thereto belonging, which are worth to the said Peter x li. a year.” Then other lands belonging to the estate are described with the rents amounting in the whole to £42 9s.; but nothing is said of the celebrated wild cattle or of the deer there.

The holdings by which the tenants held their lands under Sir Peter were various. Some of them held their lands by knight's service, which bound them to perform service in war, and subjected them to homage, relief, and various other feudal claims, but left them in other respects almost absolute owners of the land. It was the most onerous but at the same time the most honourable species of tenure. One of these tenants, Mathew de Rixton, tenant by knight's service under Sir Peter, who held the house and land now called The Wash, but formerly called The Peel, near Sankey Bridges, having died not long before his son and heir, Randle de Rixton, on Thursday, before the Conception of our Lady in the 5 Edward IV (that is on the 5th Dec. 1465), came to Bradley to do his homage, where we may suppose the following scene to have taken place on the occasion.

Bows and bills and other weapons of offence, with back and breast pieces, helmets, and other weapons of defence, mingled with the antlers of deer and other trophies of the chase, hang on the walls of the great hall at Bradley, while the light streaming through the escutcheoned window, shews the knight, now a hale man of middle age, seated on a dais. He has doffed his morion and steel coat, and is habited in doublet and hose, of crimson samit, and with a cap of maintenance on his head. Standing by in similar habits, but differing in colour and material, and with the addition of short furred cloaks, are Richard Kighley, esquire, a descendant of that knight of both his names who led fifty archers to Agincourt, Peter Legh, Esquire, Sir Peter's son and heir apparent, William Ireland, esquire, and his brother Thomas, Mathew Domvyle, Mathew Fowler, the chaplain of Sir Peter's chantry at Winwick, Peter Wudcock, chaplain, Richard Assheton, who bore the same name as one of those archers who followed Sir Peter's father to Agincourt, Richard Prestall and many others. Passing over the drawbridge through the gateway and under the bastellum already described, Randle de Rixton, the young heir, who has lately come to his inheritance, is seen entering the hall clad in plate and mail. The crowd step aside to make way for him. He advances towards Sir Peter, lays aside his sword, and unclasping his helmet uncovers his head, and kneels at the knight's feet, and after the bailiff has thrice cried “Oyez,” he places his clasped hands between those of Sir Peter and repeats aloud after the seneschal this his profession of homage:—“ Know ye, my liege lord, Sir Peter Legh, knight and banneret, that I, Randle, the son of Mathew de Rixton, become your man from this day forward, to the end of my days for

life and members, and unto you will be faithful and true, and bear you faith, for the lands I hold of you, saving only the faith I owe to my sovereign lord King Edward;" and then Sir Peter, stooping from his seat, kisses the young homager on the cheek. Some portions of this ceremony will recall to the reader's mind the scene in which Eleazer placed his hands under Abraham's thigh when he took the oath not to take a wife for Isaac from the children of Canaan. After performing his homage, Randle de Rixton placed his hands upon the gospels, and the seneschal then slowly administered to him the following oath:—"I do swear that I will be true and faithful to you, my lord Sir Peter Legh, knight and banneret, and that I will bear you faith and true fealty for the lands and tenements I hold of you, and will truly do and perform the customs and services I owe you, so help me Heaven and all the saints." And then having kissed the book, he rises from his knees, the bailiff again cries "Oyez," and the ceremony is ended.

On the 10th June 7 Ed. IV (1467), a commission was issued to Sir Peter Legh and others, to treat with the King's tenants and inhabitants of Flintshire for a subsidy in consideration of the King's remitting to them all arrears of a former subsidy.⁵⁵ On the 2nd August 1468, Sir Peter had the misfortune to lose his only son and heir apparent, Peter Legh, esquire, who died at Macclesfield, and was buried at Winwick. In the year 1449 his father's prudent forethought had found him an advantageous match, and had married him to Mabel Croft, of the ancient family of Dalton.

In 1470, the Duke of Clarence and the Earl of Warwick came to Manchester, hoping to induce Lord Stanley to join them in an attempt to restore Hen. VI; but as they found his lordship deaf to their proposals, they made no attempt to draw into their plot so staunch a Yorkist as Sir Peter Legh.⁵⁶

On the 4th of April 1474, death again entered Sir Peter's house at Bradley, and he lost his second wife, Elizabeth, who left him no issue.

In 1474, Sir Peter sued Nich. Singleton and Elizabeth his wife, who had been the wife of Wm. Leyland, in an action of detinue in the court at Widnes.

On the 19th November, in the same year, the Prince of Wales demised to Sir Peter Legh, knight, and John Coneway the elder, a meadow called Craghanan, a croft called Castle Croft, and a fishery in the river Clwyd at Rhudlan, and also a certain parcel of land called the Mote Hill, there to hold for the term of ten years.⁵⁷ Many of the Lancashire names which at a later period are found in the rentals of Rhudlan, may have been derived from those who followed Sir Peter there from their Lancashire homes.

On the 4th Oct. 16 Ed. IV (1476), some entries in his manuscript shew that Sir Peter was then acting as a justice of the peace.

On the 16th November, 18 Ed. IV. (1478), feeling his end drawing near, Sir Peter Legh carried out the settled purpose he had so long meditated, and conveyed as he had promised certain land to his chaplain, Matthew Fowler and his successors, celebrating divine offices in his chapel of the Holy Trinity at Winwick. The charter of this gift is sealed with the family

⁵⁵ Cheshire Records

⁵⁶ *Paston Letters*, 27 March 1470

⁵⁷ Cheshire Records

crest of the Ram's Head, sometimes, but erroneously, called the Buck's Head. This crest, which is supposed to have been borrowed by the Leghs, from the Baguleys, to whom they were allied, was borne also by the Urswicks, who derived it either from them or from the same source as theirs.⁵⁸

On the 29th of Nov., ten days after the above charter, Sir Peter Legh died at Bradley, at the age of 63, and was buried at Winwick. By his first wife he had an only son, who died before him, and two daughters, namely, Margaret, who married Richard Bruche, of Bruche, and Jane, who married Richard Kighley, of Inskip. Sir Peter's long residence among his tenants, his intimate acquaintance with them, and his devotion to country pursuits, had done much for his neighbourhood; and when he closed his eyes peacefully at Bradley, the home which he loved, his death was regarded as a general loss, and no *requiem* or *miserere* then sung for him in the Trinity chantry at Winwick, was half so grateful a tribute to his memory as the unbought regrets breathed by his tenants and neighbours over his remains after they had been committed to their resting place in the family chantry.

Sir Peter Legh, who greatly improved the family estate, was cautious, prudent, and far-seeing; these were qualities of great value in the times in which he lived, and in which was opened "the purple testament of bleeding war" which bequeathed to England the War of the Roses.

It was happy for him that his youth restrained him from mixing in the earlier struggles of the rival houses. He loved the shield better than the sword, and the pen better than either; and it had its effect upon the prospects of himself and his family. Never idle, he escaped that rust of leisure which is sometimes contracted in the narrow sphere of country occupations, and which is thought to have given rise to some of that blunt bearing of the country gentry of the last century. He was an active magistrate, which was one of many proofs of the trust placed in him by his Yorkist Sovereign: active and vigorous in habit, he retained his mental weapons unimpaired to the close of his career. It is a proof of his habitual caution that the long manuscript he wrote contains no single allusion to the stirring political or public events of his time. No monument was raised over his grave; but his great book, a monument—"sere perennius," has already outlived many a more pretentious monument to other men which might have been expected to outlast it.

No effigy in stone or alabaster was placed over his grave, or, if it were, it no longer remains to give us his counterfeit presentment, or we might have found in it a portrait answerable to his character of a wise and good man.

CHAPTER 6

Peter IV, died 1468

PETER LEGH, of Lyme, Haydock, and Bradley, Esquire, the only son of Sir Peter Legh, knight and banneret, was born about the year 1433, and although he died in his father's lifetime, the great family inheritance, not diminished, but increased, was transmitted through him to his descendants. In or about the year 1449, he was married by his prudent father to Mabel, a

⁵⁸ *History of Richmondshire*, vol. II, p. 32, and plate p. 42. [Probably by Dr. Thomas D. Whitaker, Ed.]

daughter and co-heiress of James Croft, Esquire, the head of the house of Dalton, an ancient family in north Lancashire. Mabel, besides the manor of Dalton, and half the advowson of Claughton, had from her father also certain lands at Aske in Westmoreland, and the portion she brought to her husband in the end helped to swell the already broad lands of the house of Lyme. Of Peter Legh, who was at one time living on some part of the family estate at Lowton, and who does not seem to have been remarkable for activity or usefulness, history makes but little mention; and he had not, as will be seen, the caution which marked through life his father's prudent career. But talent inherited is not like an estate; a generation or two passes by and its light is hid; and then it again breaks forth, and shines out more brightly than ever. Peter Legh's father in very critical times had steered his barque safely through many a shoal, and while affection and his family traditions made him wish well to the house of York he had never ventured rashly on any outbreak, which without serving their fortunes would have made shipwreck of his own. By neglecting his example, however, his son very soon found himself in trouble, and, as we shall hear, he fell into difficulty.

On the 28th August 34 Hen. VI (1456), the Duke of Exeter, who, though he had married a daughter of the house of York, was, nevertheless, suspected of favouring the Lancaster cause, made Peter Legh, as Peter Legh, the younger, Esquire, a grant of an annuity of ten pounds for life, with the view probably of detaching him from the Yorkist party, to whom his father adhered, and attaching him to that of Lancaster, which the Duke himself favoured. This grant was confirmed by letters patent, dated a few days later, and of these letters, which are in Latin, the following is a translation:-

"Henry Duke of Exeter, Earl Huntingdon and Ivery, admiral of England, Ireland, and Aquitaine, Lord de Lesparra, and also constable of the tower of London: to Peter Legh, the elder, Esquire, farmer of all our manors, messuages, lands, and tenements in the towns of Haydock, Brightmede, Harewode, Over Derwent, and Nether Derwent, in the county of Lancaster, greeting: whereas by our letters patent dated the twenty-eighth day of August, in the thirty-fourth year of King Henry the sixth, we lately granted to our beloved Peter Legh, the younger, esquire, a certain annual rent of ten pounds, to be received yearly by the same Peter and his assigns, for the term of his life, out of all our manors messuages, lands, and tenements in the county of Lancaster (our lands and tenements with the appurtenances in Torresholm and Pulton only excepted) to be received from the hands of our tenants and farmers there for the time being; at the feast of Saint Martin in winter, and of Pentecost, by equal portions, with a power of distress, as in the same letters is specified, and as therein more plainly appeareth. We command you, therefore, that you make full payment of the said annual rent to the said Peter Legh, the younger, from the said twenty-eighth day of August, at the least aforesaid, retaining these our letters in your possession as your warrant. We will also and by these presents do acquit you, the said Peter Legh the elder, of ten pounds yearly out of the farm of the manors, messuages, lands, and tenements, due and to be paid year by year during the life of the said Peter Legh, the younger; and the same ten pounds we release to you yearly by these presents. In witness whereof we have caused these our letters to be made patent. Given under our seal of arms, the first day of September, in the the thirty-fifth year of the reign of King Henry the Sixth (1456)."⁵⁹

⁵⁹ Lyme Papers

If, as we have supposed, this was a lure, it probably succeeded, and if so what we have next to relate was one of its sad consequences. In 6 Ed. IV (1466), he was in prison, whither he had been sent for not finding sureties to keep the peace. We are not told what was the immediate occasion of this, but the record in the Exchequer at Chester, which bears date 8 Sept. 6 Ed. IV, (1466), states that Peter Legh, esquire, of Lowton, in Lancashire, was then in prison in the city gaol in Northgate Street, Chester, in the custody of Agnes Darby, who, very oddly as it seems, was the keeper of that prison.⁶⁰ Most probably the Duke of Exeter's grant to him of the above pension had drawn Peter Legh into some act of sedition, which had made it necessary that he should be bound over to keep the peace.

In the next year, however, he must have regained the royal favour, for by a lease dated 18th Oct. 7 Ed. IV (1467), the King demised to him, as Peter Legh, esquire, the King's town of Vaynoll, with the pleas and issues of his court of the town of Rhudlan with the toll of its markets and fairs (except pleas of the Crown), and also his town of Baghegre (Bagillt) and a certain corn mill there, with its toll and mulcture. To hold for the term of six years, subject to a yearly rent.⁶¹ He died at Macclesfield, on the 2nd August, 1468, where perhaps, he was buried, and if so the stone figure found in the wall of the chancel of Macclesfield, which is believed to be a Legh, may be meant for him.⁶² He died leaving his wife and his sons Peter, Hamond, James, John, and Robert, and his daughter Elizabeth and one other daughter surviving. His widow Mabel died at Dalton, in Lonsdale, on 8th July, 1475, having made a will, which, as it is a curious specimen of the English of that time, we give in full:-

The Will of Mabel Legh

"This indenture, made ye viij day of July, ye yere of our Lorde mccccxxiiij, witness yt. it is ye will of Dame Mabell Lye, be the avyce of Peres son and heyre to ye said Dame Mabell, Sr. Peres Lye and Sr. Richard Redmayne, knyghtes, yt. ilkon of hir sones have es. of ye lyvelode, of ye said Dame Mabill's that is to say, Hamund, cs. [100 shillings, Ed.] James cs. and John cs. dewring their lyfes. And after ye decesse of eny of yam ye said Hamund, James, or John, then ye said cs. remayne to ye said Peres and his heyres. And if it appyn eny of thaym ye said Hamund, James and John to be evell disposit or wrang gyddit, and nought be ye avice of yair brother Peres, and Sr. Richard Redmayne knyght, then ye forsaid cs. to remayne to ye forsaid Peres and his hayres. Also it is ye will of ye said Dame Mabill, yt. ye feoffators yt. is enfeoffated in Dalton fulfill ye will of Peres Lye, late husband to ye said Dame Mabill, as touching ye marriage of Peres son and heyre to ye said Dame Mabill. And all ye resedewe of ye lyvelode of ye said Dame Mabill yt remaynes ovr. ye feoffament of ye said Peres and ye xv li [£15, Ed.] of ye said Hamund, James, and John to be deposit by Sr. Richard Redmayne, knight, and ye said Peres Lye to helping and maryng of ye sisters by ye avyce of ye said Richard and Peres. And as for ye said xv li assigned to Hamund, James, and John to be disposit by ye forsaid Richard and Peres to yai be at reasonable age to yair hehove. In witnes herof to ye p'sent writyng ye said Dame Mabill hath sett hir seale. Yeven ye day and yere aforesaid."

The Crofts were in the habit of using a seal in which their proper arms were dimidiated not quartered with those of the Butlers of Merton, with whom they were connected, while they

⁶⁰ Cheshire Records

⁶¹ Cheshire patent rolls

⁶² *History of Cheshire*, III., 346 in the footnotes

used as a crest which they had adopted from the Botelers of Merton the figure of a negro kneeling on one knee and offering a goblet with these words above it.

Bevez et benissez crofte

Peter, the eldest son of Peter and Mabel Legh, succeeded to his mother's estate on her decease, and on the death of his grandfather, Sir Peter Legh, he succeeded also to the inheritance of Lyme.

Hamund, the second son, who is mentioned in his mother's will, died on 20th May 1475,⁶³ and was buried at All Hallows, Barking,⁶⁴ James, the third son, who is also mentioned in his mother's will, married Cicely, daughter of Robert Gerard, and died 31st March 1514.⁶⁵ John, the fourth son, is mentioned in his mother's will. Robert, the fifth son, is mentioned in his brother Sir Peter Legh's will. Elizabeth, the first daughter. Margery, the second daughter, married Ralph Orrell, and left issue, as appears by the will of her brother Sir Peter Legh.

CHAPTER 7

Sir Piers V, 1455-1527

SIR PETER LEGH, of Lyme and Haydock, knight and priest, who was born in 1455, succeeded his grandfather in 1478, when he was 23 years of age.⁶⁶ According to the usual custom of that time, he had been married with the full sanction of his father and grandfather, about the year 1467, to Ellen, the daughter of Sir John Savage, by his wife Catherine Stanley. As Ellen was his kinswoman, and within the prohibited degrees, which had then been strained to a great extent, it was thought prudent, if not necessary, in order to make the marriage valid, to obtain a papal dispensation, and this is said to have been obtained in 1468, the 4th year of Pope Paul II. But if so, the marriage of the parties in the year before was either only a betrothal, or the dispensation, like that obtained by the first Sir Piers of Lyme, made the marriage valid, although solemnised previously. Another Ellen Savage, who married Piers Warburton, by dispensation, in 1469, has been sometimes confounded with the wife of Sir Peter Legh, but the wife of Piers Warburton was the daughter of Sir John Savage by his wife, Matilda Swinnerton.

In the 22 Edward IV (1482), the Duke of Gloucester being sent with an army into Scotland, was accompanied by Lord Stanley, who had command of the right wing consisting of 4,000 men. They had reached the borders of Scotland, and invested Berwick, when unwilling to lose time, the Duke left Lord Stanley to take the place, while he himself pushed forward to Edinburgh. The Castle of Berwick surrendered to Lord Stanley on the 26th August and he had his full share of the glories of the campaign.⁶⁷ Peter Legh, who certainly marched with the expedition, and in it is believed to have served and won his spurs under Lord Stanley, was made a banneret at Hutton Field, 22nd August, on a great review of the forces, where honours were distributed to those who had served in the campaign. In the year 1 Richard III, the

⁶³ Lyme Missal

⁶⁴ Stowe's Survey, p. 50. [John Stowe, 1525-1605, published his *Survey of London* in 1598, Wikipedia, Ed.]

⁶⁵ Lyme Missal

⁶⁶ Cheshire Inquisitions

⁶⁷ Collins' *Peerage*, iii, 59

King, who in his march through Lancashire as Duke of Gloucester is said to have slept a night at Bradley, granted him an annuity of ten pounds a year for his life.⁶⁸

Notwithstanding the obligations he was under, and the faithful allegiance he had always borne to the house of York, and notwithstanding also that the usurper, Richard, while Duke of Gloucester, had so greatly ingratiated himself with the men of Lancashire and the north, that according to Lord Bacon, "his memory lay like lees at the bottom their hearts, and would come up if the vessel were but stirred."⁶⁹ It is hardly likely that Sir Peter Legh, who had been advanced to the rank of banneret by Lord Stanley, should not join the force of his Lordship at Bosworth, and which, in the battle fought there on 22 August 1485, mainly decided the usurpers fate, and seated Henry VII on the throne; who shortly afterwards, by his marriage to Elizabeth of York, made the two opposing houses one, and no longer rivals but friends. And on the 6th June, 1487, when the King's crown was in peril in the battle of Stokefield, Sir Peter Legh again drew his sword, and fought valiantly to defend it. On the 7th September in the same year, he contracted with Sir Thomas Gerard, that his son and heir apparent, Peter Legh, should marry Jane, Sir Thomas's daughter.

In 4 Henry VII (1488), being then about either to make a settlement or to alien some of his lands in Grappenhall and Le Brome, he paid the King a fine to obtain the usual licence necessary for the purpose.⁷⁰ On the 7th May, 6 Henry VII, (1491), Sir Peter had the misfortune to lose his wife. Her death took place at Bewgenet, where she was buried on the 17th of the same month. It is not known what business had drawn Sir Peter and Dame Ellen Legh to Bewgenet, the place of her death, which is a hamlet nine miles from Petworth, in the west of Sussex, and is mentioned at an earlier period in one of our records; for in 9 Edward III (1336), Edward St. John prosecuted Adam Parker, of Petworth and John de Dudlesford, for breaking into his park or free warren at Bewgenet and other places, and driving away his deer, hares, and pheasants.⁷¹ Had the St. Johns a house at Bewgenet, where Dame Ellen and her husband were visiting when she died?

In the year after the death of Dame Ellen, Sir Peter Legh's wife, her brother, Thomas Savage, Canon of York and Dean of the King's Chapel in London, was consecrated Bishop of Rochester, from which place he was afterwards translated to London; and finally, in 1501, he was consecrated Archbishop of York.

In the year 1496, a controversy having arisen as to Sir Peter Legh's right to quarter the family arms with Assheton (such questions were not unusual in that age), the matter came on for hearing before the Lord Constable, and what his decision was will appear by the indenture he made of which the following is a copy:-

"The bill endented witnesseth, that on Holy Rode day, in May (i.e. May 3rd) the eleventh yere of the reigne of King Henry VII, the Earle of Derby, the Constable of England, in the King's chamber at Westminstre, determined that Sir Thomas Assheton of Assheton, knight, should bere for his propre arms, *silver* a molet unpierced of V points *sabull* alone, or whartly (quarterly) in the first quarter yf moo armes, by descent shall or mowe fall to his inheritance. And Sir Peirs a Lygh and his heires shall or mowe here the same armes whartly, so they be not in the first quarter,

⁶⁸ Harlean Cat. I, 236

⁶⁹ Life of Henry VII, p. 67.

⁷⁰ Cheshire Records and Newbiggin's *Forest of Rossendale*, p. 22.

⁷¹ Patent Rolls, 9 Ed. III and Sussex Hist. Collections, vol. XVII

with a bezant of gold on the first point, for several weye, that if the forsaid Sir Peirs can any tyme hereafter fynde anie sufficient evidence of auctoritee, and before the constable allowable, that then and in that case he and his heires shall and mowe bere the forsaid armes whartly, and without bezant or other difference. Present at this determination, Maist. James Stanley, warden of Manchester, and Sir Edward Stanley, and sonnes of the said erle, &c. And to this I, the said lord and constable, have sett my seale, 11th day of May, ye yere before specified.”⁷²

On the 3rd March 20 Hen. VII (1505), the King, by letters patent, conferred on Sir Peter Legh, knight, the office of Steward of Blackburnshire, Tottington, Rochdale, and Clithero, within the County Palatine of Lancaster, with all the rents and appurtenances, together with the conduct and government of all his vassals, tenants, and servants within those towns, and within the members of the same to have, exercise, and occupy the said office by himself or deputy from the Feast of St. Michael the Archangel then next during pleasure. On the 19th May in the same year Sir Peter Legh, knight, appointed Christopher Houghton chaplain to be the chantry priest of his chapel of the Holy Trinity at Winwick.

The grant which was made to Sir Peter Legh of the stewardship of Blackburnshire, was dated at Lancaster, and was expressly stated to be made in consideration of services which Sir Peter Legh had rendered to the King.⁷³ The services at Bosworth and Stokefield were probably among them. The office thus conferred, besides its pecuniary emoluments, which were considerable, was one of great honour, which had been long an object of ambition to the first families of the county. The first Earl of Derby was Sir Peter Legh's immediate predecessor in it; and the long list of those who filled the office both before and after him contains numbers of knightly and noble names.⁷⁴ The seneschal of Blackburnshire exercised for his lord jurisdiction over the whole of the original parish of Whalley, as well as the manor of Tottington, which lies beyond it, constituting together a great extent of country, containing many thousand acres, including all that wild domain which was divided into the forests of Blackburnshire and Bowland, or as they both came at length to be called by the one name of the forest of Lancaster.

These forests were the abode of stags, roes, and those bubali, or wild cattle, which are mentioned by Leland as remaining not long before his time at Blackley, and of which tradition records that they were transplanted into the dean's or abbot's park at Whalley, whence, on the same authority, they are reported to have been afterwards removed to Gisburne Park, where some of their descendants still remain.⁷⁵ May not some of these wild cattle have been removed by Sir Peter Legh, while he was seneschal of Blackburnshire to his park at Lyme, where some of them, which are looked upon as a curiosity, may be seen at this day?

“Of these cattle, which anciently roamed at large in the Caledonian forests, it was formerly,” says Sir Walter Scott, “a point of state to preserve a few in the parks of the Scottish nobility. Specimens continued to be kept within living memory at Hamilton, Drumlarig, and Cumbernauld; but if we are to judge from the accounts of old chroniclers they had degenerated from the ancient race in size and strength. The bull had lost the shaggy honours of his mane and the race was small and light made, in

⁷² Whitaker's *History of Richmondshire*, II., 245 in notis

⁷³ *History of Lancashire*, ii., 621

⁷⁴ *History of Whalley*, 191. [by Dr. Thomas D. Whitaker, Ed.]

⁷⁵ *History of Whalley*, 205 [by Dr. Thomas D. Whitaker, Ed.]

colour a dingy white or rather a pale yellow, with black horns and hoofs. A herd is still preserved at Lord Tankerville's seat, Chillingham Castle, and another at Chartley, where they retain some of their old ferocity and have not been domesticated."⁷⁶

Of these cattle the number at Lyme is now unhappily dwindled to a very few. Tottington, over which the jurisdiction of Sir Peter Legh extended, has been called an honour from the number of manors dependent upon it, of which Bury, Middleton, Chaderton, and Alkington were part. Some of its higher portions stretch up to the summit of our Lancashire Apennines, which, though they have neither a soil nor a climate comparable to the valleys, still have in winter, attractions for enthusiastic sportsmen.⁷⁷

Some irregularities must have taken place before Sir Peter's appointment to the seneschalship of Blackburnshire; for he had scarcely entered upon its duties in 1505, before an action was brought against him by Sir Richard Sherburn, knight, for falsely imprisoning his servant in Clitheroe Castle.⁷⁸ Nor was this the only lawsuit he had to meet, for in the next year he was sued by Richard Russheden, the castle porter (possibly the same person whom Sir Richard Sherburn had called his servant), for taking illegal occupation of his office of porter, and depriving him of the profits. It is very likely that the porter, for some neglect or misconduct, had been displaced or removed, and this was his mode of appealing against the removal, and of trying whether or not it had been legal.⁷⁹

In the year 1338, when Richard Boteler, son of Sir William le Boteler, lord of the manor of Warrington, married Joanna de Dutton, nearly one third of the Boteler property in Lancashire was settled upon the young couple and the heirs of their bodies. On the death of Richard without issue shortly after the marriage, Joanna married John de Haydock, and very strangely carried with her, to her new husband, the settled estates. There had ever since been attempts made, from time to time, by the Botelers, to regain them; and in 1493, when a fresh suit for them was commenced by Sir Thomas Boteler, it was agreed, at the instance of the friends of both parties, to leave the quarrel to be settled by arbitration. The arbitrators, after hearing the two claimants, in 1505, on the ground of a collateral warranty, adjudged the right of the lands to belong to Sir Peter Legh; as lineally representing John and Joan de Haydock; but at the same time, to put a final end to the family animosities and settle this old quarrel, the arbitrators suggested that a marriage should take place between Thomas, the son and heir apparent of Sir Thomas Boteler, and Cecilia, the daughter of Piers, the son and heir apparent of Sir Peter Legh; and thus by this marriage, which, greatly to Sir Peter's satisfaction, took place on the 22nd July, 1507, this old and long-standing family feud was thought to be staunch.

After King Henry VII in the indulgence of his inordinate passion for money, had demanded from his last Parliament two reasonable aids, one for knighting his son Arthur (which, as the son was then dead, hardly deserved to be called a reasonable aid), and the other for marrying his daughter to the King of Scotland (whence came the royal line of Stuart) and after Parliament had compromised with him for the sum of £40,000, Sir Peter Legh was appointed one of the knights and others who were to collect the £318 2s. 3 ³/₄ d., which was settled as the Lancashire portion of the composition.⁸⁰

⁷⁶ Sir Walter Scott's *Bride of Lammermoor*, I., 321.

⁷⁷ *History of Whalley*, 229. [by Dr. Thomas D. Whitaker, Ed.]

⁷⁸ Duchy Calendar, 122.

⁷⁹ Duchy Calendar, 122.

⁸⁰ *History of Lancashire*, I, 456. [This may be Edward Baines' book published in 1868. Ed.]

BEAMONT'S HISTORY OF THE HOUSE OF LYME

On the 21st April, 1509, Henry VII. died, and on the same day his son of the same name ascended the throne as Henry VIII.

On the 12th June, 1st Henry VIII, Sir Peter Legh sued out and obtained from the new King two general pardons, one under the great seal of England, and the other under the seal of the Duchy of Lancaster. These general pardons affected to discharge him of all imaginable crimes and offences committed or supposed to have been committed by him from the beginning of the world to the day of the date of the pardons. In times when the law was less settled than it is now, and when many offences might be committed through ignorance or inadvertence, all offences, however many, were purged by the effect of a general pardon; and in these general pardons there was this further advantage, that they redressed all such forfeitures as in that age were often incurred by a mere outlawry in a personal action; and this, no doubt, was one of the reasons which led to their being so commonly resorted to. The two general pardons granted to Sir Peter Legh, and which are in the possession of his descendant, wiped out all his offences general and particular.

In the 2nd year of Henry VIII. (1511), Sir Peter Legh, for reasons which we shall presently understand, resigned the office of seneschal of Blackburnshire, which he had held for the last six years with advantage to the crown and satisfaction to the public. He had now spent the best years of his life either in camps or in the discharge of other active public duties, and beginning now to sigh for repose, he wished to spend the remaining years of a life now past its meridian in preparations for a better life to come. His wife had now been dead twenty years, but he had not ceased to mourn her loss. Her brother, Thomas Savage, who at this time had risen to high rank in the Church, was Archbishop of York, and if, as is probable, Sir Peter went to consult him how he could best spend his retirement, he would be likely enough to recommend him to betake himself to the Church as a quiet haven, where exchanging the casque for the cassock, and carnal weapons for the sword of the Spirit, he might find peace himself while administering it to others. At all events, he now took holy orders, and in due time became a priest. It was at this time probably that he fitted up the chapel, which we find mentioned as existing at Bradley at a later period. With a view to the settlement of his estate, on Tuesday after the close of Pasch, on 25th April 6th Henry VIII (1514), describing himself as Sir Peter Legh, "Knyght and priest," he suffered a recovery at Chester of his lands in Hanley, by which Sir William Stanley and others, his trustees, recovered against him 35 messuages, 1 water mill, 200 acres of land, 60 acres of meadow, 400 acres of pasture, 1,000 acres of wood, and 2,000 acres of moor, which the trustees were to hold to the use of Sir Peter and his heirs, to perform his last will, that is to say, to the use of himself, the said Sir Peter, for life, and after his decease; then to the said recoverors, who, for the term of ten years next ensuing, were to suffer the executors of his will to take and perceive all the issues and profits of the same messuages, lands and tenements, during the said term of ten years, all which issues and profits were to be conveyed to the monastery of St. Werburgh at Chester, and there placed for safe keeping in a substantial and locked coffer, to be there standing and remaining at Sir Peter's costs and charges, and of which coffer every one of the executors was to have a several lock and key. And his said executors, with the said rents and profits, were to purchase as soon as they conveniently could, lands and tenements to the yearly value of ten pounds, which lands and tenements so purchased were to remain to the uses contained in a certain indenture made or to be made concerning the sustentation of a chapel which he had edified in Dystley, in honour of our Lady for evermore. And it was declared that the said Sir William Stanley, and the other trustees, should be seised of Sir Peter's chief place called Lyme, in Hanley, with the lands called Lyme Park, and the water mill there to the use of Sir Peter's son, Piers, or of him that should happen to be his (the testator's) next heir male of his

body, upon condition that he suffered the said Sir William Stanley and the other trustees to accomplish and perform every article that should be comprised in his last will or wills.

The reader will not fail to notice the cumbrous way in which the testator directs his executors to keep the accumulations of the rents of his chantry. The five gentlemen, his executors, each with a separate lock and key, were to deposit money in a coffer at St. Werburgh's Abbey, in Chester, where, like the talent buried in the earth, the money, instead of breeding interest, would lie idle, while the arrangement itself seemed to imply a want of confidence in the integrity of any or all of his five friends, who were not to have even such discretion as was vested in the servants in the Scripture parable of the talents. From an early time, monasteries seem to have been thought safe places in which to deposit money. On the 13th October 1345, the Abbot of Furness received the royal commands to find a proper and strong room in his house, where the collectors of the King's tenth and fifteenth in Lancashire might deposit his moneys for safe custody. But a bank where money, while it is making its owner interest by night and by day, and at the same time is being of use to others, is far preferable either to burying it or locking it up in a coffer. On the 8th April 6 Henry VIII (1515) Sir Thomas Boteler lay sick, and was visited by Sir Peter, who besides sympathising with his neighbour in his bodily sufferings, probably administered to him the consolations of religion.⁸¹

Sir Peter Legh, as we have seen, had found for his son's daughter Cecilia an alliance which was suitable to her rank, with the prospect of making peace and ending a long standing family feud with his neighbours the Botelers; and prudence now led him to find a suitable match for his son's other daughter Jane; and by an indenture of the 18 July 9 Hen. VIII (1517), between Sir Thomas Gerard, knight, and Sir Peter Legh, knight, and Piers Legh, his son and heir apparent, it was agreed that Thomas Gerard, the said Sir Thomas's son, should marry the said Piers' daughter, Jane; and the marriage was, after a proper delay, occasioned by the youth of the bride and bridegroom, duly solemnised.

On the 1st February, 12 Hen. VIII (1521), Sir Peter Legh, calling himself knight and priest, made his will, by which he left to his son John x marks a year, to his son Gowther xx marks a year, to his son Richard iiij marks a year, to his (the testator's) brother Robert xliij s. a year, his cousin James Domvyle xl s. a year, to his servant Robert Arden xl s. a year, to Matthew Arowsmith xxix s. a year, to Piers Legh his (the testator's) brother's son xxxij s. iiij d. a year, to his sister's son Robert Orrell xxvij s. a year, to his servant John Kighley xxvi s. viij d. a year, to James Atherton xxvi s. viii d. a year, to William Nailler xl s. a year, to Henry Arowsmith xx s. a year, and to Robert Smith xx s. a year; all which sums he charged as annuities to be paid out of his land for the lives of the respective annuitants. But of this will he omitted to name executors. About the year 1524, when he seems to have been living at Lyme, he erected the well-known building called Lyme cage, which was probably meant to be a keeper's lodge. He also built about the same time, Disley chapel, in which he placed Thomas Davenport as its chaplain and chantry priest.⁸² He seems at one time to have intended to place in it three priests and two deacons, and to make it also a little college. But it is never safe to put off the execution of a good purpose, for life is uncertain, and Sir Peter's intentions being unfulfilled when the call of death came, a great controversy, which afterwards took place respecting them, caused much trouble and expense and in part frustrated his intentions. Before he died, however, he made another and a nuncupative will, of which he named as executors, Edward Molyneux, clerk, rector of Sefton, Thurstan

⁸¹ Proceedings in the Duchy Court v. Sir Thomas Gerard.

⁸² *History of Cheshire*, iii. 404

Tyldesley, William Trafford and James Domvyle, esquires, and Robert Ardern, gentleman, who undertook to be executors of the former will also, and at their instance before the testator's death Piers, his son and heir apparent, "in order to remove from his father's mind any doubt of the execution of his will after his decease, and to the intent that he should neither think nor put any mistrust in him, and to confirm the same more assuredly, made his confession unto Mr. Edward Molyneux, clerk, and did depose upon the holy evangelists and receive the holy sacrament of our Lord's body in form of bread, that he would never do or procure any other in his name or by his title or by his will as aforesaid to do anything against the execution of his father's will, and of this he signed an indenture, made his bodily oath thereupon and used the sacrament of the altar on the 7th Oct. 1524, in the chapel of Bradley, in the presence of Sir Alexander Radcliffe, Mr. Edward Molyneux, parson of Sefton, John Holcroft, esquire, James Domvyle, esquire, Gowther Legh, gentleman, Robert Ardern, gentleman, Richard Kighley, Brian Morecroft, Thomas Levyns, and William Hacche, priests, and many others."⁸³ Having thus ordered his worldly affairs and set his house in order, Sir Peter died peacefully at Lyme, on the 11th August 1527, at the age of 72, and was buried at Winwick.

His children were:- (1) Peter Legh, who succeeded him. (2) John, who had an annuity by his father's will and who with four other persons, sued out a general pardon under the seal of the county palatine of Chester in 1530.⁸⁴ He married, and his two daughters, Helen and Elizabeth, are mentioned in his brother Gowther's will. (3) Gowther, who had an annuity by his father's will, had a lease of the rectory of Winwick, and was the founder of the school there. (4) Richard, mentioned in his father's will. (5) Margaret, who married Lawrence Warren of Poynton, and died before her husband, leaving several children.⁸⁵ (6) Alice Whyte, who sued Sir Peter Legh for lands in Bradley and Bewsey in 4 Eliz, who in the suit calls herself a daughter of Peter Legh.⁸⁶

Sir Peter Legh is commemorated by a monumental brass in Winwick church, which, if not unique, is among the most remarkable monuments of its kind in the kingdom. It represents him clad in plate, girt with a sword, and wearing the spurs of knighthood, while his bare head shows the priestly tonsure, and over his armour he wears a chasuble. Between his hands, which are not closed on his breast but raised as if in prayer, lies his shield of arms of six quarterings, which is again repeated on another part of the brass. By his side is placed the effigy of his wife, upon whose robe are the fusils of the D'Anyers and Savage arms. At Conyngton, in Huntingdonshire, where the only similar effigy is found, is a monk who had been a knight, and who, as if clad both for carnal and spiritual warfare, "*in utrumque paratus*," wears over his armour his monkish robe, but in his ease no wife is represented resting by his side.⁸⁷ Emblems of the four evangelists ornament the four corners of the Legh brass, and this inscription is engraved upon it:-

"Orate pro aiab' probi viri, dni Petri Legh, militis, hic tumulati, et dnae Elenae, ux. ejus, filiae Johis Savage, militis, cujus quidem Elenae corpus sepelitr. apud Bewgenett 17 die mensis Maii, anno Domini millesimo cccclxxxj. Idemq Petrus, post ipius Elenae mortem i. Sacerdotem canonice, consecrat obiit apud Lyme i. Hanley xi. die Augusti ao. di m^vcxxvij."

⁸³ *Lancashire Chantries*, Chetham Society, 112 in the footnotes.

⁸⁴ Lyme Papers

⁸⁵ Watson's *History of the Earls of Warren and Surrey*, II, 126

⁸⁶ Duchy Calendar, p. 29

⁸⁷ Fosbroke's *Brit. Monachism*, p. 292, where the effigy is figured.

One of the old pedigrees of his family repeating a slander says of Sir Peter that he slew Sir Thomas Boteler, knight, and to atone for it was forced to build Disley church at his own cost and charges. But the charge rests on no foundation, and is nothing else but the revival of the old story of the Bewsey tragedy, which occurred either before Sir Peter was born or while he was but an infant. His building Disley church was a spontaneous act, the result of his religious character and of the obligations his vows had laid him under. As we know but little of the schools which our ancestors frequented, we are at a loss to know where young men received their learning in the age in which Sir Peter lived. George Stanley, Lord Strange, eldest son of the first Earl of Derby, we are told, received a part of his education in the cloisters of Whalley;⁸⁸ and Sir Peter Legh may have completed his in some similar establishment. It is probable, however, that his grandfather's example early inspired him with a desire to acquire that learning which at length qualified him for the priesthood. He seems neither to have sought nor obtained a benefice in the church, and he probably contented himself with officiating in his own two chapels at Bradley and Disley. When his old servant, Robert Arden, one of his executors, to whom he left an annuity, and who outlived him many years, made his own will, in which he left a legacy to a priest to pray for his soul, he directed that he should pray also for the soul of his late master Sir Peter Legh, knight and priest,⁸⁹ an instance of grateful remembrance extending beyond the grave, which shows well for the terms on which master and servant had lived together.

It is to the credit of Sir Peter, that in an age when the gentry appeared so often in courts of justice, we only once meet with his name occurring either as a plaintiff or a defendant, except in the two cases mentioned as arising out of his appointment to the seneschalship of Blackburnshire, for which there was probably good reason, and except also another case which occurred in 16 Hen. VIII. (1524), when Thomas Boteler and his tenants sued Sir Peter Legh, Lady Gerard, and their tenants for obstructing his right of way to Winwick Church and to Bradley acre, which was probably near to Sir Peter's mansion there. The Inq. P.M. on Sir Peter as to his Cheshire estates in 19 Hen. VIII. finds that he held land in Lyme and Hanley, from the King in socage by fealty, and the render of vi. d. that the value was xxx li. per annum, and that he also held half the manor of Grappenhall, and lands in Broome, Heteley, Trephurst, Sutton, and Macclesfield, of the value of liij. li. viij s. ob.⁹⁰

CHAPTER 8

Piers VI, 1479-1543

PETER LEGH, esquire, of Lyme, Haydock and Bradley, when he succeeded to the family inheritance on the death of his father, Sir Peter Legh, knight, banneret, and priest, had attained the mature age of forty-eight years, a time of life which may be supposed to have given him the necessary experience how to use to advantage the fair patrimony that had fallen to him. On the 3rd Sept. 3 Henry VII (1487), his prudent father, as we have seen, had contracted to marry him to Jane, the daughter of Sir Thomas Gerard, of the Bryn; and of this marriage, which was afterwards duly solemnised, there was issue three daughters but no son, namely (1) Cecilia, who about 24th July, 1507, was made a family peace offering, and married to Sir Thomas Boteler, a thing not without precedent in early times, since we read

⁸⁸ *History of Whalley*, p. 96 in the footnotes. [by Dr. Thomas D. Whitaker, Ed.]

⁸⁹ *Lancashire and Cheshire Wills*, Chetham Society, II., 138.

⁹⁰ *History of Cheshire*, III, 337

that Robert de Marbury, in the 4th year of King John, came into the Court of the Justice of Chester, and then gave his charter to his son Peter, and Lucia, daughter of Wronow FitzOsbert, whom Peter had espoused, to put an end to the enmity existing between the parents of the bride and bridegroom.⁹¹ (2) Jane, who married Thomas Gerard, esquire, son of Sir Thomas Gerard, for which marriage a papal dispensation was obtained in 1518, and (3) Anne, who is mentioned in her grandfather's will as being then unmarried. Jane, their mother, died on 5th May 1510, leaving her husband surviving, who afterwards married Margaret, the daughter of Nicholas de Tyldesley.

An Act of Parliament having passed in 1533, to annul the King's marriage with Queen Katherine, and to declare such issue as should be borne to him by his then wife, Queen Anne, his lawful children, another Act was passed in the following year,⁹² by which an oath was prescribed to be taken by all persons "to bear true faith and obedience to the King's Majesty, and to the heirs of his body by his said wife Queen Anne." A copy of the King's letter to Sir William Fitz-William, the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, giving the form of the oath to be taken to ensure the succession to the crown, pursuant to the statute, was sent to Lyme for Mr. Legh's information; and if he was acting at this time as he probably was as a justice of the peace, he was to make the letter publicly known and administer the oath contained in it.

Unlike many of his knightly neighbours, Mr. Legh's father, a churchman and a lover of peace, had seldom appeared in courts of law, and of him, either as plaintiff or defendant, their records but seldom mention his name. Either less prudent, however, or living among neighbours who were more litigious, Mr. Legh appeared frequently in the legal arena. In the 22 Hen. VIII (1530), he sued Thomas Boteler and others for interrupting him in the quiet enjoyment of his right to cut turf on Dallam and Market Mosses,⁹³ and about the same time he filed a bill in the Duchy Court praying for a revival of a former suit, and for entering a decree to settle the boundaries of certain lands in Burtonwood and Sankey.⁹⁴ In the same year also (22 Henry VIII) William Jackson and his wife brought an action against him to recover from him a house and lands in Warrington.⁹⁵ And in the 27 Hen. VIII. (1535) John Harrison and his wife sued him in an action charging him with debt and detainue.⁹⁶ In the same year he, and one John of the Marsh, also, were sued by Robert Harrison for taking and maintaining wrongful possession of a house, barn, and lands, in Haydock.⁹⁷ Not long after this he and Thomas Rawlinson, or Richardson, were sued by Sir Thomas Boteler to recover from them certain lands, tenements, and common of pasture in Burtonwood.⁹⁸ By an old and flagrant, but too common abuse of the right of patronage, his brother, Gowther Legh, had become the lessee of the rectory of Winwick, and about this time either by himself or his tenant he was occupying its parsonage house and the deer park attached to it. Some disagreement, of which no explanation can now be given, having arisen, Peter Naylor and others, with the sanction of Mr. Legh, if not in his actual presence, entered the park, assaulted the keeper, and destroyed some of the deer, a trespass for which they were called to answer in a criminal court.⁹⁹ To take a deer was once almost as serious as to kill a man; but long ere this time this

⁹¹ Grosvenor MSS. XXI. 5 102b in pref to *Hist. Cheshire*.

⁹² 20 Hen. VIII, c. 2

⁹³ Duchy Cal., 207.

⁹⁴ Duchy Cal., 207.

⁹⁵ Duchy Cal., 207.

⁹⁶ Duchy Cal., 151.

⁹⁷ Duchy Cal., 152.

⁹⁸ Duchy Cal., 199.

⁹⁹ Duchy Cal., 207.

code of Draco had been modified. After his father's death, Mr. Legh had to encounter a new and very plentiful crop of litigation. Scarcely had his father closed his eyes before the executors charged him with having obtained tortious possession of the rents and profits of certain lands and tenements, for which, and for detaining certain books of account, they sued him at law.¹⁰⁰ It would seem, that besides the will which we have before referred to, his father made three other wills, which latter, and particularly the last of all, which was made probably in his last sickness, and when his mind was clouded by age and illness, were in a great measure nuncupative, which very naturally afterwards gave rise to questions as to what was their real meaning, and this could not be settled without calling in the aid of the Duchy Court and examining witnesses. Accordingly, about the 25 Hen. VIII (1534), Edward Molyneux, clerk, Thurstan Tyldesley, William Trafford, and James Dowmbyll, esquires, and Robert Ardern, gentleman, the executors, filed their bill of complaint in the Duchy Chamber before the right honourable Sir William Fitz-Williams, knight, the chancellor of the duchy, against Mr. Legh, the testator's son and heir-at-law, in which after setting out the testator's cumbrous method of accumulating the money for his foundation at Disley, to which allusion has been already made, they sought the Court's direction as to the nature of the foundation he intended, and as to who should have the principal direction in setting it out. The evidence taken in the suit conclusively established that Mr. Legh, the testator's son and heir, was to have the principal voice as to the foundation.¹⁰¹ Apparently in pursuance of an order then made in the matter, all parties on 26th April 26 Henry VIII, 1535, came before Paul Rogerson, Mayor of the city of Chester, Richard Sneyd, esquire, lieutenant-justice of Chester, and recorder of the said city, Wm. Davidson, alderman, and John Thorneton, and Thomas Martyn, Sheriffs of the city, when Peter Legh, then and there having offered himself to be bound to the said executors, in an obligation of statute merchant of one thousand pounds, to accomplish and perforin the articles and decree taken before the king's chancellor of the Duchy concerning the last wills of his said father, and of and concerning his manors of Dalton and Hanley, and certain lands in Hanley, and the matters thereupon ordered by the same decree to be observed, he demanded to know from the said executors whether their counsel, learned in the law, had drawn up any condition of the said statute merchant for the performance of the said order, and upon their saying that they had not, and upon their further declining to take any bond of the said Peter, according to the said order, unless he would be bound to perform all the said four wills and testaments of his said father, not only concerning the said manors of Dalton and Hanley, but all the other matters contained in the wills of the said Sir Peter, which were not mentioned in the said decree, and would also suffer all persons to whom the said testator had granted annuities, peaceably to enjoy the same, according to their grants, the said Peter utterly declined to enter into any bond, save such as was mentioned in the same decree and order, and so the parties separated.¹⁰² It would seem that the executors wished the son to enter into a bond not contemplated by the decree, and far more extensive than it in its terms, and that in thus resisting it, he had the right on his side, and was not unreasonably angry that the executors distrusted him.

The executors seem not to have been satisfied to let the matter rest, and in the 28 Hen. VIII (1536), they again sued Mr. Legh about the chapel at Disley, and certain lands in Hanley, Dalton, and other places.¹⁰³ How this suit ended we have not ascertained, but the tottering condition of all chantries and similar establishments, which ensued so shortly after, probably settled the chapel suit without requiring a decree. In 32 Hen. VIII (1540), he was sued by

¹⁰⁰ Duchy Cal., 218.

¹⁰¹ Duchy Cal.

¹⁰² Duchy Cal.

¹⁰³ Duchy Cal., 198.

Henry Hill and others to recover from him the possession of some lands at Woodhey¹⁰⁴ and not long after he became plaintiff in a suit which he commenced against Sir Thomas Boteler and others, to recover some lands in Great Sankey, and to establish a custom of God's Penny.¹⁰⁵ What this term means does not seem very clear. It appears, however, that some of the tenants of the abbot of Furness held their lands by the payment of a God's penny only.¹⁰⁶

Some arrangement had been made of the debt due from his father to his old servant, Robert Ardern, if we may judge from the wording of a passage in the latter's will dated 22 Oct. 32 Hen. VIII, 1540, in which, after alluding to his executorship of Sir Peter Legh's will, he says:

"To our lady chapell of Dystele I give vi s. viii d., to be set in the boke of brotherhode. Also whereas I was executor to my Mr. Sir Perys Legh, knyght and priest, I take yt upon me, as I shall answere afor God, that I have no man^r of goodes of hys gold ner sylvur except as her aft^r foloys, that ys te wyt, iij yardes of black fryce aft^r vij d. a yarde, x knotts of blew threde y^e p^rce. iiij d., viij knotts of whyte threde y^e p^rce. iiij d. an old leysthe (lease), a case of leydur to carey a glasse in, a gafflyn hedde (a part of a cross bow) in money vj s. vij d. also halfe a pownde and a quarteron of greyse, a hert gratter of wode, also a leyde mall (mallet). It^m ij. twytfyn basketts y^e p^rce. xij d. I have hade more than these, bot not past the value of xij d. These goodes Mayst^r Perys Legh, of Bradley, oghe to have, bot he doytts oghe me far more than thys."¹⁰⁷

Mr. Legh, who was now approaching his grand climacteric, perhaps felt the weight of his years more from the lameness with which he is said to have been afflicted. Whether this was constitutional, or was the effect of some wound which he brought from Flodden where he probably went with half Lancashire, and amongst them his kinsman of Baguley, who wrote in verse the story of the battle, we do not know. The probability of his having been at Flodden receives some countenance from a MS. copy of the story of the battle which has been since printed, having been found in one of the boxes at Lyme.¹⁰⁸ Mr. Legh, however, seems to think that the evening was now come, and he must make preparation for a change. His ancestors in such circumstances would have founded chantries and perpetual masses for the repose of their souls. But the recent Act of 23 Hen. VIII c. (1531), the first knell that rang the coming dissolution of the chantries, had made it unlawful to charge lands for such a purpose for longer than twenty years, and he therefore contented himself by conveying to his trustees in 30 Hen. VIII (1539), certain lands in trust to provide a chaplain to celebrate divine offices for his own soul, and the souls of his ancestors, and directed that the engagement of such chaplain should continue only for seven years. After thus arranging his affairs, Mr. Legh, who fell far short of attaining his father's fulness of years, died at Bradley on 4th Dec. 33 Hen. VIII (1541), at the age of 62, leaving issue by his second wife the following children, viz. (1) Peter, who succeeded him; (2) George; (3) Robert; and (4) Catherine, who married Robert son of Richard Langton, of Lowe, in 22 Hen. VIII. It is not known whether or not his second wife survived him. The inquisition as to his Cheshire estates which was taken in 33 Hen. VIII finds that he held lands in Lyme, Hanley, as his father did, half the manor of Grappenhall and land in Offerton, and in the several other townships mentioned in his father's inquisition post mortem.

¹⁰⁴ Duchy Cal., 198.

¹⁰⁵ Duchy Cal., 198.

¹⁰⁶ Beck's *Annales Furnesiensis*, 15. [Thomas Alcock Beck's book published in 1844, from Wikipedia, Ed.]

¹⁰⁷ *Lanc & Ches. Wills*, Chetham Society Part II 139.

¹⁰⁸ Chetham Society. Miscellanies.

CHAPTER 9

Sir Piers VII, 1514-1589

SIR PETER LEGH, of Lyme and Bradley, born in 1513, was twenty-eight years of age when, by the death of his father, he succeeded to the family estates. The Reformation was then in its birth throes, a season of difficulty and trial was at hand; and it was a fortunate circumstance for the new possessor of Lyme that he was neither too young to see the dangers of the situation, nor yet not strong enough to brave the current, and with honesty to make his way through it, at a time when "*flectas non frangas*" was the motto but too commonly followed. The peculiar circumstances of the time in which printing and printed books were becoming common, naturally lead us to expect to meet with his name on the page of history more frequently than that of any of his predecessors. In the year 1518, when he was still an infant not more than five years of age, his father having sought and found for him a good match, espoused him to Margaret, the daughter of Sir Thomas Gerard, of the Bryn, and as the young couple were akin to each other, and the Church's dispensation was necessary, it was obtained the same year, and in due time the marriage was solemnized. These early marriages, which in old time occurred in every generation of a great family, were resorted to as a means of avoiding various feudal consequences which would have entailed loss and expense. If a parent died leaving a son or a daughter under age and unmarried, the lord of the fee claimed the wardship of the heir or heiress, and the right to put up his or her hand in marriage to sale, which besides being a serious pecuniary loss to the heir, might perhaps disparage him in marriage. To avoid this evil, these early marriages were resorted to, which consequently did not merit the sneer which the president Montesquieu cast upon our country when he said there was a law in England which permitted girls of seven years of age to choose their own husbands—which, he said, was shocking two ways, since it had no regard to the time when nature gives maturity to the understanding nor to the time when she gives maturity to the body.¹⁰⁹ Though called marriages these infant alliances were for the most part only espousals.

Sir Peter Legh, who was fourteen years of age at the death of his grandfather, afterwards gave proof that he was a scholar, and showed that his education had not been neglected. Had he been under the care of such a tutor as that Henry Dowes who, after his pupils had heard morning mass, "gave them a lecture out of the *Pietas Puerilis* in the *Colloquies of Erasmus*? after which he exercised them in writing one or two hours upon *Fabyan's Chronicle*, and the rest of the day they spent upon the lute and virginals,"¹¹⁰ which last may shew us that our ancestors considered with the framers of the new code that music ought to form a part of elementary education. Whether he ever proceeded either from a tutor or a school to the university, and afterwards claimed either Oxford or Cambridge as his Alma Mater, we are not informed.

From the Field of the Cloth of Gold, where the two Monarchs of England and France displayed a lavish magnificence, and where many of their subjects

"Broke their backs by laying manors on them,"

¹⁰⁹ *Spirit of Laws*, B. 26, c. 3 [A treatise on political theory by Charles de Secondat, Baron de Montesquieu in 1748 with the aid of Claudine Guérin de Tencin. Wikipedia, Ed.]

¹¹⁰ Ellis' Letters, 1. 343.

Sir Peter Legh was either kept away by his youth, or, if he went there at all, it was only as a page, a sort of apprenticeship in arms which most of the well-born youths of that age underwent. On the 22nd September, 34 Hen. VIII, 1542, he granted to Lawrence Penington for his life £3 6s. 8d. for which he was to do divine service in the chapel at Winwick. This gift, which was probably a kind act towards an aged or sick occupant of the chantry, may have been twisted into the founding of a second chantry. The seal bears a ram's head erased and holding a branch in its mouth.

When he came into full possession of his estate, both the greater and the lesser monasteries had been swept away, happily without any of their spoils enriching him or his ancestry.

In May 1544, he was in the expedition to Scotland under the Earl of Hertford, with the object of affording support to the party of the Scottish reformers, and he took part there in the storming of Edinburgh, a scene which the pen of the historian so graphically describes, and in which the city, to oppose the English battering train, had no better ordnance than their monster gun, that great curiosity Mons Meg.¹¹¹ The city being speedily taken, Sir Peter retired with the army to Leith, where the commander distributed honours to those who had won them, and Sir Peter, who was one of them, was made a banneret. If he had not made this campaign, he would probably not have escaped sailing with the King to France, and taking part in the siege of Boulogne, which city surrendered the same year.¹¹²

In the 4th Ed. VI., 1550, he served the office of high sheriff of Lancashire, an office of high trust at that critical period, to which his being appointed is a proof of the confidence reposed in him.

On the 6th July 1553, Edward VI, the young King, for whom the nation had augured a great future, died after a wasting illness, to the deep regret of the country, and his sister Mary ascended the throne. On her accession, a general muster of soldiers being ordered, Sir Peter Legh was appointed to a command in the force of 430 men of West Derby hundred, who formed part of the Lancashire contingent.¹¹³

As he had served with credit the office of high sheriff of Lancashire soon after the late King's accession, so now, in 1554, the first year of the new Queen's reign, he was appointed to fill the same office in Cheshire, a fresh instance of the confidence reposed in him, and as before he filled the office with great credit.

The next year saw the persecuting acts for religion blush once more upon the statute book, and the Queen, with Gardiner and some other bishops, did not intend that their revival should remain a dead letter. The bishops were to reconcile the clergy, and in every diocese, there was to be kept a register containing the names of those who were received as submitting to the new order of things. The register was, indeed, hardly anything but the Inquisition under a new name.¹¹⁴ This register, when applied throughout the country, became a drag net for all who held doctrines at variance with Rome. George Marsh, a Lancashire man, born at Deane, near Bolton-le-Moors, had begun life as a farmer, but, on losing his wife, "being desirous of godly studies," had given up his farm, and betaken himself to the University of Cambridge, where, after a time he took a degree, and was ordained by the Bishops of London and

¹¹¹ Froude's *History of England*, IV. 323.

¹¹² Froude's *History of England*, IV, 323.

¹¹³ History of Lancashire, I. 504

¹¹⁴ Froude's *History of England*, VI., 313-14.

Lincoln. He afterwards held a cure in one or more dioceses, where he preached the reformed doctrines, and obtained a great name for his "sermons and godly readings." Having neglected to come in and be registered, however, he was sought for in his old neighbourhood. On hearing of the search, and that the servants of Mr. Barton, a neighbouring magistrate, had inquired for him, although he knew the inquiry boded him no good, and that his going might cost him his life, he rose up the next morning, and, committing himself to God, walked to Smithills, a neighbouring old mansion, where Mr. Barton lived. Coming into his presence, he was shortly interrogated by Mr. Barton, who then showed him the Earl of Derby's letter requiring him to send him to his Lordship. Among the bystanders at Smithills there was probably no sympathy with him; but the tide afterwards turned, and an impression on the floor at Smithills, said to be the print made by Marsh's foot as he descended the stairs in the custody of the two persons who were to convey him to the Earl at Lathom, has since been long shewn and revered as a martyr's memorial. On the 14th March 1555, he was brought before the Earl of Derby, Edward, the 3rd Earl, so celebrated for his princely hospitality that Camden said when he died, English hospitality expired with him.¹¹⁵ The Earl, attended by his council, Sir William Norris, Sir Peter Legh, Master Sherburn, the parson of Grappenhall, who at that time was Richard Gerard, Master More and others, was sitting in the great presence chamber at Lathom, the house afterwards so celebrated, but now, alas no more, when Marsh was brought, in and asked whether he had taken holy orders, and if so from whom, and he replied that he had taken such orders; and that he had received them from the hands of the bishops of London and Lincoln, and being asked whether he had ministered with a good conscience, he answered that he had so ministered, and, if the laws of the realm had suffered him, he would have continued so to minister, whereupon the parson of Grappenhall, who seems to have been very forward and active on the occasion, interfered, and urged the accused to declare his opinions more fully, saying with some passion that "this last communion, was the most devilish thing that was ever devised."¹¹⁶ On Palm Sunday, when he was examined a second time before the Earl and his council, we are expressly told that Sir Peter Legh was not present, from which we may infer that he was no longer disposed to view Marsh as the rector of Grappenhall did, or any longer to take part against him, and that if he could he would have saved him. The account of Marsh's commitment and treatment, all except the last closing scene written by himself, is eminently simple, touching, and truthful, and the reader will rise from it with a high admiration of his faithfulness and fortitude and a deep sympathy in his sufferings. When Bishop Coates after sentencing him had said he would now no longer pray for him than for a dog, Marsh meekly replied that "he would pray for the bishop." In his work already referred to, Foxe has published the story and added the particulars of his martyrdom by fire at Chester on 24th April 1555. Sir Peter Legh did wisely to withdraw from taking part in the martyr's prosecution after the first hearing.

In 1558, at Sir Peter's instance, the chapel at Disley was consecrated for Protestant worship.¹¹⁷

Holinshed, the historian and chronicler, a Cheshire man from Bosley, near Lyme, was very probably acquainted with Sir Peter Legh. The two had some similar tastes. Both of them loved history as well as heraldry. But the heralds at that time were credulous genealogists, and when Flower had given the seal of his authority to the fable of the first Legh of Lyme having fought at Crécy, and Sir Peter had placed over his remains the memorial lines which

¹¹⁵ A portrait of this Earl is given in Stanley Paper, Chetham Soc. p. 11.

¹¹⁶ Strype's *Ecclesiastical Memorials*, II. 136; [publ. 1721, Ed.] Foxe's *Acts and Monuments*, VII. 41. [often known as Foxe's *Book of Martyrs*, 1563, Ed.]

¹¹⁷ *History of Cheshire*, III, 494

have been quoted upon his sepulchral brass, Holinshed in his history boldly endorsed the story and thought himself bound to maintain it against all challengers.

Not only did Sir Peter Legh not live like his grandfather, free from litigation, but he succeeded to a large legacy of lawsuits left to him by his father, the fruits perhaps either of some neglect or a want of taking proper care of his affairs.

In the 4th of Queen Elizabeth, 1562, Roger Kenyon, claiming under a lease by his late father Peter Legh sued him to recover possession of a dwelling-house at Haydock. In the same year Alice Whyte, calling herself a daughter of Peter Legh, deceased, and claiming some land in Bradley, under a feoffment made to Maria Tunstall sued Sir Peter Legh, as the deceased's son and heir, to recover such land. Thomas Rothwell and his wife sued him also at the same time, to recover a dwelling-house in Haydock; and in 1563, John Shawe and his wife sued him for some lands in the same township. In the 6th Elizabeth, 1564, James Haselden sought to recover from him a house in Haydock. In 8th Elizabeth, there having been some remissness in asserting the manorial rights of Woolston, he joined Sir Thomas Langton and others in suing Adam Gaunt and others for a trespass in Martinscroft and Woolston. And in 6th Elizabeth, 1567, Sir Thomas Langton, their positions being just reversed, sued him to recover some fields called the Langton fields in Newton.

In 1566, when the trade of Liverpool was recovering its elasticity after a temporary depression, the Earl of Derby, in much state, paid a visit to the town; and on the 5th August in that year was entertained by the Mayor at a great banquet, where amongst others in the Earl's suite Sir Peter Legh is mentioned as having been present.¹¹⁸

In the early part of the Queen's reign, and probably about the above year, in pursuance of a licence from Her Majesty, the domain at Lyme was impaled and enclosed, and became a park, and Sir Peter at the same time obtained a grant to have free warren within it and his adjoining lands.¹¹⁹

Our ancestors in former times submitted to modes of raising money which would now startle the kingdom into rebellion. In the reign of Queen Mary, when a Scotch army was wasting and burning the border, and money was wanted to fit out forces to repress and drive back the invaders, there was no waiting for the grant of a subsidy, and the new Queen took another way to fill her exchequer and support her forces. "The country," says the historian, "was in a condition to lend, and a commission was sent out for a forced loan, calculated on the assessment of the last subsidy." Lists of the owners of property were drawn out with sums opposite to their names, and the collectors were directed to "travail by all the best ways they might for obtaining the sums noted." Persons found conformable were to receive acknowledgments. But should any be froward, they were to find security to appear when called upon before the Privy Council.¹²⁰ This plan having proved a partial success, and brought in a good sum, Queen Elizabeth, being about to send an army to Scotland in 1570, in or about the April of that year issued out her letters of privy seal for raising the necessary funds to support it. One of these letters, addressed to Sir Peter Legh as a Lancashire landowner, reached him there, and another as a Cheshire landowner, reached him in Cheshire, upon the former of these he advanced Her Majesty one hundred pounds, and upon the latter one hundred marks or just one third less than the former, which shews how much

¹¹⁸ Picton's *Memorials of Liverpool*, 66.

¹¹⁹ Lyme Papers

¹²⁰ Froude's *History of England*, VI, 486

lower the one estate was estimated than the other.¹²¹ These advances being never meant to be repaid were miscalled loans, and ought more properly to have been called benevolences. In December, 1572 (not 1574 as Collins has it), Sir Peter was one of the mourners at the magnificent funeral of Edward, Earl of Derby, and he and one of his fellow mourners joined in offering the Earl's sword.¹²²

In 1574, when there was another muster of soldiers in Lancashire, Sir Peter is not mentioned as having had any command.

Sir Peter Legh, we have said, was a lover of that which was one of the ruling passions of his day,¹²³ the science of heraldry; and when Flower, the Norroy, King of Arms, in the course of his visitation of Cheshire, in 1575, came to Lyme, on the 11th June, he allowed the family the following arms and crest:- Gules a cross engrailed argent, and the crest issuing from a ducal coronet or, a ram's head argent, attired or, holding in its mouth a laurel sprig proper. This crest, which the house of Lyme is said to have had from the Leghs of Baguley, was slightly differenced from theirs by having a laurel instead of an elm sprig in the ram's mouth, in which form it appears in the carvings at Worsley Old Hall. The old heralds were less exact than their successors; and Flower, after having allowed Sir Peter the old arms, added to them an escutcheon of honour, and in his grant repeated, the mistake of ascribing the honour of winning it to Sir Piers Legh, instead of to his wife's father (grandfather), Sir Thomas D'Anyers. The well-deserved escutcheon of honour thus granted was sable within an orle of estoilles argent, an arm coupé, embowed and armed proper, holding a pennon argent. The grant was well designed, and formed a handsome addition to the ancient coat of the family. The visitation took place in 1567, but the herald probably took time to consider and draw up his grant.

On the 16th March 1580, when a commission to muster the men of Lancashire between 16 and 60 was issued, Sir Peter Legh was one of the commissioners to whom it was directed.¹²⁴ The muster was to be of "*omnes et singulos hoies ad arma et hoies habiles ad arma ferend tam equites q'm pedites et sagittarios ac sclopetarios*" (or crossbow men).

From the time of the first founder of the house of Lyme, this history has shown the Leghs to have been almost always officially connected with the forests of Macclesfield, a fringe of the line of forests which occupied the centre of England. They had been its stewards, its surveyors, its judges for the trial of offenders, its parkers, its official foresters, and its foresters of the fee. On the 4th Jan. 1 Ed. IV, 1462, however, the King had granted to Thomas Lord Stanley, a powerful nobleman, then enjoying the sunshine of royal favour, the seneschalship and master forestership of Macclesfield forest, to hold to him and his descendants, and from that time every office in the forest, except that of the forestership in fee, which belonged to certain landowners by the payment of some small fee farm rents to the crown was vested in the Earl. Of these foresters in fee, there were eight of whom the owner of Lyme was always one. It was not, however, on these, but on the official foresters who were appointed from time to time during pleasure and were the real guardians of the forest, that its business devolved. These were duly sworn to preserve the vert and venison, to attend to the wild animals and to attach and present offenders, for which purpose, and for the better

¹²¹ Harlean Manuscripts, 2, 2219, p.17

¹²² Collin's Peerage, vol. iii; and Stanley Papers, Chetham Society, Part II. xxxv.

¹²³ There is at Lyme a portrait of a herald in his official robes. Is it a portrait of Flower?

¹²⁴ Lanc. Lieut., II, 104.

discharge of their duties, they had inferior servants called walkers or under keepers to assist them.

Of such a chief forester in his day Chaucer has given us this vivid picture:-

He was clad in cote and hode of grene;
 A shaft of pecocke arwes blight and kene,
 Under his belt he bare full thriftily,
 Well coude he dresse his takel yemanly;
 His arwes drooped not with fetheres lowe,
 And in his hande he bare a mighty bowe;
 A not-hed had he with a broune visage,
 Of wood-craft could he well all the usage.
 Upon his arm he bare a gay bracer,
 And by his side a sword and a bokeler,
 A Christopher on his brest of silver shene
 A horne he bare, the baudrick was of grene,
 A Forster was he sothily as I guesse.

Like every other forest, Macclesfield had courts of its own for the trial both of the greater and the lesser pleas. The latter of these were heard in the Swainmote court, which sat thrice a year. A description of one of such courts held in Macclesfield forest on 12th Sept. 23 Eliz., 1581, shows that Sir Peter Legh, besides being present at it as a forester in fee and as the deputy of Lady Margaret Stanley, another such forester, tilled also as the deputy of Henry, Earl of Derby, a multiplicity of other offices in the forest. He was its knight rider, its regarnder, its verderer and finally its seneschal and judge.¹²⁵ Representing as he thus did so many important offices we need not wonder at his seeking and obtaining from the Queen, as he did in 1581, a warrant under her seal to excuse him from being in future called or summoned to attend on any juries or assises. In the same year, when a general assessment was made of all the property in the Hundred of Macclesfield, he was charged for his estate at the sum of £16. 13s. 4d., a larger amount than that charged by the assessment on any other person in the district.¹²⁶ At the same time the arms of Corona are ascribed to him, and the story is told also of the grant to him of the escutcheon of the hand and banner.¹²⁷ It is very apparent that the Lyme venison was not all consumed at home, but that a good part of it was hospitably distributed to the great contentment of the receivers. In the Shuttleworth accounts, we see, where some of it found its way, "Paid for twoe pounds of peper that wente to Lyme when the staggs were sent to London, 5s. 8d." "The keeper at Lyme for killing twoe staggs, 4s." "The Kowke at Lyme, 4s." "Unto a mane who broughte a shoulder of a stagge from Lyme, xii d." "Unto a keeper of Sir Pyeres Legh who brought venison, 5s."¹²⁸

In the year 1584, there are other acknowledgments, and in particular one from the Queen's favourite, the too well-known Earl of Leicester, who wrote to Sir Peter not only thanking him for a hind which had been sent him, but also for the present of a hound, which, if this dog was one of the breed now so celebrated at Lyme, is a curious circumstance, and shows how early they were known there.

¹²⁵ *History of Cheshire*, III., 281

¹²⁶ Manuscript in Caius College Library.

¹²⁷ Manuscript in Caius College Library.

¹²⁸ Shuttleworth Accounts, Chetham Society, pp 10-19

BEAMONT'S HISTORY OF THE HOUSE OF LYME

There are some lines in a modern periodical which mention the Lyme mastiff, but it does not appear where the author got his authority for the name:-

Slow she tracks him, and sure as a Lyme hound sudden she grips him.
Crushing him, blind in his pride for a sign and a terror to mortals!

Church Quarterly Review, No. 1., 167.

We can well understand how terrific an English mastiff of the best breed would be in the time of Elizabeth, since we are told that Lord Buckhurst, her ambassador to France in 1572, produced before Charles IX an English mastiff which alone, without any assistance, successively engaged a bear, a leopard, and a lion, and fairly pulled them all to the ground.¹²⁹

A few years later we have these further notices of the liberal distribution of the game from Lyme:-

“Given unto a mane of Sir Peteres Lyghte which broughte rabettes and pigiones, xii d.” [12 pence, Ed.] “To a mane of Sir Peter Lyghe, which broughte fische to the Smytheles, ij s.” “To a mane of Sir Peter Lyghe, which broughte a fatte buke to Smytheles, v s.” “To Lytell Robin, which brought smelts from my Ladie Lyge, iiij d.” “To Sir Peter Lyghe’s mane, which broughte a fatte buke to Smytheles, vi s.” “Sir Peter Lyghe’s keeper, which brought the buke to Gawthrope, x s.”¹³⁰

Sir Peter Legh, who in a receipt of Roger Bruche’s on 26th Sept. 1585, is mentioned to be then living at Bradley, is said to have built all or some part of the great house at Lyme,¹³¹ but he could not have built its gateway the only part not hidden by Leone’s alterations of the house in the last century, since that is in the renaissance style introduced by Inigo Jones, who had not returned with it from Italy before Sir Peter died. [This interpretation is not accepted now. It is believed that the model was old Somerset House. Ed.] Living at Lyme *en prince*, Sir Peter was not satisfied with distributing his game and venison bountifully to gratify his friends’ palates, but he aspired to please their ears also by maintaining a party of musicians, who, while they generally exercised their quality at home, occasionally visited his neighbours’ houses and enlivened them with the strains of their minstrelsy. On one of their visits to Gawthorpe, where their performance was much appreciated, their pains were rewarded with a suitable gratuity. Sir Peter had a taste also for that popular music made by a peal of bells which can be heard by more ears at the same time, and at a greater distance than any other. He is said to have placed such a peal in his chapel at Disley, which was afterwards removed to Norbury, and the bells recast with a date placed upon the sixth bell, the date of which is only a century wrong, and this jingling rhyme to commemorate the giver:

All people may behold and bee
The works of good Sir Peter Legh. (1682.)

Henry, the fourth Earl of Derby, took counsel with Sir Peter Legh as well on his public as on his private affairs, and his numerous letters remaining at Lyme show the confidence he had in the judgment of his adviser.

¹²⁹ Whitaker’s *History of Manchester*, II, 66.

¹³⁰ Shuttleworth accounts. Chet. Soc.

¹³¹ Whitaker’s *Richmondshire*, II, 246 in the footnotes

About the years 1587 and 1588, when the Earl of Essex was much abroad on the Queen's affairs, in the Netherlands, and elsewhere, he seems to have engaged the services of Richard Bold, Esquire, of Bold, who had before been retained in the service of the Earl of Derby. The latter, resenting this transfer of his former retainer's sword to the rival Earl, took means to make him aware of the displeasure he had conceived at it; upon which Essex, who was well known as an accomplished letter writer, wrote his lordship a very beautiful letter justifying his conduct, and hoping that his lordship, after his explanation, would see reason to excuse it. The letter, however, failed to satisfy his lordship, and Essex addressed him a second very handsome letter; and copies of these letters, seem to have been sent to Lyme by Lord Derby for Sir Peter Legh to advise him upon them.

Ever since the year 1585 Spain had been preparing her naval and other armaments at Cadiz for an intended descent upon England. Her people, who had found Drake's boast but too true that he meant to "burn the King of Spain's beard," growing very defiant upon it, had begun to seize English ships and sailors in Spanish ports, without notice, and while the two countries were still at peace. They tried this practice once too often, however; for one Captain Forster, of the *Primrose*, whose name well deserves remembrance, upon the Spaniards trying to seize him and his ship, called his crew to arms, when they resisted so effectually, as not only gallantly to bring away their own ship, but to make prize of and bring to England the Spanish Corregidor, a man high in office at Bilbao.¹³² Neither blind to the clouds which were gathering nor deaf to the mutterings of the coming storm, the Queen appointed in the above year Henry Earl of Derby to be her Lord Lieutenant of the two palatine counties of Lancaster and Chester, and gave him express power to appoint his own provost marshal, a sort of vice-lieutenant, to enforce discipline in the troops and to correct all offences against it. Under this power the Earl was at no loss whom to select as his provost marshal, and he accordingly appointed to the office his tried friend and adviser Sir Peter Legh, who had large estates in the two counties, which would tend to make his corrective office less unpopular. There are at Lyme numerous letters from the Earl expressly addressing him in that capacity, and there is also a complete muster roll of all the troops then enrolled, amongst whom there were, doubtless, some of those soldiers who, as we are expressly told, had been drilled and trained for eight years before the coming of the Armada.¹³³

On the 19th April, 1587, he sat as one of the Commissioners of Survey of the Lancashire estates, to which the Earl of Leycester had succeeded by the death of the late Edward Boteler, Esquire, of Bewsey; and having thus served the Earl in a private capacity he was within one short week afterwards called to act for him in a public character. On the 26th April, in consequence of a complaint made against one Randolph Norbury, brought before him charged with uttering "very heinous words against the Earl," Sir Peter, describing himself as provost marshal and justice of the peace for Lancashire and Cheshire, signed a warrant committing the accused to the keeper of the Castle of Chester, to be detained until he should be discharged by due course of law.¹³⁴ But Sir Peter, who was thus on terms of intimacy with the Earl of Leicester, seems to have been on like terms of intimacy with Essex, his rival in the Queen's favour. It was about this time that Essex having come to visit him at Lyme, the incident occurred which Wilson, the historian, then a youth, and one of the Earl's followers, thus describes:-

¹³² Froude's *History of England*, XII. 129

¹³³ Froude's *History of England*, VII. 427

¹³⁴ *British Librarian*, May, 1737

“Sir Peter Legh,” he says, “invited my lord one summer to hunt the stag, and having a great stag in chase, and many gentlemen in the pursuite, the stag took soyle, and divers (whereof I was one) alighted and stood with swordes drawne to have a cutt at him at his coming out of the water. The staggs there being wonderful fierce and dangerous, made us youthes more eager to be att him. But he escaped us all, and it was my misfortune to be hindered of my coming neare him, the way being slipperie, as by a fall; which gave occasion to some who did not knowe me to speake as if I had fallen for fere, which being told mee I left the stag, and followed the gentleman who first spake it. But I found him of that cold temper that it seemes his wordes made an escape from him as by his denial and repentance it appeared. But this made mee more violent in pursuit of the stag to recover my reputation. And I happened to be the only horseman in when the dogs set him up at bay; and approaching nere him on horseback, he broke through the dogs and run at mee and tore my horse’s side with his hornes, close by my thigh. Then I quitted my horse and grew more cunning (for the dogs had set him up again), stealing behind him with my sword and cutting his ham strings, and then got upon his back and cut his throate, which as I was doing, the company came in and blamed my rashness for running such a hazard.”¹³⁵

But following the stag, to the cheering sound of hound and horn, or pursuing and taking the winged four-footed or other game over the breezy hills of Lyme, where the air is as pure and exhilarating as ether, were not the only amusements Sir Peter’s friends and visitors found at Lyme. They found others indoors, amongst which were the theatrical performances enacted in the house by professional actors, a class which, after struggling for some time with the general prejudice, had found in Sir Peter one of their patrons. To quote Dr. Whitaker, “dramatic composition attained its height long before the art of representing it on the stage had emerged from a state of rudeness in England.” Itinerant actors, however, seem to have been not uncommon here, even in the early part of the reign of Henry VI; but the establishment of the first regular company of actors is due to the Duke of Gloucester, afterwards Richard III, who kept such a company as his own.¹³⁶ In 1548. the patronage of actors seems at times to have belonged to royalty, for King Edward VI had a company of players who received xx s, for playing an interlude three times in the common hall at Norwich.¹³⁷ But in 1572, patronage, either royal or otherwise, became necessary for the actors; for an Act of Parliament in that year enacted that all actors not licensed by some nobleman, should be taken up as vagabonds, the only effect of which was to multiply the number of companies of actors, who obtained the required licences and called themselves the servants of the particular nobles who licensed them, just as the actors at the Royal Theatres call themselves “Her Majesty’s servants,” at this day. In 1576 no less than three companies of players, the Earl of Essex’s, the Lord Stafford’s, and the Lancashire players (probably Lord Strange’s) were paid for performing at Gawthorpe, for which each of the former two were paid twenty shillings, and the last ten.¹³⁸ After which three or four other companies of players are also mentioned as performing at the same place, and in the year 1588, two short years after Shakespeare, the harbinger of a new era for the drama, first came to London, Sir Peter Legh’s players appeared at Gawthorpe, and were paid for a performance there in the hall. But it is worthwhile to inquire what were the plays which these actors at Gawthorpe, Lyme, and the neighbouring houses represented in Sir Peter Legh’s time, the sixteenth century. No company could then furnish such actors as those whom Polonius commended to

¹³⁵ Peck’s *Desiderata Curiosa*, XII. 10.

¹³⁶ *Athenaeum*, January 3, 1866, p. 44.

¹³⁷ Harrod’s *Norfolk Gleanings*, 87

¹³⁸ *Shuttleworth Accts*, Chetham Society.

Hamlet, who he said were ready for tragedy, comedy, history, pastoral, pastoral-comical, historical-pastoral, tragical-historical, tragical-comical, historical-pastoral, scene undividable or poem unlimited” for except the miracle plays the old moralities were the only plays an audience could then expect from the performers.

In 1540, Nicholas Udall, a great scholar, who at first was master of Eton and then of Westminster School, wrote for his scholars *De Papatu*, a tragedy, which, although written in Latin, being acted by his scholars, young gentlemen of birth, served to make it known. Its success induced its author to turn his attention to the drama in English, and he wrote other plays, one of which, the comedy of *Ralph Royster Doyster*, has alone survived to our times, the rest having floated down the stream of time and been forgotten. This play, which appeared in the year 1557, has an amusing plot with an agreeable mixture of humour and seriousness. Ten years afterwards there appeared from the pen of Mrs. Norton and Lord Buckhurst the tragedy of *Gorboduc* or *Perrex and Porrex*, which, though dull, heavy, and declamatory, was acted before Queen Elizabeth, which was a passport to its popularity among her country lieges. *Gammer Gurton's Needle* a comedy from the pen of Bishop Still, though of no great merit, also became popular, and then a little host of playwrights arose to meet the public craving for the drama. In 1586, Shakespeare first arrived in London, and in six years afterwards he had begun to write for the stage, after which came Kyd, Lodge, Greene, Lyly, Peel, and Marlowe, followed by Heywood, who wrote the first interlude, *The Pardoner and the Frere* and Ed. VI, who is said to have composed another, but all these with Marsh, and the rest of the minor dramatists who had succeeded Udall, sank before Shakespeare's unclouded effulgence, and all their works, except parts of Greene and Marlowe, became rarities to be sought for only in the collection of the bookworm, not for their intrinsic merit, but as curiosities. But it was reserved for the immortal creations of Shakespeare in the next generation to gladden not only audiences in the halls of Lyme and Gawthorpe, but wherever else the English tongue was spoken.

Early in the year 1588, were heard mutterings which could not be mistaken that the long rumoured Armada was assuredly coming, and that the nation must prepare to meet it. To create a diversion of the enemy, Henry, Earl of Derby and others, as the Queen's commissioners, were sent to the Netherlands, and as the exchequer was at a low ebb and funds were absent when they were most wanted, privy seals were issued, though the fact seems to have escaped the notice of the historians; and one of these reached Sir Peter Legh, who readily and most loyally contributed one hundred pounds, a larger sum than a ten per cent income tax upon his estate would have produced.¹³⁹ The winds and waves and heaven's dread artillery were on the side of the nation, and thus assisted, brave English hearts and hands were enabled utterly to destroy the mightiest armament that one nation had ever fitted out against another, and the result went not only to establish Elizabeth on the throne but also to settle more firmly the principles of the reformed faith. If Sir Peter ever reflected on the mite he had contributed to the overthrow of the Armada, he must have felt satisfied that the money had been placed out to advantage.

In March, 1589, the Magistrates of Lancashire, as guardians of the public morals, issued a declaration which set forth the evils arising from the desecration of the Sabbath, by the common practice of holding upon it wakes, fairs, markets, bear and bull baits, ales, May games, the keeping open of alehouses during divine service, and having piping and dancing, hunting, and all manner of unlawful gaming, on Sundays. To meet the evil the magistrates

¹³⁹ *History of Cheshire* I, pref. xxxiv

proposed to reduce the multitude of alehouses, to suffer no one to keep such a house without first obtaining a licence from the sessions, and as far as possible to put a stop to the above abuses, they ordered that ale-sellers should sell a full quart of beer for a penny and none of any less size.¹⁴⁰ This declaration and the resolve to meet the evils complained of could not fail to increase the official duties of Sir Peter Legh and his brother magistrates; but after an active life, Sir Peter had now passed the allotted age of man. He had lived longer than any of his ancestors, having attained the age of seventy-seven years, and though nearing the goal he enjoyed a green old age; but on the 6th December, 1590, he gently expired, and on the 10th January, more than a month afterwards, he was carried from Lyme to his last resting place, the family chapel at Winwick.

Living in critical times, when it must have been difficult for even a man of firm resolve to hold fast by the right, Sir Peter, while he held firmly to his principles, remained unshaken in his loyalty to the Crown. He lived as we have seen, under Henry VIII, Edward VI, Mary, and Elizabeth, four sovereigns each very unlike the other, yet he served all of them in his various public offices faithfully and loyally. Serving Henry VIII with his sword, he won knighthood with it while fighting in support of the cause of the Scottish reformers. At a trying period of Edward VI's reign, he was high sheriff of Lancashire, and by his prudence and sense in that office he was able to assist in staying the breakers that threatened the new order of things. In the first year of Queen Mary's reign, when a muster of soldiers was ordered in Lancashire, he loyally accepted the command in them, assigned to him by Edward Earl of Derby, and if the historian is correct in saying that the Earl, immediately after the Queen's accession, marched in great force towards London to support the throne, Sir Peter probably marched with him.¹⁴¹ It was, perhaps, out of an appreciation of his services on a former similar occasion, that in the same year he was made high sheriff of Cheshire, and by it enjoyed an honour that few either before or since have ever attained, that of filling the office of high sheriff of two great counties within a very short interval of time. He had happily, however, retired from this last service before the fires of religious persecution were lighted, and George Marsh passed through them to his desired home; though had Sir Peter still continued sheriff, the sad task of conducting that martyr to the stake had not devolved upon him, but upon the sheriffs of the city of Chester. Still it must have been a satisfaction to him that his shrievalty was unstained by such a dark blood spot.

Sir Peter being an active member of the Council of Edward Earl of Derby, had been present at the martyr's first appearance before it, but at his second appearance he absented himself, whence we may presume that he neither approved of the Rector of Grappenhall's rough speaking nor of the prisoner's treatment. After Earl Edward's death he enjoyed the full confidence of Earl Henry his successor, who consulted him on all occasions, and made him judger and under-seneschal of Macclesfield forest, offices requiring sound judgment and vigilant circumspection. But these offices were secondary to the military command with which he was entrusted by the Earl as provost marshal of Lancashire and Cheshire, a sort of vice-lieutenancy of those two counties. The superintendence of the local troops and disciplining them when the clouds were threatening "war in procinct," proved to be not only no sinecure, but became an office of great responsibility and consequently as great anxiety.

As an active justice of the peace, before whom offenders were brought to be committed for trial, Sir Peter must have found his duties much increased by the declaration of March, 1589,

¹⁴⁰ *Lancashire Lieutenancy*, Chetham Society, 217.

¹⁴¹ Froude's *History of England*, VI. 18.

by which the magistrates, in order to repress the ill use made of Sunday, were called upon to reduce the number of ale houses, and to suppress the holding on Sundays of all wakes, markets, fairs, bear and bull baits, May games and all unlawful gaming. In his day, too, the great offence of deer stealing, which was not then obsolete, sometimes came under Sir Peter's notice, and besides the ordinary game trespasses gave him some trouble. His loyalty to the Crown was shown not only by his being always ready to give his personal service, but also by his liberally opening his purse when it was necessary for public purposes.

It was his study to live at peace with all his neighbours, and never to enter into a law suit that could be avoided. Those into which he was forced were for the most part a legacy left him by his father. Living very much at home, he improved his property, built Lyme, and so improved his estate that when an assessment was made, he was found to be possessed of the best estate in the district. He was acquainted, and on terms of social intercourse, with both the Queen's favourites, Leicester and Essex, the former, of whom probably and the latter certainly visited him at Lyme. He was the trusty councillor, friend, and adviser of Edward and Henry, the two successive earls of Derby, whom he visited at Latham, and attended in their suite on their visits of state and ceremony. Holinshed, the historian, and Flower, Norroy, King at Arms, were known to him, and he had a sympathy not only with their particular tastes, but with literature in general, as we see from the books collected in the library at Lyme, and from the encouragement he gave to music and the drama in maintaining a company of actors, and a band of minstrels. As a neighbour he was genial and generous, distributing with lavish hand game and venison from his park, and sending his actors and minstrels to enliven the houses of his neighbours, amongst whom he became a sort of little king, who was looked up to with well-deserved affection and respect.

In the evening of life Sir Peter's ancestors had generally provided a chantry or chapel in which they were to be commemorated by prayers and masses; but the age was changed, and Sir Peter was changed with it, and without waiting for the approach of the grave he took means immediately upon the accession of Queen Elizabeth to have his chapel at Disley consecrated for Protestant worship;¹⁴² but there is neither an epitaph nor any sepulchral inscription to him either there or at Winwick. But though no sculptured stone or monumental brass remains to mark his place of sepulture, he is commemorated by the sister art of painting in two portraits of him, an art which he was the first of his family to patronise. The first of these portraits, both of which are preserved at Lyme, is expressly ascribed to Sir Peter, and said to have been painted in the year 1572, when he was fifty-seven years of age. It represents him as wearing an Edward VI bonnet, bordered with roses and cocked a little on one side; but the rest of his dress is not in the fantastic taste of that of Nicholas Pott, of Ulster, a provost marshal like Sir Peter Legh, who wore a doublet jerkin fashioned of blue velvet laid with gold lace and a pair of breeches answerable to the same, while he had a hat or bonnet made and lined with velvet and in it a black feather.¹⁴³ In the second portrait, which was painted by Zuccherro, when Sir Peter was perhaps seventy or upwards, he is represented as wearing a steel gorget, a doublet of white velvet, slashed and figured and guarded with black. He has a ruddy countenance, with a stern and resolute look. His hair is white, and his silver beard is in shape like that in fashion in the time of Queen Elizabeth, which was less peaked than that of her successor. He wears a very handsome gilded sword belt, and has on black trunk hose, and with his right hand he grasps the official baton of the provost marshal.

¹⁴² *History of Cheshire*, III, 404

¹⁴³ *Notes and Queries*, 1858, 162

The issue of Sir Peter Legh and dame Margaret were:- (1) Peter, his eldest son, who died before him. (2) John, to whom his father made a lease in 22 Elizabeth 1579, and whose will, dated 2 April 1593, is printed in the Lancashire and Cheshire wills,¹⁴⁴ and who at 48 years of age was buried at Disley on 21st April following. (3) Thomas, who married Catherine daughter and coheir of Sir Thomas Langley. He was not the person of both his names who in 8 and 12 Elizabeth was the Queen's aulnager for Lancashire, for that officer was of the High Legh family.¹⁴⁵ (4) James, to whom his father made a lease in 1579, and who died a bachelor, and who in 1587 seems to have been one of the Earl of Derby's gentlemen waiters. (5) Robert. (6) Ellen, married John Booth, Esq., of Barton, by whom she had issue. (7) Margery, married (1st) Sir Robert Barton, of Smithills, by whom she had no issue. (2nd) Sir Richard Shuttleworth, chief justice of Chester. She was buried at Winwick, and an account of her funeral is given in the Shuttleworth accounts. The lives of Sir Robert Barton and Margery Legh are also the subjects of a romantic ballad.¹⁴⁶

Dame Margaret, Sir Peter's wife, survived her husband several years, and in the year 1595, when she was in her ninetieth year, a good portrait was taken of her, which is still preserved at Lyme. This portrait is well painted by some artist whose name is unknown, one of the results probably of that taste for the painter's art which Dame Margaret's husband was the first of his family to introduce, and which has since filled the house at Lyme with so many valuable *effigies avorum* of the family. The portraits of Sir Peter himself, in their style and treatment, bear a resemblance to those of Edward and Henry, Earls of Derby, as they are given in the second part of the *Lancashire Lieutenancy*, one of the volumes of the Chetham Society.

Chapter 10

Peter VIII, died 1570

PETER LEGH, Esquire, of Haydock, Sir Peter's eldest son, who was born about 1540, married Katherine, daughter of Sir Thomas Venables, baron of Kinderton, a lineal descendant of one of those prescriptive barons of the Cheshire palatinate who constituted the Parliament of Hugh Lupus, the Norman Earl of Chester. Dying before his father, Mr. Legh never succeeded to the rich inheritance of the family estates, but through his issue by his wife Katherine they were duly transmitted to his descendants. He is believed to have resided at Haydock, where until the late fire, the arms of Legh, Venables, D'Anyers, and Haydock remained on the ceiling of the entrance hall at Haydock Lodge, connecting it as it were, with his residence there, though not in the late house, yet in some earlier one which stood on the same site. The author of the *Golden Mirror*, which was probably written before 1589, although not published until then, addressed a copy of his verses in that work to "Maister Peter Legh, heir apparent of that valiant Knight Sir Peter Legh, of the Lyme," but the verses were probably not meant for him but for his son and successor. As Mr. Legh did not outlive his father, very few memorials occur of him in the family annals. He died most probably at Haydock, on 10th August, 1570, leaving issue by his wife Katherine Venables:- (1) Peter, his eldest son, afterwards Sir Peter Legh, who succeeded to the family estates. (2) Thomas Legh, esquire, of Hallam, near Whitley, Cheshire, who was attached to the Court of Henry, Prince of Wales, the son of James I, and stood high in that Prince's favour. In a petition which he presented to the King in 1614 he styles himself "one of his Majesty's carvers." In 1625 he

¹⁴⁴ Chetham Society, ii., 241

¹⁴⁵ *Lancashire & Cheshire Wills*, II, 90-91

¹⁴⁶ Colonel Egerton Leigh's *Cheshire Ballads and Legends*, p 27 *et seq*

was a benefactor to the neighbouring chapel of Lower Whitley, and he died in October of the following year. His memory seems to have lived in the mind of one of his friends far beyond the term which Hamlet says is the limit of a good man's memory, for in 1635, when he had been dead ten years, one of his friends at Paraiba, in America, wrote a letter to Sir Peter Legh, which speaks of him in terms of affection and kind regard to his memory, and says that "he remembered him at court in the golden days of Prince Henry." (3) Edward Legh, who in the year 1588 was of Gray's Inn, and was so described in a bond of 25th May in that year. In 1593 he was living and probably following the profession of the law in Chancery Lane, where he entertained Mr. Farington, of Werden. In 40 Elizabeth 1597, he was escheator of Lancashire, and was probably the same person who in that year was elected member of Parliament for Wigan. He married Katherine, widow of John Touchet, Esq., of Whitley, and daughter of Ralph Worsley, of Chester. (4) Elizabeth who married Thomas Latham, Esq., of Parbold. The settlement made on her marriage bore date 1st November, 28 Elizabeth 1585.

CHAPTER 11

Sir Peter IX, 1563-1636

PETER LEGH, of Lyme, Esquire, afterwards Sir Peter Legh, Knight, who was born about the year 1563, on the death of his knightly grandfather, in 1590, succeeded to the family estates, after the destruction of the Spanish fleet had purified the political atmosphere and rendered it more serene. In the year 1575, when he was about twelve years old, Flower, Norroy King at Arms, calling him Peter Legh, esquire, dedicated a beautiful manuscript volume on vellum to him, containing drawings of the numerous coats of his family arms. This book, which is still preserved at Lyme, is signed with the initials M. P., probably those of Mercury Patten, Blue Mantle, herald, its copyist. The young heir apparent, who had a taste for the gentle science and a respect for the heralds, its professors, had probably imbibed both from his grandfather.

On the 15th April, 1577, when Henry, Earl of Derby, on the way to his little island kingdom of Man, entered Liverpool in state, and was met with great ceremony by the Mayor and Council, Mr. Peter Legh, who by mistake is said to have been of Baguley, held up the Earl's train as his page, and probably went forward with the Earl to his island throne.¹⁴⁷

In 27 Elizabeth, 1584, when the same Earl, having been appointed Her Majesty's ambassador to France, and directed to invest its monarch Henry III with the Order of the Garter, set out on his mission, Mr. Legh again attended him as "one of his gentlemen waiters," and was then erroneously described as "Master Peter Legh, son and heir to Sir Pierce a Legh." On this occasion he must have formed one of the earl's suite when he entered Paris with two hundred horsemen in his splendid train.¹⁴⁸

Like most of the young gentlemen at that time, Mr. Legh took the wise step of entering himself at one of the Inns of Court, that he might gain an insight into those laws which as a country gentleman he would have to take part in administering. He chose Gray's Inn in preference to the others; and in a bond of 25th May, 1585, in which he is called Peter Legh, of Bradley, esquire, he is described as then being of that Inn.

¹⁴⁷ Baines's *History of Liverpool*, 231-2.

¹⁴⁸ Collins' *Peerage* III. 79 and *Stanley Papers*, Chetham Society, II, 145.

In the same year, as appears from his marriage settlement, he married Margaret, the daughter of Sir Gilbert Gerard, knight, Master of the Rolls. There had long been a connection between the two families, and though Sir Gilbert had left Lancashire and become the founder of a family elsewhere, Mr. Legh did wisely not to forget the old family intimacy. Not long before this time Ely Hall, a fanatic, who had been a turnspit, or as he calls it a "tourner of the broche" in Sir Gilbert's kitchen, made both himself and his Lancashire origin conspicuous.

In 1586, when Mr. Legh was again described to be of Bradley, he was elected member of Parliament for the ancient borough of Wigan, and had for his colleague William Gerard, esquire, a kinsman of his wife. If the Parliament was sitting when the conspiracy of Babyngton and others to murder Queen Elizabeth and to set up Mary Queen of Scots in her place was discovered, and when Salisbury, one of the conspirators, escaping from London took refuge in Cheshire and after swimming the river Weaver on horseback to escape pursuit was there taken, Mr. Legh must have shared the great excitement which the discovery of the plot and its defeat would occasion throughout the country, and especially in the Houses of Parliament.

About this time the Queen's sea captains were making havoc with the Spanish ships, and Drake's achievements on the main were in every mouth, in consequence of which a wit of the day answered someone who regretted that we had not then a king instead of a queen on the throne, by this well-timed impromptu supplication:-

O fortune! to old England still
Continue such mistakes,
And give us for our kings such queens
And for our dux such drakes!

But if called to London by his parliamentary or other duties the next year, Mr. Legh might then have shared the general joy in an excitement of a more satisfactory kind, for then there happened what might have recalled the scene that once occurred when a queen sailed in state on the Cydnus:-

The barge she sat in, like a burnished throne,
Burned on the water; the poop was beaten gold,
Purple the sails and so perfumed, that
The winds were love-sick with them!

Cavendish, another seaman emulating the feats of Drake, and having made prizes like him, was then returning home with them, and was seen sailing up the Thames, "all his mariners and sailors being clothed in silk, and having his ship sails of damask, and his top-sail cloth of gold."¹⁴⁹

In the same year Mr. Legh was a frequent guest of the Earl of Derby at Lathom, where he must have been struck with the strange incongruity that occurred in the observance of Sunday. In the morning Mr. Caldwell, one of the Earl's chaplains, would preach a stirring sermon in the house, and a play would be performed by a company of professional actors in the same house in the evening.¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁹ Hulme's *History of England*, V, 328

¹⁵⁰ *Stanley Papers*, Chetham Society, part II.

BEAMONT'S HISTORY OF THE HOUSE OF LYME

The next year affairs of a different and more serious character claimed public attention. News that the Armada, so often threatened and so often deferred, was at last really coming was on every tongue, and startled men into preparations to meet it. They bade farewell for a time to all visits and feasting, and there was instead a stern bracing for the coming conflict. Sir Peter, the provost marshal of Lancashire and Cheshire, was no laggard, nor was his neighbour and kinsman Sir Thomas Gerard, who had fitted out a ship at his own expense and was ready to sail with it against the enemy. We may suppose Sir Peter, with his silvery head, acting much as the southern sheriff did on the alarm being sounded on the coast when

With his white hair unbonneted, the stout old sheriff comes,
Behind him come the halberdiers, before him sound the drums;
His yeomen round the market cross make clear an ample space,
For there behoves him to set up the standard of her grace.
And haughtily the trumpets peal and gaily dance the bells,
As slow upon the labouring wind the royal blazon swells!

No man, especially a Legh, could be idle at such a time, and Mr. Legh, the grandson, either served in the ranks under the standard of the provost marshal, or he buckled on his armour and served in a like service elsewhere. In numbers and in armaments the enemy far surpassed the English; but as Henry of Navarre, when asked by the Duke of Mayenne how he dared with his small force to confront the large army opposed to him, replied that in reckoning his strength the Duke had not counted either the justice of his cause or the arm of the Omnipotent that was with him; so the Queen of England, with the like reliance and hoping for the like success, might have made the King of Spain a like reply, and, as the result proved, with equal justice; for brave and skilful as were Howard and her seamen and soldiers, their efforts would have been puny indeed, nor had victory crowned them so easily, or the Armada found the destruction they sought to bring, if the angry winds and waves, heaven's dread artillery, had not fought for England. Well might the Queen, when the strife was over, ascribe the glory of it where it was due, and exclaim

Afflavit Deus et dissipantur inimici!

In 1589, Mr. Legh was again elected member of Parliament for Wigan, but this time he had Robert Leicester, Esquire, and not Mr. Gerard, for his colleague. So overjoyed and in such good humour was the Parliament with the overthrow of the Spaniards that becoming unusually liberal they voted Her Majesty, towards the great cost she had been at by sea and land, two subsidies and four fifteenths for four years."

It was about this time that Richard Robinson wrote his poem called *The Golden Mirror*, which has been already mentioned. The work contains a number of acrostic pieces addressed separately to his many friends and patrons, amongst whom for one he selected Mr. Legh, whom he addresses as "Maister Peter Legh, heir apparent to that valiant knight, Sir Peter Legh, of the Lyme." The acrostics are so constructed that the first letter of each stanza, allowing for occasional faults in the spelling, is made to express the name of the dedicatee; Mr. Legh's acrostic is complimentary and tolerably correct in its spelling, and the verse, which is of course not Spenserian and is diffuse in style, ends with the following lines, intended as a moral, in which the moral is better than the poetry:-

Revenge from skies with fiery flames,
Shall now at hand devour and waste,

BEAMONT'S HISTORY OF THE HOUSE OF LYME

All mortal men unto their shames,
Except where grace and virtue's plac'd.
Those that believe and God do fear,
As angels then shall straight appear.

(*Golden Mirror*, Chetham Society, p. 27, *et seq*).

When Sir Peter Legh was called to his rest in a good old age, his grandson, who had more than attained his majority, was saved from all the various feudal exactions which the lord of the fee had a right to make upon an infant heir, and was left only to pay the usual one year's relief of his lands, upon payment of which, on the 8th July, after the death of his grandfather he had special livery, and thereupon entered into full possession of his estates. As he had very soon afterwards a special writ of exemption from serving on juries or being put upon assizes, on the express ground that he was the forester of Macclesfield forest, we may assume that this office had been regranted to him by the Earl of Derby. Mr. Legh, who in many respects resembled his grandfather, seems to have inherited his taste for the art of painting, and in the next year after his coming to the estate, when he was twenty-eight years of age, he had his portrait painted in oils. This portrait, a picture of life size, painted upon a panel which hangs in the entrance hall at Lyme, has on it the words "*Jusques alors*" (so far thus), and is a good painting of a handsome man probably by a Frenchman, who put this inscription on the painting in his own language.

The great danger threatened by the late Armada with the irregular war in which the Queen was continually engaged in support of the Protestant cause abroad conspired to make it necessary that some order should be taken for mustering and arming her troops, and for ensuring greater uniformity in their arms, accoutrements, and weapons. In a review of the arms in Wirral, in 1590, where weapons in great variety were produced, there were "sallets, scull caps, hakes, swordes, bills, daggers, bowes and arrows," but only one "caliver." It was possibly in consequence of this, and similar exhibitions elsewhere, that some orders arrived from the Privy Council on the subject, in pursuance of which, in the year 1595, Mr. Legh and four others (he being the first named) addressed a letter dated Woodday, on the 9th Oct. in that year, to the parson, vicar, or curate of the parish church of Neston, in Wirral, requiring him "to give open monition and warning in his church on the following Sunday to all persons whatsoever, gentlemen and others, to put in order and array all such armour, weapons, and other furniture as they stood charged with, or had shewed at any former muster, so as that the said armour or weapons might be ready for Her Majesty's service at any time within one hour's warning."¹⁵¹ Mr. Legh, who at this time was acting as a justice of the peace, and deputy lieutenant, in the same year became also high sheriff of Cheshire, when he was described as "Sir Peter Legh, of Lyme, knight."

In 1597, Mr. Legh, who had an affection for the abode of his ancestors at Bradley, had that old house so thoroughly reinstated and repaired that some of his work can still be traced there, although the moated place, having seen better days, has been long deserted as a mansion and is now only occupied as a farm house. Mansions descend in the scale of state in proportion as their owners ascend. Two or more unmistakable memorials of what Mr. Legh did at the house which are worthy of notice still remain. One of these is this verse, deeply engraved on its massive oak roof tree, on which either the workman who cut it or the builder employed, with pardonable vanity has put on it his own name and the date of the work:-

¹⁵¹ *Proceedings of Liverpool Historic Soc.*, xi., 890

BEAMONT'S HISTORY OF THE HOUSE OF LYME

The master doth, and mistress both
Unite with one accorde
With Godly minds and zealous hearts
To serve the living Lord

(Henry Westley, 1597.)

Another of these memorials is a shield of arms made in the plaster of the wall of the great staircase which contains these eight quarterings, with the escutcheon of honour occupying its usual place in the centre:- 1. Corona; 2. Legh; 3. Butler, of Merton; 4. Croft, of Dalton; 5. Haydock; 6. Boydel, of Pulcroft; 7. Southworth; 8. Assheton; all of which, blazoned in their proper colours, remain where they were originally placed.

In the same year Sir Hugh Cholmondeley, knight, one of those gentlemen who had joined Mr. Legh in the Neston monition two years before, having had Her Majesty's commands to collect a loan of £1,675 upon privy seals in Cheshire, received from Mr. Legh on 16th November 1597, the sum of thirty pounds towards it, which was a larger amount than the great majority of the contributors had to advance towards the loan. Our ancestors seem to have submitted to these privy seals very easily, because by use they had become accustomed to them.

But even if Mr. Legh knew that the loan would probably be used to fit out some of those buccaneering expeditions against the ships of Spain he would have been wiser than his time if he objected to it on that account.

At the latter end of the year 1597 he was elected member of Parliament for the county of Chester, and was then again called Sir Peter Legh of Lyme, Knight, although it is said that he was first actually knighted by the Queen at Greenwich on the 2nd July, 1598. Henceforth, *quacunque vid data* he became entitled to be called Sir Peter Legh, knight.

The desultory war with Spain still continuing, money was called for to fill an empty exchequer, and a parliament therefore assembled on 24th October, 1597, at which the members for Cheshire, Sir Peter Legh and his colleague Thomas Holcroft, Esq., of Vale Royal, no doubt were present when the Queen told her faithful commons that necessity had obliged her to call them together as she had disbursed more than triple the sum of all the supplies that had been granted her, and that besides having expended her ordinary revenues she had been obliged to sell many of the Crown lands; whereupon the Parliament, again disposed to be liberal, granted her the large supply of three subsidies and six fifteenths. It was in this same Parliament that the Commons took offence at the Upper House for returning some of their amendments to the Commons' Bills engrossed upon parchment instead of paper, to which the peers replied that they did not expect such a frivolous objection would have come from the gravity of the Commons' House, nor was it a matter at all material whether the amendments were written on parchment or paper, or whether the paper was white, black, or brown.¹⁵² We wonder whether Sir Peter Legh took part in this piece of parliamentary sparring?

Sir Peter Legh, who had so lately repaired his house at Bradley, in the year 1600, extended the like care to the church built by his ancestors at Disley, which he then new roofed and

¹⁵² Hume's *Hist. Eng.* V., 385.

restored out of a sense of piety to heaven, duty to his ancestors' memory, and the common good of the neighbourhood.¹⁵³ Although nothing is said on this occasion of the stained glass in the windows of the church, yet remembering Sir Peter's taste for art, it is but fair to infer that the stained windows in the church and steeple were contributed by him at the same time. Many of these windows, now, alas fragmentary, still remain in the church. In the chancel windows there are the arms and quarterings of some of Queen Elizabeth's nobles, with a few portraits and several fine old shields emblazoned with the Legh quarterings.¹⁵⁴ About this time also Sir Peter surrounded his park at Lyme with a wall, and built the old entrance gateway to the hall, the style of which is clearly that introduced by Inigo Jones, which tells its own age.¹⁵⁵ In this year also his kinsman Thomas Legh, Esq., of Adlington, by his will dated 20th November, left Sir Peter a legacy of a "Spurr riall," a gold coin of that time of the value of thirty shillings. The latter half of its name this coin obtained not as a corruption from Spur rowel but from the monarch's effigy on its obverse having upon it royal or kingly robes; but the other, or first half of its name, was derived from its having the sun's image surrounded with rays on the reverse side, which the popular or matter-of-fact mind of the people by a strange declension likened to the rowel or star of a spur, and therefore gave it that name. The testator never intended Sir Peter to keep the coin merely as a keepsake, or to hang at his breast as such things hang now-a-days, but he intended him to make a memorial ring of it, with a posy in it to be worn on his finger, for which it was more fit than that leaden money which had issued from the Queen's mint the year before.

Sir Peter, although not living below his rank, had used such thrift and care, and had so well managed his partrimony, that it had yielded him a rich return, which enabled him, in the year 1600, to contract with Roger and Hamlet Bruche, gentlemen, for the purchase of their family estate of Bruche, with the hall and lands belonging to it; but although there was nothing that was not fair in the bargain, it took several years before it was completed, a thing which was then not unfrequent, and was probably owing in this case to the unwillingness of the vendors to quit what had so long been their family home, and had also given them their name. We need not wonder that they could not leave it and not

Cast one longing lingering look behind.

About this time Sir Peter was appointed by the Earl of Derby, under whose family he still held the forestership of Macclesfield, to be captain of the Isle of Man, the same office perhaps as that of the lieutenant-governor at this day. After the death of Earl Ferdinand in 1594, a question was raised by his daughters whether the kingdom of Man had not descended to them; but the difficulty was at length settled by Earl William purchasing their claims, which gave it to his lordship, to whom it was confirmed by an Act passed on 7th July, 7 Jac. I, 1609.¹⁵⁶ Earl William was now Sir Peter's patron.

Edward Scarisbrick, and four other persons, probably well born like himself, whose breeding should have taught them better, in 1601 entered Sir Peter's park at Bradley and carried off one of his deer, for which they were very properly prosecuted at law. There is a species of adventure in poaching which sometimes gives it a charm in the eyes of others, besides the ordinary poacher.

¹⁵³ *History of Richmond*, II, 246

¹⁵⁴ *History of Cheshire*, III, 404

¹⁵⁵ *History of Richmond*, II., 246.

¹⁵⁶ *Collins' Peerage*, III, 82

Not very long afterwards Sir Peter had the great misfortune to lose his wife, dame Margaret, who died as we believe, in London, in June 1603, and was buried on the 3rd of the following month at Fulham, in the church of which place Sir Peter erected a handsome monument and placed on it an inscription to her memory. The monument is on the left of the north door of the chancel, and upon it, under an arch supported by Corinthian pillars, is dame Margaret's effigy nearly as large as life, with one infant in her arms and another lying by her side habited in the dress of the time. Over her head are the arms of her family; and on the tomb beneath is the following inscription:-

“To the memory or what else dearer remayneth of that verteous lady, La. Margaret Legh, daughter of him yt sometimes was Sr. Gilbert Gerrard, knt. and mr. of ye rolles in ye Highe Court of Chancery, wife to Sr. Peter Legh of Lyme, in the county of Chester, knt. and by him ye mother of seven sons, Pierce, Frauncis, Radcliffe, Thomas, Peter, Gilbert, and John, with two daughters, Anne and Catherine, of wh. Radcliffe, Gilbert, John, deceased infants, the rest yet surviving to the happy increase of their house; the years she enjoyed were 33. Yt. her husband enjoyed her 17, at which period she yielded her soul to the blessedness of long rest, and her body to the earth, July 3, 1603. This inscription in ye note of piety and love by her said husband is here devotedly placed.”¹⁵⁷

Of this lady there is a full-length portrait at Lyme, in an elaborate dress, which is very characteristic of the time.

Queen Elizabeth having departed this life at three o'clock in the morning of the 24th March 1603, Sir Robert Cary having obtained early but secret intimation of the event, and having perhaps had horses on the road in expectation of it, took horse from London about nine the same morning and reached Doncaster, a distance of 155 miles, that night; the next day he rode to Morpeth, 135 miles, and far on in the night of the next day he reached Edinburgh, 105 miles, and, being admitted at once into the King's bedchamber, he had the honour of first saluting him as James I, King of England, Scotland, France, and Ireland; and on the 31st March, just one week from the Queen's death, the county of Lancaster met at Wigan and voted an address assuring the new King of their loyalty and attachment to his person and their devotion to his throne..

Very soon afterwards Sir Peter Legh sued out and obtained a general pardon under the great seal of England, which served as a sort of act of oblivion, to wipe out all offences, either of omission or commission either real or supposed, of which he was or might be supposed to have ever been guilty. In his case though he had really committed neither a crime nor an offence, for which such a pardon was needed, the precaution was yet a wise one. It was a compliance with an old custom which was kept up in part for the sake of the fees it brought into the Exchequer and in part for the benefit of the officials who prepared these pardons.

Sir Peter, in the year 1606, had to sustain another misfortune in the loss of his attached friend and faithful pastor the minister of Disley, Henry Sumner, “the preacher of God's word,” as he is called in one of the wills of the time. Sir Peter lamented his death, and to preserve his memory placed over his grave in Disley Church an inscription in Latin verse from his own pen, engraved on a brass plate, which is translated into English as follows:-

¹⁵⁷ *History of Fulham*, p. 69

BEAMONT'S HISTORY OF THE HOUSE OF LYME

“To the pious memory of Henry Sumner, the very excellent and most faithful minister of this church, Sir Peter Legh, knight, has placed this:

Adorned with letters, faithful, pious, wise,
Removed by death, here Henry Sumner lies;
Well stored with arts in them he found relief,
Mourn him, O Disley! nor restrain thy grief.
No pastor here was greater e'er than he,
Nor mayst thou hope a greater e'er to see;
Should He who only gives and takes away,
Whom sea and land and heavenly hosts obey,
With looks benign of favour and of grace,
Not grant one like him to supply his place”

He died xxi September 1606, and was buried here on the xxiii of the same month.

In 1609 he lost another friend in Richard Assheton, Esq., who in his will calls Sir Peter his beloved friend. A scholar himself, and the affectionate father of several sons, Sir Peter naturally felt a great desire to procure them an education suitable to their rank at the universities, where it could be best acquired; and about the year 1609 he sent three of them there. Piers, the eldest, was sent to Magdalen College, Cambridge, and Francis and Thomas, the second and third sons, were placed at Brasenose College, Oxford, under a Mr. Richardson as their tutor. But young men sometimes disappoint the fondest hopes and the wisest plans laid out for their education. Within a year from his entering at Magdalen, Sir Peter found it prudent to send his steward to Cambridge to fetch Piers back to Lyme, and Francis in his Oxford home grew in stature so rapidly, becoming 6ft. 2in. high in so short a space of time, that fears were entertained for his health, and with the advice and full approval of his tutor he was obliged to return home after he had been at Oxford only a year, while Thomas for some reason seems to have remained unusually long at Brasenose before taking his degree. Whilst his sons were at the university, Sir Peter kept up a constant correspondence with their tutors, and took diligent note of their proceedings and progress.

In 1611, when the advowson of Blackley chapel was purchased it was conveyed to Sir Peter and a number of other persons, in order to secure the future appointment of the minister, which showed the confidence the purchasers had in naming Sir Peter as one of the trustees. The advowson, which has been since sold to the Manchester Collegiate Church, was thus for a time vested in Sir Peter and his colleagues.

Lord Gerard, Sir Peter's brother-in-law, in the year 1614, had an intimation that he was to receive a visit from the King at his house at Chypenham, and in expectation of the visit he wrote to Sir Peter, on the 22nd June, announcing that His Majesty was hourly expected, and that the expectation had thrown him into a flutter, as he had no place for His Majesty to hawk in but his “orchard pools.”

In the following year (1615) Sir Peter married for his second wife Dorothy, the widow of Richard Brereton, esquire, of Tatton, and daughter of Sir Richard Egerton, of Ridley, knight. A portrait of this lady, which expressly calls her “Sir Peter's second lady,” and which was doubtless painted at her husband's request, is said to have been the work of Cornelius Jansen, and to have been painted by him in the above year; but if the date be correct and the painting

is really from the above artist's easel, it is certainly an earlier English portrait by him than Walpole had ever seen.

At Winwick, Sir Peter had many ties. It was the church at which he attended worship from Bradley. There his ancestor, Sir Gilbert de Haydock, had founded a chantry, which, since chantries existed no longer, had become the family burial place; and at Winwick also Sir Peter's collateral ancestor, Gowther a Legh, who was not as Sir Peter calls him his uncle, but a more distant kinsman, before the year 1548 had founded a public free school. This school had since had some good masters as well as not a few good scholars. Richard Mather, one of the new England pilgrim fathers, had been first a scholar and afterwards a master of the school. Sir Peter noticing that the school was destitute of a school-house, and that the endowment was too scanty, determined to supply the one and increase the other, and in the year 1618 he carried his good purpose into effect, as the engraved plate now remaining in the school, with this inscription upon it, sufficiently shews:- "This howse was builte by Sir Peter Legh, knight, upon his owne charges, in the yere of our Lord 1618, to be a schoole-hous for ever, for the free schoole of Winwicke, founded by Gaulter Legh, Esquire, great uncle of the said Sir Peter, which Gaulter gave ten pounds of yerely rent for the perpetual maintenance of the said school; and the said Sir Peter hath augmented the same with ten poundes per annum more, which he hath assured to be yearlye payde to the same free schoole for ever, for his zeal to God's glorye and his love to the parish of Winwick, and common good of the cuntry." And in the next year Sir Peter executed a formal deed for giving legal effect to his good intentions and saving them from being thereafter perverted.

His younger children being all of age, Sir Peter, on the 28th March, 20 Jac. I, 1622, joined his sons Francis, Thomas, and Peter, in making a deed of settlement of his newly acquired property at Bruche and limiting it to certain family uses after his decease. The arrangement could not fail to be satisfactory to the sons, to whom it secured benefits which it had been in Sir Peter's power either to give or withhold.

The Duke of Buckingham, who had lately returned from his romantic visit to Spain, whither he had gone with the Prince of Wales, was now in correspondence with Sir Peter, whom he seems to have known before. Having at this time occasion to ask the Duke's assistance on behalf of a friend, the Duke in his answer, which is preserved at Lyme, promises to do what is asked, and writes in very friendly terms.

From another letter also preserved at Lyme, and which, according to the learned editor who has printed it, was written on the 13th June 1623, it appears that Sir Peter's advice and counsel were then sought by a man who afterwards became far more widely known in history than even the King's favourite Buckingham. Marple, an old hall near Lyme, was at the date of the letter, the seat of Henry Bradshawe, whose third son, John Bradshawe, after having served his articles to an attorney at Congleton, went in 1622, when he was a little past the usual age, and entered himself at Gray's Inn. He appears before the date of the letter to have incurred his father's serious displeasure and in terms of the highest respect and greatest affection he makes an appeal to Sir Peter in his letter to be a peacemaker between them. He acknowledges that Sir Peter had given him sound advice, which he promises to follow, and emphatically adds that he shall never forget his kindness. The letter is a very long one, and its perusal will well repay the student of history.¹⁵⁸ Congleton was not very far from Marple, and after he was called to the bar, Mr. Bradshawe, whose difference with his father we may

¹⁵⁸ *Chetham Miscellanies*, part II, at the end.

presume by Sir Peter Legh's wise mediation had been long since settled, returned there to practise his profession. In 1632 his name appears in the following heterogeneous entry in the books of that old corporation:- "Roger Hobson, mayor, John Bradshaw for counsel, Players xs, Bear-ward iij li. Mr. Bradshaw made free. Spent on that occasion in sack and beer vii s. His fees paid to him quarterly xs."¹⁵⁹ How great was the difference between this his debut and that sad scene in which he sat as president of the regicide court at Westminster!

Besides his love of letters, Sir Peter Legh had a love for music also, of which after Queen Elizabeth by showing her taste for it, made it popular there had been a revival in his day. Sir Peter's taste becoming known, Francis Pilkington, bachelor of music, and chaunter (or precentor) of Chester Cathedral, and a professor of some note, having written and printed a volume of madrigals in the year 1624, could find no fitter patron for his work than Sir Peter Legh, and to him therefore he dedicated it. Henry Lawes, the friend of Milton, and a musician still better known than Pilkington, was also Sir Peter's friend.

On the 27th March 1625, King James I breathed his last; and his son, King Charles I ascended the throne. On this event Sir Peter Legh again thought it prudent to sue out a general pardon, to clear off all real or supposed offences of the past and begin the new reign without a blot, and on 10th Feb. 1 Car. I, 1626, he sued out and obtained such a pardon or bill of indemnity.

When Sir Peter had attained the age of 68, he in the year 1631, again sat for his portrait, and a small miniature then taken of him, and which is still preserved at Lyme, was the result. His love of the painter's art was not abated by years.

On the 17th February 1636, Sir Peter, who though old in years was still vigorous, hale, and strong, seems to have had some sudden seizure probably of an infectious nature, which there was no resisting; and he departed this life on the above day at Lyme. In that age, when interments of great people were often delayed for a month after their death, the usual custom, for some reason, was departed from; and Sir Peter's funeral took place precipitately on the third day after his decease, which gives countenance to the idea that his death was caused either by the plague or some other infectious disease. A pestilence somewhat like the plague was raging at Manchester, at Louth, in Lincolnshire, and many other parts of England in 1631, and we know that the plague itself either then or at a little later period visited the neighbourhood of Lyme more than once, as the gravestones to be seen on the wild hills above the house plainly show. On one of these we read:-

Think it not strange our bones lie here;
Thine may lie thou know'st not where.

Elizabeth Hampson.

While another has upon it:-

John Hampson and his wife
And three children lost their life! 1646.

Sir Peter's hurried funeral left Lyme in the following order, as appears from this contemporary account:-

¹⁵⁹ Congleton Records.

BEAMONT'S HISTORY OF THE HOUSE OF LYME

“The order of Sir Peter Legh’s funeral from Lyme to W.”¹⁶⁰

Tenants two and two.
Gentlemen’s servants of blood and affinity in their liverys.
The Baron’s of Kinderton in livery.
The Baron’s men in black.

Gawen Duncalfe	Jo. Duncalfe
John Carter	Rafe Carter
Mr. Vernon	Mr. Ouldfeld
Mr. Fenwick	Mr. Owen
Here Sir R. Wilbram’s men.	
John Jenkyns, the groome of Sir Peter.	
--- Edelstone	Richard Martyn
Reynald Richardson	Fra. Gascoyll
Jo. Osencroft	James Grimsworth
Robert Mather	Richard Legh
Piers Gascoyl	Robert Gascoyl
Ralph Armfield	William Swyndall
Richard Muchsell	Richard Donbabyn
Mr. Thomas Patten	Mr. Holbrook
Mr. Legh	Mr. Collier
Mr. Hanmer	Mr. Dunbabyn
Mr. Brotherton	Mr. Sopert
Mr. Warren	
Jo. Armfield	

Mr. Creswell (afterwards incumbent of Disley)
Mr. Woodcock, his grandchild’s tutor
Doctor Nicholls (dean of Chester and rector of Cheadle from 1623 to 1647)

THE CORPSE

Mr. Peter Legh the heir to his grandfather	
Mr. Francis Legh	Mr. Tho. Legh
Mr. Peter Legh	Mr. Venables
Sir Anthony St. John	Sir George Booth
Sir Richard Wilbram”	

The procession, as we see, is here expressly stated to have set out from Lyme; but the initial “W.” leaves it uncertain whether the funeral took place at Warrington or at Winwick; and unhappily the parish register of Winwick, which is defective at this time, contains no mention of the burial there at all; while the Warrington register, on the contrary, expressly records it as having taken place there. The usual family burying place, however, was at Winwick, and there this brass records his burial:-

¹⁶⁰ *Harlean Manuscripts*, 2094 f. 37. c

BEAMONT'S HISTORY OF THE HOUSE OF LYME

“Here underneath this stone lyeth buried the body of Sir Peter Legh, kt., who departed this life, February 17th 1635. Etatis suse 73.”

No other monumental memorial besides this, either in brass or marble, exists at either of the above places to mark the good knight's last resting place. Whence these slight sepulchral honours to one of the house most deserving of them? Has any other monument erected to his honour been destroyed in the civil war which broke out not long after his decease? It certainly was not because the deceased had impaired his family estate; and it is still less likely that he left a thankless heir to resent such an offence.

It is possible, as Sir Peter's son Piers was not at the funeral, [Peter IX's son, Peter X, had predeceased him, dying in 1624, hence he was succeeded by his grandson, Peter XI. Ed.] though his son was, that the old estrangement which outlived Sir Peter's life might have occasioned the omission which we regret. Dame Dorothy Legh, Sir Peter's second wife, by whom he had no issue, having survived him a little more than three years, departed this life on the 4th April 1639. Her remarkable will, which is very lengthy, and contains some very curious particulars, has been printed verbatim by the Chetham Society.¹⁶¹ In Eccles church, where she was buried, her full length effigy in stone lies recumbent by her first husband's side, upon a monument which she herself erected in the year 1600. To have been thus buried in effigy so long before her death must have been a perennial “*memento mori*.” In an account of Worsley, from the pen of the late Mr, Harland, she has the character of a kind-hearted and most benevolent lady.

Sir Peter's children by his first wife, who survived him, were:- (1) Piers Legh, of Lyme, his eldest son [This is incorrect as he had died in 1624. Ed.] (2) Francis Legh. (3) Thomas Legh, D.D., of Brasenose College, Oxford, rector of Sefton and Walton, who died in 1639, and of whom there are several portraits at Lyme. (4) Peter Legh, of Bruche, who has a legacy in Dame Dorothy Legh's will in 1639, and appears to have died before the 12th April 1642. (5) A daughter Katherine, who died unmarried, and was buried at Disley on the 14th Sept. 1617, in her father's lifetime. (6) Anne, born 1594, married Richard Bold, of Bold, esquire, about the 7th October 1612, which is the date of their marriage settlement. There is a portrait of her at Lyme, taken when she was one year old. The old hall at Bold, built in 1616, bears upon it hers and her husband's name, and they are also commemorated by a quaint monument in Farnworth Church, on which there are portraits of the husband and wife, though there is no mention made on it when she died. Richard Bold died 19th February 1636, aged 47, and Anne is mentioned in Dame Dorothy Legh's will in 1639.

On the death of Sir Peter Legh, the last of his family who up to this time had the knightly prefix of “Sir” to his name, a few words upon his character public and private may not be out of place.

The founder of the house of Lyme fell by the headsman's axe a martyr for his loyalty to his lawful sovereign Richard II; and his son and successor died of the wounds he had received fighting for the son of that King whose father had put his father to death. From that time to 1590, when Sir Peter Legh succeeded to the estate, two hundred years had passed, during which Lyme, except in two instances, where in consequence of the son dying before the father it had passed over one generation, had descended in a regular unbroken line of succession. During these two hundred years how many and how great had been the changes

¹⁶¹ *Lancashire and Cheshire Wills*, III. 201

in our national history! The house of York, which lost a throne when the founder of Lyme lost his head, had since recovered and again lost that throne during the long war of the Roses, which lasted until Henry of Richmond, by his marriage with Elizabeth of York, stanchd further bloodshed and made one house of the two houses of Lancaster and York. The monasteries and religious houses had been abolished, religion had been reformed, the fires of persecution had been lighted, and the Spaniard at Madrid had been baulked in his endeavour to reduce England to a province of Spain. But these things were now over, fewer clouds darkened the horizon; and Sir Peter therefore came to his inheritance under favourable circumstances. He was of mature years, had had the benefit of his grandfather's long experience and wise teaching, and had escaped the dangers which beset a rich minor who, like him, whose fate the poet laments, comes to his inheritance too soon,

Left by his sire too young such loss to know,
Lord of himself that heritage of woe!

We may well wonder, considering the troublous times through which the Legh inheritance had passed, how in the then unsettled state of the law it had escaped forfeiture and confiscation, and all the illegal challenges which might have wrested it from its rightful owner.

With the advantages above referred to, Sir Peter entered upon his duties as a country gentleman at a period when he could both understand and discharge them.

In the halls of Lathom, in the kingly court of the Little Isle of Man, and at Paris, in all which places he had served, he had acquired a polish of manners, without bringing back from the last named place such follies as were imported by the English gallants from the Field of the Cloth of Gold betwixt "Guisnes and Ardre," which so filled the Court "with quarrels, talk, and tailors," that a proclamation being issued against them, met with such hearty approbation from the King's old chamberlain, that he exclaimed, with well deserved tartness:-

I am glad 'tis there, now I would pray our Monsieurs,
To think an English courtier may be wise
And never see the Louvre.

(*Henry VIII*, a. I. s. 3.)

Though we can only presume that Sir Peter had frequented a university, we know for a certainty that he entered himself at Gray's Inn, then as now one of our law colleges, in order to gain such an acquaintance with the laws of his country, as Cicero in his time thought was a necessary qualification for a Roman gentleman. It was by resorting to an inn of court to complete their studies, that Sir Peter Leycester and Sir Thomas Mainwaring acquired that skill in the use of forensic weapons which they displayed so well in the celebrated *Amicia* controversy.

Sir Peter Legh had not acquired his stores of knowledge and experience to let them lie idle, but to use them. He lived the subject of three successive Sovereigns, Elizabeth, James I, and Charles I, all of whom he served loyally, faithfully, and zealously. Under the maiden queen he had served as a cadet against the Armada, and on other occasions, both civil and military, he had shown a readiness to serve the Crown both in purse and person. He was twice in Parliament for Wigan, and he sat once there for the great county of Chester. Once he filled

the important post of Lieutenant-Governor or Captain of the Isle of Man, and, like his ancestors, he was for many years, a judger and forester of Macclesfield. As a magistrate and deputy lieutenant he presided at the Wirral and probably other Weaponshows, and he was afterwards High Sheriff of Cheshire. In recognition of which services he received from the hands of his royal mistress, who knew well what "*Palmarum qui meruit ferat*" meant, and was never lavish of her honours, the distinction of knighthood, and six years before the commencement of the sad troubles of Charles's reign he had been called to his rest.

Having said this much on Sir Peter's public character, it only remains for us to take some notice of his private life, to note his tastes and pursuits, and his relations with his family, friends, neighbours, and dependents.

From the testimony of a King-at-arms we know that he early showed a proficiency beyond his years in the art of blazonry and coat armour, and of this taste, which he retained to the end of this life, the escutcheons scattered so profusely through his houses at Bradley and Lyme and in the churches of Winwick and Disley, afford abundant proof. It was not for show merely that he indulged in this taste; for, though he could no more rank heraldry as an exact science then, than we can now, and though he would not like Voltaire have stigmatised it as "the science of fools with long memories," he yet found it a great help in his study of genealogy and family history.

Of his taste for letters he gave many proofs. He added more books to the library at Lyme, patronised Pilkington's *Madrigals* and Robinson's *Golden Mirror*, and corresponded among many other persons of rank and station or repute with the Duke of Buckingham, one or more of the Earls of Derby, John Bradshawe, the future judge of the high court of justice, and Henry Lawes, the musician, of whom we shall hear more. He also wrote the scholarly Latin epitaph on Henry Sumner, "preacher of the word of God," whom he calls his friend. In their knowledge of the classics the gentry of his time would have shamed Lord Eldon, who when he was Chancellor of the University of Oxford had to borrow his brother Lord Stowell's pen to write his answer to a Latin address.

But loving letters, Sir Peter loved music also. Henry Lawes, as we have stated, corresponded with him, and from some of his letters it is clear that he had also visited Lyme and prepared the music for some performance that had been or was to be got up there. When "Comus" was first performed Lawes not only prepared the music, but performed in it the part of the attendant spirit; and what composer would not be proud of this allusion which its author Milton makes to him in that character:-

Thyrsis, whose artful strains' have oft delayed
The huddling brook to hear his madrigal,
And sweetened every musk rose of the dale.

Or that still more exquisite thirteenth sonnet, which is dedicated to him by the same great author. Music must have been hereditary in the Lawes' family, for Henry had a brother William, who was almost his equal as a musician, and for whom, when he died fighting for the King during the siege of Chester in 1645, His Majesty himself went into mourning.

Sir Peter showed his taste for painting by having portraits taken of himself and both his wives, and by portraits in stained glass which he placed in the windows of Disley church. He considered portrait painting as the precursor of historic art in England.

By building the entrance gateway at Lyme in the style introduced by Inigo Jones, he showed that he appreciated architecture and had an eye for beauty. [The entrance is not in true classical style, which requires columns to be in pairs and predates Jones. Ed.] When this work was finished, he removed from Bradley to Lyme, a circumstance to which his daughter-in-law, Lettice Legh, alludes in her letter to the deputy-lieutenants. His grandfather, who patronised the drama, quitted the scene just as the first rays of its greatest luminary were reddening the horizon, and Shakespeare, who was to gladden all time, was entering upon his career. Until then no dramas had been placed before the audiences at Lyme but plays, which are now forgotten; Sir Peter, however, living in the bard's meridian day, was able to present before them those which will live forever; unlike other surprises which die away, these dramas, though they came suddenly, are destined to immortal youth. How rapidly and how far they spread appears from this incident. *Richard II*, which was first printed in 1597, and *Hamlet*, which was first printed in 1603, were both enacted in 1617 by the officers of the king's ships lying off Sierra Leone¹⁶² whither they had been conveying emigrants and convicts. Hawkins, who had employed himself less innocently in kidnapping the negroes on that coast, fell into trouble by it. If Sir Peter ever indulged his taste by visiting the Globe theatre while he was in London, he may have seen some of the plays performed there and perhaps even have seen their author acting in them.

Though he lived generously and hospitably Sir Peter managed his estate so well that after surrounding his park with a wall, building part of Lyme, restoring Bradley and the church at Disley, building the school at Winwick and completing the purchase of Bruche, he left his estate unimpaired at his decease.

The hall at Lyme was a little Court, frequented by the best company. Among Sir Peter's guests he had the Earl of Derby, the Earl of Bridgewater, his sons, the Viscount Brackley and the Honourable Thomas Egerton, and his daughter, the Honourable Alice Egerton, and Henry Lawes, the last four of whom had taken parts in the Masque of *Comus* when it was performed before the Earl of Bridgewater at Ludlow.

Sir Peter manifested his religion by his works, and the inscription on the Bradley roof-tree may remind us of the words of Joshua, "As for me and my house we will serve the Lord." The schoolhouse at Winwick was an outcome of his zeal for God's glory, and the restoration of the church at Disley proceeded from the same feeling as that which led Haggai to denounce all such as left God's house to lie waste while they continued dwelling in ceiled houses themselves.

Sir Peter, in selecting both his wives, chose them wisely and well. With dame Margaret, his first wife, a lady of good birth, by whom he had a large family and whom he lost only too soon, he lived very happily. Dame Dorothy, his second wife, a lady of equal birth and as great prudence, had the art to win the affection and respect of his children, which was alike honourable to her and them. Several of the children kept up a correspondence with her, and to all of them who survived her except Piers she left legacies in her will. [Piers died before his step-mother, Dame Dorothy. Ed.]

Over his children, whom he loved affectionately, Sir Peter exercised a parental care. He provided for them masters on whom he could rely, and when at a proper age the young men went to the university, he found them tutors and corresponded with them on their progress.

¹⁶² *Notes and Queries*, 1863.

Ever since Bolingbroke rose in rebellion against Richard II when Piers Legh, the founder of Lyme, and Sir Robert Legh, head of the parent house of Adlington, espoused different sides, and while the former laid down his life for his loyalty, the latter was pensioned and rewarded by the usurper; there had been a coolness between the two houses, who, though their estates adjoined, had never intermarried or had any intercourse together. But the character of Sir Peter seems to have made an impression on the head of the parent house, who by his will about this time left him a legacy as a makepeace, which if it did not wholly close at least lessened or reduced the old standing sore.

The portrait which hangs over the mantelpiece at Lyme, and which has been said to be that of the founder of the family, is most probably that of the last Sir Peter. It was he who finished, if he did not wholly build, the house; and it was easy to transform his portrait as its builder into the portrait of the founder of the family, in whose days portrait painting was an art almost unknown in England, and no painter could then have produced such a portrait as this.

CHAPTER 12

Piers X, c. 1589-1624

PIERS LEGH, of Lyme, Sir Peter Legh's eldest son, born about the year 1589, was placed in or before 1611 at Magdalene College, Cambridge, and in that year he wrote from thence an affectionate letter to his brother Francis, then at Brasenose College, Oxford, informing him that he had sent him a greyhound, and that "according to his promise" he would send his brother Peter a sword. From Cambridge on the 21st November 1615, he also wrote a handsome letter to Dame Dorothy Legh, his stepmother, congratulating her very cordially upon her recent marriage with his father, and full of good wishes for her happiness. He was still at Cambridge when his father wrote to his steward to fetch him home, saying that he was "enforced to do so for cause," but what the cause was we have not been able to ascertain. About the year 1620, he married, it is believed, without his father's knowledge, Ann Savile, a daughter of Sir John Savile, of Howley, Lord Savile of Pontefract, in the county of York, who was knight of the shire for that county.¹⁶³ Of this Sir John, we are told that having been a powerful member and speaker in the House of Commons and also a very zealous opponent of the Court, he was made by King James I the controller of his household, a privy councillor, and soon after raised to the peerage as Baron Savile. Upon which event the historian remarks that it was memorable "as being the first instance perhaps in the whole history of England of any King's advancing a man on account of Parliamentary interest and of opposition to his measures." However irregular this practice was, it will be regarded, says the historian, by political reasoners as one of the earliest and most infallible symptoms of a regular established liberty.¹⁶⁴

The great difference between the political views of the two houses of Lyme and Howley was very likely the reason which occasioned Piers Legh to marry Ann Savile, a lady in every way his equal in rank, without waiting for his father's consent, or perhaps without even first apprising him of his intention to marry at all. It was, however, one of the unhappy consequences of this marriage, that it caused a coolness between the father and the son, and

¹⁶³ Thoresby's *Ducatus*, p. 150

¹⁶⁴ Hume's *History of England*, VI, 117.

put a stop to much intercourse between them ever after. Dame Dorothy Legh, who remembers several of Sir Peter's children by legacies in her will, leaves none to Piers, from which we may infer that even after her husband's decease she continued to entertain and respect his feeling of displeasure towards his son. [Piers was already dead when she died. Ed.]

John Bradshaw, his father's former correspondent, who was now a flourishing lawyer, on 13th April 1636, wrote Mr. Piers Legh a letter from Chester in which, after desiring his compliments to the house of Lyme in general, he says: "Upon Saturday next, in the afternoon, a great cause stands referred to the Earl of Derby (Earl William) and the judges between the company of brewers (for whom I am) and the houses and inns of the city. On Easter Sunday (17th April) after evening prayer, I shall post to Warrington and attend you the next morn."¹⁶⁵ The conclusion of this letter leads us to suppose either that Mr. Piers Legh was then staying at Bruche or that Bradshaw's correspondent was Mr. Legh's youngest brother Peter, who is thought to have been then residing there.

Before his father's death Piers may have resided at Bradley, but afterwards he probably removed to Lyme, where it would seem he was living on 8th February, 1639, when Dame Dorothy Legh made her will and left a legacy to "little Peter Legh, son of Mr. Peter Legh, of Lyme." At a later period, he had a house at Blackley, unless the house there, which is mentioned as his home in his son's will, was not his but only his son's. It would seem more natural as the heir of his father that he should have taken up his residence at Lyme. Mr. Piers Legh must have been living on the 1st Feb., 1642, the date of his son's will, in which he is mentioned, and on 24th September following, when the royal troops, under Lord Strange, marched from Warrington to Manchester, Mr. Legh was with them.¹⁶⁶ This being the last time that we hear of him, it is probable that he lost his life not long after in those troublesome times; but as no register of his burial has been found either at Winwick, the family burial place, or at Disley, where they occasionally buried, he may have found an unknown grave at some place where he lost his life at a distance from home. A good portrait of him, painted doubtless at his father's request before their estrangement, is preserved at Lyme. His wife, who, as it would seem in her husband's life time had obtained from the court of wards and liveries a grant of the wardship of the family estates during her son's minority, was charged after his decease with letting the hall at Bradley fall into decay. She survived both her husband and her son, and on the death of the latter she lost all claim upon the estates.

[The National Trust Lyme Park booklet states that on Piers X's death in 1624, his infant son, Peter XI or little Peter (1621-42) was taken from his mother and brought up at Lyme, to which he succeeded in 1636 on the death of his grandfather Peter IX. Earwaker in his *History of East Cheshire*, mentions a decree in the Court of Wards and Livery of 22 November 1624 in which it is stated that Piers X had already died while still in his father's displeasure. It was requested that Peter XI be taken into the wardship of his grandfather but the King granted wardship to Sir Richard Molyneux, Sir Charles Gerard, Peter Daniel and Thomas Legh at such price and consideration to be paid to his majesty as they and the Court should decide. Ed.]

The children of Piers Legh and Anne his wife were:—(1) Peter Legh, born about 1620. (2) Elizabeth, who married Richard Standish, Esq., of Duxbury.¹⁶⁷ She and each of her sisters

¹⁶⁵ *Historical Comm.* 3, report 269

¹⁶⁶ Oldmixon's *History of England*, II. 209

¹⁶⁷ *History of Lancashire* III. 519

are remembered and have a legacy in her brother's will. (3) Frances married first Major Vavasour, of Weston, in the county of York; probably William Vavasour,¹⁶⁸ who was Major in the regiment of horse under his brother Col. Sir Walter Vavasour, and secondly Mr. Robert Parsons. (4) Margaret, who married Mr. Braithwaite, a gentleman in the profession of the law at Ambleside, in Westmoreland, who is mentioned in the will of Peter Legh, his wife's nephew.

CHAPTER 13

Piers XI or Little Peter, 1623-42

PETER LEGH, the son of Piers Legh by his wife Ann Savile, was born about the year 1620. On the death of his grandfather he succeeded to the reversion of the family inheritance expectant on his father's decease, and he attended in that character, with Mr. Woodcock, his tutor, at his grandfather's funeral. Dame Dorothy Legh, by her will dated 8th February, 1639, leaves him a legacy distinguishing him in these terms:- "To little Peter Legh (sonne of Mr. Peter Legh of Lime), five pounds." At the proper age he was entered at Oriel College, Oxford, and, like several of his predecessors, he was entered also about the same time at one of the Inns at Court. He had, however, quitted both these places of education before 1640, to take upon him those Parliamentary honours, which his father had never sought.

On the 3rd Nov. in that year the ominous day when the Long Parliament met, Mr. Legh and his colleague William Ashurst, Esquire, who had been elected to sit for the borough of Newton, took their seats, but, alas, Mr. Legh was not long to enjoy his senatorial honours, for in "The perfect Diurnal of Passages in Parliament" from 24 Jan. to 30 Jan. 1641-2, under Friday 28 Jan, we find this notice: "This evening Sir Peter Lee, a member of the House of Commons, was hurt dangerously in a duell by one Master Mansfield." It was not Sir Peter, however, but Mr. Legh, who had this misfortune, which is alluded to also by Lord Herbert of Cherbury, who calls Mr. Legh's antagonist his nephew the son of Sir John Browne, and that lord in his autobiography seems to plume himself upon his nephew's prowess in having fought and mortally wounded in combat his antagonist. He says: his nephew had the fortune to kill one Lee of a great family in Lancashire."¹⁶⁹ We do not know what caused this encounter, but it was very possibly one of those foolish quarrels, too common at all times, but especially common among the gallants or drawcansirs of that age.

But whatever the cause, we read the sad sequel in this entry in the Warrington parish register of 1642, "Feb. 14th (Buried). Mr. Peter Leigh, slain at London, and buried at Winwick." After he was wounded, he calmly made his will, a document which as it is touching and has a melancholy interest we give verbatim.

28 Jan. 1641.—Peter Legh, esqr., being dangerouslie wounded maketh his desiers and requests as followeth, viz. The barron of Kinderton to take the moneyes in his trunk which is about 70 li. Desired him to speake to his unckle Frauncis to be good to his mother and sisters. Sir Willm Gerrarde to have his dunnage.

1 Feb. 1641.—He desireth his unkle Frauncis over and above his owne bountie to his sistars, that he will for his sake give them c li. a peece. To his man Ralph Arnefielde

¹⁶⁸ J Peacock's *Army Lists of the Cavaliers*, p, 13.

¹⁶⁹ Lord Herbert's *Life of himself*, page 16.

the xiiij li he oweth him to be made upe xl li. The boy here with him, Myles Leighe v li., his footboy at Blackley v li., and every servant at Blakley x s. a peece. Raphe Swindells x li. He giveth his greye nage he had of Mr. Brathwates to Captain Broughton. His sword at his lodging in towne to Mr. Carrel Mulineux and praieth God he may make better use of it than he hath done, and his case of pistoles. His watche to his aunt Lettice Leigh. His cloathes to his three servants, the boy at Blakeley, Ralphe Arnfield, and Myles Leighe. Desireth his father to see his bodie buried at Winwicke, and Mr. Jones, who hath beene with him at his sickness, to preach at his funerall. To his brother Tom his sword at Blakeley, and a gray nage he bought of the barron. To his father his white mare and best saddle. Praieth his unkele Frauncis to consider the debts he oweth Sir Wm. Gerrarde and all the debts he oweth to others. To his friend Mr. Roger Moston his caen. To his unkle Frauncis the sword that was his grandfather's, his great scale ringe, and his greate fowlinge piece. Desireth his unkle to give his mother C li. a year during her life if she give the porcon in money she hath to his sisters, which if she otherwaies dispose of then C li. in money.

Witnesses hereof PETER LEGH, I say my hand

RAPHE ASSHETON, K., JOHN JONES,
ROGER MOSTYN, THO MUNCKAS, 1641.

[This will gives two apparent anomalies. First it mentions a brother, Tom, not mentioned in the previous chapter as a son of Peter X. If he had existed, he would be the next in line to succeed but the estate went to Peter X's brother, Francis. Secondly it mentions the testator's father as if still alive when there has already been the documentary evidence of his death as described earlier. Lady Newton in her history of the family quotes the same will and notes that Tom must be a brother-in-law as he has no brother. For the word "father" she says in a footnote, "presumably godfather". Ed.]

It would appear from this will, in which he expressly mentions his brother, that the father was then living at Blackley, and that the young heir apparent had also his home there. But the father must have died very soon after, and when he died the inheritance of Lyme, which had hitherto gone in a direct line of descent, always to or through the eldest son, was broken for the first time, as Peter Legh, who perhaps was hardly of age, for the age of members of Parliament was then not often enquired into, died unmarried, and the inheritance passed to his next brother. [It passed to his uncle Francis the next brother of his father. Ed] On the great staircase at Lyme there is a portrait of a beautiful boy with the date 1626, which it is believed must be meant for this Peter.

CHAPTER 14

Francis Legh, 1590-1643

FRANCIS LEGH, the second son of Sir Peter Legh [Peter IXth, Ed.], on the death of his father and the failure of issue of his nephew Peter Legh, succeeded to the family estates. In 1609 his father placed him at Brasenose College, Oxford, where in a short time he grew so tall in stature that fears beginning to be entertained for his health, his father fetched him home, where he remained until his health was re-established, and then returned to the University, to which he seems to have been very partial. On the 16th March 1636, he purchased the estate

of Blackley. When his nephew Peter, after his most melancholy and fatal wound, made his will *in articulo mortis* on the 1st Feb. 1642, he remembers very affectionately his uncle Francis, and says he confides in him to discharge his last wishes. On the 12th April 1642, Mr. Legh executed a trust deed respecting Bruche. On the 11th June, 18 Car. I, 1642, he was appointed by the King one of his commissioners of array, a kind of deputy lieutenant for Lancashire.¹⁷⁰ These officers or commissioners of array are to be met with very early in our history. Edward III, in the first year of his reign, issued a commission of this kind to John de Occlesthorne and John de Fenton to array the men of the wapentake of Barkeston, to repel the Scots. And so Charles I, on the breaking out of the civil war, issued similar commissions, which called upon the receivers to see that the men of the district were mustered and properly armed and accoutred. Francis Legh married Ann, the daughter and heir of Sir Edward Fenner of Hampton, formerly one of the judges of the King's Bench, and died without issue on the 2nd Feb. 1643, having survived both his eldest brother Piers and his nephew Peter, the son of Piers; and also his brother Thomas, who died in 1639; as well as his youngest brother Peter, whose will was proved at Chester on 24th March 1642. The death of so many persons of the same family in the short space of about two years, all of them except one, who was just of age, being persons in the prime of life, and not the victims of any infectious distemper, is a circumstance almost unparalleled in any family history. It is thought that Mrs. Legh survived her husband.

In those days, when newspapers were as yet only in embryo, and though about to be born, had not actually struggled into existence, it was customary for the gentry to employ some person to write them a daily or weekly account of public events in and about London and the Court; it would seem as if Mr. Legh at this time had engaged as his correspondent no less a person than the celebrated herald Elias Ashmole, from whom he received a letter dated at Clement's Inn on the 24th June 1642, addressed to him as Mr. Francis Legh, at Mr. Holloway's, Oxford, in which, under the head of parliamentary intelligence, he says:—

“Yesterday's debate was on the King's answer to the 19 propositions.” What was the nature of these propositions we may see from the King's remarks upon them:—“Should I grant these propositions,” the King said, “I may be waited on bareheaded: I may have my hand kissed; the title of Majesty may be continued to me and the King's authority signified by both houses may still be the style of your commands; I may have swords and maces carried before me, and please myself with the sight of a crown and sceptre (though even these twigs would not long flourish when the stock upon which they grew was dead). But as to true and real power, I should remain but the outside, but the picture, but the sign of a King.”¹⁷¹

Chapter 15

Richard Legh, 1634-1687

RICHARD LEGH, of Lyme, esquire, the first baron of Newton of his name, who succeeded to the Lyme estate on the 2nd February 1643, when his uncle Francis died, was born on 7th May 1634, and was the eldest son of the Reverend Thomas Legh, D.D., rector of Sefton and Walton, and of Lettice, his wife, the daughter and co-heir of Sir George Calveley, of Lea,

¹⁷⁰ *Farrington Papers*, Chetham Society 77

¹⁷¹ Hume's *History of England*, VI. 492.

baronet, a lineal descendant of that Sir Hugh Calveley, the Cheshire knight, who so distinguished himself at the battle of Auray, fought in 1364, and of Navarete, fought in 1367.

By Dr. Legh's alliance with a daughter of this house "the quarterings of the Cheshire hero were appropriately united to the shield which had been borne at Agincourt and was graced with honorary trophies from Crécy."¹⁷² Dr. Legh, who in 1610 was at Brasenose College, Oxford, took orders about 22nd August 1624, when he preached his first sermon at Disley, and was presented to the Rectory at Sefton, though the list of the rectors of that place given in the History of Lancashire leaves it uncertain both when he received and when he voided the living. In 1629 he was again residing in Oxford, probably in preparation for passing the necessary exercises for his doctor's degree; and on 21st February 1630, he was presented by his father to the living of Walton on the Hill, near Liverpool. In 1639 his stepmother, Dorothy Legh, left him a legacy by her will, and soon after that time he died. A likeness of him is preserved in several portraits painted of him which are kept at Lyme. Neither of his parents was spared to see their son Richard, the young heir of Lyme, come of age, for his mother only survived her husband until 1648, when she also was called to her rest, and was buried in the Lyme chancel of Macclesfield Church, where this epitaph records the event:-

P. M. S.

D'nae Letticiae Legh de Lyme d'ni Georgii
Calveley, de Lee baronetti et uxoris charissimae
Rev'di Thomae Legh S. S. T. P. ecclesi. parochi. de
Walton et Sephton in agro Lancast'i rectoris vigilantiss'i
Et d'ni Petri Legh de Lyme, equitis aurati filii natu
Tertii. Obiit Oct. XIV, anno salutis MDCXLVIII.

Besides Richard, their eldest son, Dr. and Lettice Legh left a son Thomas, of whom a portrait which is expressly assigned to him at Lyme, represents him wearing a sort of military buff coat, as if he had been a soldier. They had also four daughters: (1) Francisca Posthuma, who married Sir Richard Brooke, Baronet; (2) Margaret, who married Sir John Arden, knight, at Disley, 7th February 1644; and (3 and 4) Lettice and Dorothy, who died unmarried.

The loss of both his parents at so early an age was a great misfortune to Mr. Legh, the young heir of Lyme; yet there are always some alleviating circumstances in the greatest misfortunes. His mother had died but a few months before the execution of Charles I, an event which for a time was followed by great political trouble and disturbance, in which neither person nor property was as safe as in quieter times, more especially for persons on either side who were known or suspected to have strong political feelings. It was fortunate for Mr. Legh that while a civil war continued raging in the country for several years after he came to the estate, he escaped through being a minor, from being called upon to render either military or other personal service.

No one could then put to one so young Ancient Pistol's threatening demand:-

Under which King, Bezonian? speak or die.

¹⁷² Froissart, I. 332, 369, and *History of Cheshire*

Hostile armies marched and re-marched through the country, not sparing Mr. Legh's estates; but he escaped being challenged as either a malignant or a round-head or under any other offensive party name. It was fortunate for him that during a few of those earlier years his good mother, the brave daughter of a brave ancestry, was spared to stand by him to protect him from undue taxation and to defend his rights. His rents, too, which were accumulating during this period, formed a fund which afterwards proved of use when he was able to write himself MAN.

His uncle Francis, not long before his death, and probably in anticipation of that sad event, had by good and sufficient assurances conveyed Lyme and all his other estates to trustees upon certain uses and trusts, one of which was to apply the yearly sum of sixty pounds to the maintenance and education of Mr. Legh, the heir, during his minority, and subject thereto to stand possessed of the whole or the greater part of the estates for his nephew, Richard, his heirs and assigns forever. It was fortunate also for Mr. Legh that in choosing his trustees his uncle had made a wise selection. The Reverend Charles Harle, rector of Winwick, afterwards prolocutor of the assembly of divines at Westminster, who was the chief trustee, was a man of influence with the then ruling powers, and was able and probably equally willing to throw his powerful shield over his young ward in a time of need. A civil war has a maw so wide and so devouring that it was hardly likely the estate of Lyme could wholly escape it. Within a year after his uncle's death the estate was surcharged to find an extra man and horse for the war, but his vigilant mother opposed it with great spirit and resolution, and by a remonstrance addressed to the deputy lieutenants she showed that the surcharge had been already answered by the estate in another place. Although the motto of tax officials is but too often *nulla vestigia retrorsum*, the deputy lieutenants either could not resist her proofs, or the Scripture parable of the widow's importunity found a fresh illustration in her case, for the surcharge was given up wholly in consequence of Mrs. Legh's appeal.

There were, however, other claims made upon the estate which were not so easily remitted. From the steward's accounts it is evident that towards the assessment for maintaining soldiers in the year 1645 the Legh estates paid no less than the sum of £19 0s. 7½ d. monthly, that is for Warrington £3 19s. 9d.; Haydock, £10 1s. 4½ d.; Burtonwood, £4 7s. 6d.; and Parr, 12s. Nor was this all, for on December 11th, 1645, there occurs in the books this notable entry:- "Received £5 14s. by Hill for the Rough Park in Haydock, for which the tenants in 1644 agreed to pay £10, but the Prince and his army plundered their cattle, and nothing was made of the ground, and therefore an agreement was made with them to pay £5 14s. and no more than that sum could be got." And again, on 17th June 1646, the steward writes:-

"The towne of Hoole hath been greatly impoverished, and until Lathom House was delivered I could not with safetie send thither, so that the pooreness of the people, neglect of calling upon them for their rents, together with these times of libertie and distraction, rendered them of that place incredibly forgetful, and many of them would denie to pay anie rent. And since Lathom was delivered to the Parliament I have sent there three tymes and appointed Henry Hunt to gather the rents, or at least demand the receipts, &c."

But afterwards

When nobles and knights so proud of late
Must fine for freedom and estate.

Mr. Legh's minority again stood him in good stead, and saved him from the fines and sequestrations which fell upon many of his neighbours and were so freely levied. But in spite of the political distractions of the time, the spirit of trade was not dead in Warrington, where Mr. Legh had a considerable estate; and about the year 1649 a new business, the manufacture of pins, was introduced into the place, probably from Gloucester, where it was first invented.

Queen Catherine Howard deserves to be remembered as a public benefactor in being the first great patron to bring pins into notice, and if she had the homage of all who now make use of that useful article which won her patronage no saint would have more worshippers. Pins long boasted of the place of their origin, and even until recent times those manufactured at Warrington were labelled and sold as made at Gloucester. But their manufacture, which long flourished at Warrington, has now departed. An old trade, however, is like the fabled Phoenix, which in dying produces its successor, for wire drawing, which was a necessary part of pin making, was turned when that trade ceased into the manufacture of brass, copper, iron and steel wire, on a far more extensive scale, supplying telegraphs to girdle the world and carry swifter messages than Ariel ever did, and meeting other great demands until the metal trade has become one of the staples of Warrington.

In 1654, when the Parish Church of Grappenhall was being repewed, Mr. Legh, in right of his lands there, took care to secure himself a pew, by placing his name upon it, where until lately it remained.

In the next year, when Mr. Legh came of age, on the 7th May, he might reasonably congratulate himself on the good Providence which had conducted him to manhood unscathed by many of those troubles and losses which very many of his friends and neighbours had suffered.

Although we do not know where Mr. Legh received his early education, we may be sure that under such a mother as his and a trustee such as Mr. Herle, it would neither be neglected nor left incomplete. During his school days, Winwick had for its schoolmaster Mr. Gorse, to whom belongs the high honour of educating and preparing for the University that great and good man John Howe, Cromwell's chaplain, and the school, which was in Mr. Legh's patronage, having become famous, it seems not very improbable that for a time he might be placed in it where he would be under Mr. Herle's eye. From the school he was probably sent to Oxford, either to Brasenose, his father's college, or to Exeter, which was Mr. Herle's. At all events, he showed by his future career that his education had not been left incomplete. [Lady Newton reports that he went to Cambridge and that explains why he married Elizabeth Chichely from Wimpole Hall, which lies just to the south.]

In the following year, 1656, he was elected member of Parliament for the county of Chester, having the celebrated Sir George Booth, baronet, afterwards Lord Delamere, for his colleague. This Parliament differed widely from its predecessor, the Parliament of 1654, which having sat five months without making a single "aye" or "no" was rightly called "The Still Parliament," while this, which from its being a Parliament of selection came to be called "a rag of a house," none of those elected being allowed to enter it but such only as were approved of by the Protector's Council. In this Parliament it was proposed to make Cromwell King; but on this question Mr. Legh probably escaped from voting, for on the call of the House on the 31st of December, 1656, before which time the proposal had not come on, he was reported to be gone into the country "dangerously sick. He had probably heard Dr. Owen preach the opening sermon of the session in Westminster Abbey, and he probably

heard also the Protector afterwards give his reasons for calling the Parliament. As a young member. Mr. Legh's voice would be seldom heard in the House, and he very likely was content to give a silent but conscientious vote on the questions proposed, and which he understood. Before the end of the Parliament he probably returned in time to see Cromwell dissolve the House, and hear him in melancholy tones utter these farewell words, "I do dissolve this Parliament, and God judge between you and me," after which the chronicler adds with some irreverence "the mace was presently clapped under a cloak, the Speaker withdrew, and *exit Parliamentum*"¹⁷³

In 1658, Mr. Peter Legh, of Winkle Grange, one of the Ridge family, and a kinsman of Mr. Legh's (who had once been brought before Cromwell with that Dr. Hewitt, who was executed on the 8th June in this year for attempting to restore the King), was apprehended for disloyal words spoken of the Protector after his death. We do not know how the case ended, but if he was brought before Mr. Legh, as the nearest magistrate, to be dealt with, Mr. Legh must have felt himself in a delicate and disagreeable position.¹⁷⁴ His ancestor, Sir Peter Legh, when Randolph Norbury was brought before him charged with speaking "very heinous words" against the Queen's favourite, the Earl of Leicester, had had no enviable office considering the general belief in the reports spread about the Earl; but, though the Earl was a great man, the prisoner was not the justice's kinsman. On each occasion both the accused had probably said only what they honestly thought.

In 1659, when Richard Cromwell, the new Protector, called his first and only Parliament, Mr. Legh was again elected one of the members for the county of Chester, John Bradshawe, the President of the High Court of Justice, which sat on the King's trial, being his colleague. Bradshawe owed many obligations to the House of Lyme, and the two members probably attended on the 27th of January to hear the new Protector's speech on the opening of his Parliament. But the story of what took place at the election of the two members for Cheshire to this Parliament is so singular that it deserves to be told. At the nomination, three candidates were proposed for the two seats, Mr. Legh, Mr. Bradshawe, the president, and Col. Brooke, who had been an influential member of the Long as well as of the late Parliament. After the poll had been opened and had continued for five days at Chester, where Mr. Legh's seat was made secure and the contest between the two other candidates continued, the Sheriff adjourned the poll to Congleton, where Bradshawe, who was an officer of the corporation, had many friends, and there he continued it until Mr. Bradshawe had a majority over his opponent, when he returned him and Mr. Legh as the two members elected. Against this return Colonel Brooke petitioned, and upon the petition coming on for hearing before a Committee of Privileges in the Star Chamber, 14th April 1659, where it was argued that the Sheriff's removal of the poll to a remote place, after it had continued five days at Chester, was void, for that if he had such a power he might have removed the poll from place to place until he had gathered up a majority for the person whom he had the most mind to elect. After hearing the case the Committee were unanimous in declaring Mr. Bradshawe's election void, but on the report being brought up, the House, by 17 votes to 10, reversed the decision of the Committee.¹⁷⁵ They certainly ought to have upheld the Committee's decision, but party feeling prevailed over justice, and the House felt that they could not afford to part with Mr. Bradshawe. On the 7th May following, however, the Rump Parliament re-assembled, and Colonel Brooke, who had been one of its members, resumed his old place in the House.

¹⁷³ Burton's *Cromwellian Diary*, II. 464

¹⁷⁴ Dugdale's *Troubles*, 456.

¹⁷⁵ Dugdale's *Troubles*, iv. 430.

If Mr. Legh was at the opening of the Session he had returned to Lyme before the 19th February following, for a news letter now there, which is dated from London on that day, gave him this summary of the public news, which we give as a specimen of such a letter:—

“It was agreed on all hands that the House should be recruited either by the old secluded members, if it came to a new election, and that the old members be not shut out by any previous vote, 'tis supposed in most places that they will be pitched on, and to that purpose encouragement hath been given by some in power to many of the old members to use their interests; if they go a new way to work then many of the boroughs will be deprived of their ancient rights. Affairs here are in a hopeful state. There is news that the Court of Aldermen have taken their oaths that the Anabaptists endeavoured to poison General Monck and his army. He stays in the country, where he and his soldiers are nobly treated. On Saturday night the town made some thousand bonfires to congratulate the accord between the soldiers and the City.”

Two days later another news letter from the same writer announced the entrance into the House of Commons of the old secluded members, and amongst them “Mr. Prynn, with a basket-hilted sword.”¹⁷⁶ It announced also that Monk was to be general, and Lawson to be Admiral.

The allusion to Mr. Prynn calls up vividly before us that stout old member marching into the house armed. If any brother member had said to him, “Come you in peace or come you for war?” his answer might have been “*in utrum que paratus*” [i.e. “prepared for both, Ed.]

On the 22nd April 1659, when the second Protector dissolved his first and last Parliament, he waived the formality of a speech, and dissolved it by commission. After which the members returned to their homes, and the Protector laying down the sceptre which was too heavy for his hand, retired into a private station, where he lived long with universal respect, adorning by his quiet virtues the character of a country gentleman. “He withdrew” (says Bishop Burnet, his contemporary) “and became a private man, and as he had done no hurt to anybody, so nobody ever did hurt to him, a rare instance of the instability of human greatness and the security of innocence.”

Richard, as the name of an English Ruler, has never been fortunate. The Saxon King of that name died far from home on a pilgrimage to a foreign land. Richard Coeur de Lion died ingloriously by an arrow shot. Richard of Bordeaux met his death by violence. Richard of York was killed at Wakefield. Richard III lost his crown and his life at Bosworth. And now Richard Cromwell, Queen Richard as he has been called, surrendered the sceptre, after grasping it, and finding it too great for him to hold.

After Richard had dissolved his Parliament the remnant of the Long (or as it was called the Rump) Parliament re-assembled, but there being then no real ruling power, the Royalists, whom many of the Presbyterians had now joined, took heart of hope, and again held up their heads.

Sir George Booth, baronet, an active leader and a man of reputation with his party, after issuing a proclamation which called for a free Parliament as the only remedy for the national grievances, raised a body of troops which were met and dispersed by Lambert in a battle

¹⁷⁶ Appendix to 3rd Rep. Historical Com., p. 269.

fought at Winnington, near Northwich, on the 19th August 1659. But the rising, though unsuccessful, was not without its results in raising still higher the hopes of the royalists by making them conscious of their numbers. Though Mr. Legh is believed to have favoured the rising, he was not with the host when it was encountered and routed by Lambert at Winnington. But his kinsman, Peter Legh, of Bruche, "Mr. Legh," as he is called by the historians, was undoubtedly in the battle, and was one of those who were made prisoners and sent to Chester Castle.¹⁷⁷

On the 1st Jan. 1660, Mr. Legh married Elizabeth, daughter of Sir Thomas Chicheley, of Wimpole, in the county of Cambridge, Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, and Master of the Ordnance, and the good fruits of his long minority appeared in his purchasing the same year from Sir Thomas Fleetwood the barony of Newton-in-Makerfield of which his Haydock property had always been held as a mesne manor. In Newton, which was at that time a borough sending two members to Parliament under a charter of Queen Elizabeth, Mr. Legh had now so large a territorial interest that it could hardly fail to recommend him to the electors as fit to represent them in Parliament if he should seek such an honour; and accordingly in the Convention Parliament which was called upon the King's restoration he was elected one of the members for the borough. Although possessing the parliamentary privilege, Newton had never been incorporated or had any corporate seal; but Mr. Legh supplied this defect by giving the borough as its arms his own crest, "Out of a ducal coronet a ram's head, holding an elm sprig in its mouth."

It is presumed that he was present at the King's coronation, and he was certainly in favour at Court, for in a letter at Lyme there is express mention of there being an intention to make him a Knight of the Bath, meaning the intended Order of the Royal Oak.¹⁷⁸

On the 20th Sept. 1662, Charles, Earl of Derby, and William, Lord Brereton, the joint lord-lieutenants, appointed him a deputy lieutenant of Cheshire;¹⁷⁹ and on the 26th April following, the same office in Lancashire was by his Majesty's command conferred upon him by the Earl of Bridgewater, then lord-lieutenant of that county.

In Feb. 1676, Sir Thomas Chicheley, who corresponded with Mr. Legh, informed him that he was going to Toulon to examine the French Fleet, and added, very significantly, that he hoped the Parliament at home would not meanwhile neglect our own shores.

Sir Thomas, the Master of the Ordnance and Contrallor of the Navy, was probably in the same department as Pepys, whose gossiping diary would perhaps have been no loss to the world had it slept undeciphered in the short hand in which it was written.

It was Mr. Legh's province as Baron of Newton to appoint a gentleman to act as returning officer at the election of members of Parliament for the borough; and by a formal instrument dated 19th December 1677, he nominated his brother Thomas Legh to that office, and also to be his steward of the Manor and Court of Newton-in-Makerfield.

In the year 1678, Mr. Legh advanced a claim to be owner of one third of the Manor of Warrington, and in stating his case he alleged that one of the three constables was always

¹⁷⁷ Hume's *History of England*, VII. 301.

¹⁷⁸ Nicholas Bowden's letter at Lyme.

¹⁷⁹ Arley deeds, B. xvi., No. 1.

chosen from his tenants, and also that they always formed one third part of the leet jury; but the case having been stated for counsel's opinion upon the facts, the result was unfavourable to Mr. Legh, who it was decided was entitled to no such one third part of the manor. Mr. Legh, had a taste for the turf, of which he must have been one of the early patrons, for after a race, which probably took place at Newton in 1679, the Earl of Derby, with whom he was on intimate terms, wrote to him from London on the 14th June to say that he was desirous that the plate should be run for again. "The entered," he said, "was as fairly drawn for all sides as could be done; and that he did not desire any advantage, neither would he willingly think others should, but he thought every horse that ran should put in 20s. or more, but he would leave this to Mr. Legh to determine; though he believed it would cause more sport, and the world would be glad to run for something more than the bare plate."¹⁸⁰

In the News Letters received by Mr. Legh at Lyme there are sometimes personal allusions and an occasional attempt at humour. In one from Richard Sterne, dated 3rd Nov. 1680, reporting some proceedings in the House he says:- "Upon Col. Titus moving for leave to bring in a bill to repair the highways, Sir Nicholas Cary said he thirderd the motion because it was to mend the Colonel's way to Tyburn, (then the place of execution;) on which the Colonel replied that he had passed by Tyburn, and he only hoped Sir Nicholas might do so too." And further on in the same letter the writer says:- "I hear that Lady Powys and Lady Abergavenny have withdrawn (that is absconded), upon apprehension that Mrs. Collier, who is to be tried for high treason, will sooner turn (that is, give evidence) than burn" (burning being then the punishment for female traitors). Another letter of 23rd December informs Mr. Legh that the House thanked Dr. Burnet for his poems, but not Dr. Sprat, who spent much of his powder against fanatics.¹⁸¹ At a much later period, when Lord Collingwood heard that some gunpowder he had given the Spaniards to defend themselves had been spent in firing salvoes on a saint's day, he told them he did not mean his powder for saints but for sinners.

At the end of 1679, the Duke of Monmouth, who had been ordered abroad, having returned home, suddenly found himself hailed as the Protestant Duke, and, in opposition to the Duke of York, exalted into a popular idol. His vanity being inflamed, he made in 1681 a sort of partisan progress through Cheshire and some other parts of the country, and took means to ingratiate himself with the people; in which his popular manners well qualified him to succeed. In the following year, when it was expected he would again visit Cheshire, Caryl Lord Molineux, one of his partisans, wrote thus to Mr. Legh:- "At Chester they are in consternation how to treat the Monmouth Duke. You, I hope, are settled in your resolution of entertaining him when he comes to Lyme, which I hear will be very soon." But Mr. Legh, who had no such resolution, and did not receive the Duke on 15th September, was instructed by Sir Leoline Jenkins, one of His Majesty's Secretaries of State, to obtain answers on oath to certain questions which were transmitted to him about the Duke and his progress, upon which Mr. Legh and two of his brother magistrates, on the 20th September, took the depositions of Edward Sherman and Samuel Proudlove upon the subject and forwarded them to Sir Leoline, who shortly afterwards, by command, conveyed to them His Majesty's thanks.¹⁸² Mr. Rosse had been the Duke's tutor, and in a MS. poem at Lyme, one of a multitude of similar productions which appeared in those disturbed times, the ghost of Mr. Rosse, alluding to the story of Phaeton is made thus to address the Duke:-

¹⁸⁰ Appendix to 3rd Report Historic Commission, p. 269

¹⁸¹ Appendix to 3rd Report Historic Commission, p. 269.

¹⁸² Appendix to 3rd Report Historic Commission, p. 269

Both he and you were gloriously bright,
The first and fairest of the sonnes of light;
But when like him you offer'd at the Crown,
Like him your angry father kick'd you down.

In 1683 Mr. Legh found employment for his time, in a good and charitable work at home, by rebuilding at his own expense St. Peter's Church at Newton, and afterwards contributing himself and collecting from others subscriptions for the better endowment of the living.

On the 6th February, 1685, Charles II, having breathed his last, was succeeded by his brother, the Duke of York, who was thereupon proclaimed King by the title of James II. Anxious to secure what support he could for his throne, which he felt to be insecure, the new monarch having first thanked the old deputy-lieutenants for their diligence in the discharge of their office, very soon afterwards set himself to renew their appointments. William, Earl of Derby, having been made lord lieutenant of Cheshire on the 11th June 1685, appointed Mr. Legh to be one of his deputy-lieutenants, and he soon found not only that his office was to be no sinecure, but that it involved the performance of duties which were unpleasant to himself, and likely to give pain to some of his neighbours. Lord Delamere, who was one of these, having fallen under suspicion, a Secretary of State's warrant, which had been issued for his apprehension, was on the 20th of the same month delivered by the Earl of Derby to Captain Needham, with orders to observe Mr. Legh's orders as to its execution. As Lord Delamere was no distant neighbour, and possibly even a friend of his, Mr. Legh would no doubt charge Captain Needham to consult the comfort of his prisoner and show him all the consideration in his power. Lord Delamere was taken, but when he was put upon his trial before the Lords triers, who were the sole judges of the facts, and not the obsequious tools of power ready to be swayed by the arrogance and insolence of Jeffreys, the infamous Chancellor, who on the trial conducted himself as was his wont elsewhere, they unanimously pronounced the accused not guilty, a verdict which by all but the Court sycophants was hailed with joy. Another of the prisoners, Charles Gerard, Lord Brandon, eldest son of the Earl of Macclesfield, who was apprehended on the same charge as Lord Delamere, but who unlike him was found guilty, wrote while under confinement in the Tower, to Mr. Legh and informed him that one Sherman of Gawsworth, doubtless the person of that name whose deposition Mr. Legh had before taken as one of the King's friends, was charged with speaking ill words of His Majesty, and that he (Lord Gerard) had ordered the persons who heard him to attend and swear to it before Mr. Legh.¹⁸³ Sherman was probably a weathercock politician, who changed sides as suited the favouring wind. It appears that Lord Brandon who was evidently one of Mr. Legh's friends, after remaining long in prison, was at length released.¹⁸⁴

He was the same person who in one of King James's Parliaments, sought to be elected for the borough of Lancaster, where he had the interest of most of the common freemen, to vote for him. He was known to be a partisan of Monmouth, and he was opposed on that account by the Mayor and Council and by the country gentlemen, who only succeeded in defeating his return by bringing in their servants and attendants and buying their votes at six for a shilling, which got them the name of the two-penny freemen.¹⁸⁵ The Duke of Monmouth must have had zealous partisans in Lancaster, for the town sergeant there in 1685, having refused when ordered to proclaim him a traitor was sent to prison for it.¹⁸⁶ Which brings to mind the case

¹⁸³ Appendix to 3rd Report Historic Commission, p. 269

¹⁸⁴ Macaulay's *History of England*, II. 36.

¹⁸⁵ Stout's *Autobiography*. 30.

¹⁸⁶ Stout's *Autobiography*. 73

of that Peter MacAlpin, of Edinburgh, who was discharged from being public clock keeper of the city for making the bells play *Over the Water to Charlie*.

Sir John Chicheley, the member for Newton, informed Mr. Legh by a letter from London on 13th June 1685, that the Duke of Monmouth had landed the previous Thursday at 10 p.m., with about 200 gentlemen well armed. That they had taken possession of the town of Lyme, and pitched the Duke's colours on the bowling green. The Duke in his proclamation, declared that he came against Popery and arbitrary power; and that the Duke of Albemarle's page, who the writer says had come from those parts where his master had been for ten days disposing the militia, reported that Monmouth was within two miles of Taunton; "so that," says the writer, "we may hope the two dukes have met and tried their strength." "Taunton," he says, "is one of the most factious towns in England."¹⁸⁷ This is a very different character from that which Macaulay gives of the place who calls it the stronghold of civil and religious freedom during fifty troubled years.¹⁸⁸

As the patron of St. Peter's Church, at Newton, Mr. Legh in 1686 presented to it the Reverend Edward Alanson, M.A., an old friend of Bishop Wilson's, and afterwards Rector of Grappenhall, who was examined as a witness for the defence on the trial of the Jacobite gentlemen at Manchester in 1694.¹⁸⁹

Mr. Legh, at the early age of 53, was called to his rest on the 31st August 1687, and on the 6th of the following month he was buried at Winwick, where the Reverend William Shippen, D.D., rector of Stockport, preached his funeral sermon, which was published at Oxford the next year.

Until the war broke out between King Charles and the Parliament most of the great estates in England were held by military tenures, which made them subject to some or all of these seven fruits or consequences of tenure—namely, aids, relief, primer seisin, wardships, marriage, fines for alienations and escheat, which, however justly they might be called fruits to the receivers, were in their consequences always serious and sometimes almost ruinous to the tenants who had to pay them. From some of these burdens the Lords of Lyme had enjoyed a comparative exemption. They had, it is true, paid aids and reliefs but no heir had been subjected to wardships, or had had his hand put up to sale in marriage. Yet until the war between the King and the Parliament suspended it, an inquisition post mortem had been taken on the death of every tenant to ascertain what lands he held, the terms on which he held them, the relief he had to pay, and who and of what age was his heir. On Mr. Legh's death, however, for the first time in the family history, no such inquisition was taken; nor was it necessary, for on the Restoration an Act of Parliament had passed by which all the above burdensome fruits of tenure were taken away and abolished forever.

There are at Lyme several excellent portraits of Mr. Legh, and also of his wife, who survived him. She was living and proved herself very active in defending her son in 1694, and she was probably also living in 1713. [She died in 1728. Ed.] A very elaborate monument, which still exists, was set up in the family chapel at Winwick to Mr. Legh's memory by his sorrowing wife. Upon it below two handsome marble busts of Mr. and Mrs. Legh are the arms of Legh, of Adlington, i.e., Venables, with a difference impaling, Chicheley and the following inscription:-

¹⁸⁷ *Hist. Com.* 3, Report 270

¹⁸⁸ *History of England*, IV. 541.

¹⁸⁹ *Trial of the eight Jacobite gentlemen at Manchester*, Chetham Society, 94

BEAMONT'S HISTORY OF THE HOUSE OF LYME

Here lyeth the body of Richard Legh, Esqr., of Lime, in Cheshire, who dyed upon ye last day of August in ye year of our Lord 1687, and in the 54th year of his age.

Cruel and senseless death thou dost thyself deceive,
In snatching him thou art more death to them yt live,
Hapless and destitute distracted are they grown.
Lost with their loss for he that was their life is gone,
Pious and brave, just, noble, all that could wonder move,
Softened with honest husband's father's friendly love,
These and all excellences were in him exprest,
Peaceful and sacred then let his loved ashes rest,
Till reinformed with light immortal he shall rise
A welcome glorious ornament of Paradise.

By his good wife Elizabeth, Mr. Legh had a numerous family of sons and daughters:-

(1) Peter, his eldest son and heir. (2) Thomas, born 13th June 1675, who, in right of his wife, Henrietta Fleetwood, became owner of Bank, near Preston, and was M.P. for Newton from 1701 to 1710. In 1702, he voted against the Lords' Amendments for better securing the Protestant succession to the Crown.¹⁹⁰ (3) Anne, died, in 1684, unmarried. (4) Sarah, died in 1680, unmarried. (5) Margaret, married the Rev. Mr. Denny. (6) Richard, born 26th March 1679, married his cousin, Elizabeth Bankes. He was a captain of horse, and died in 1740. His son, Peter, who became fellow of All Souls in right of the Chicheley founder's kin, died about 10th September 1735.¹⁹¹ (7) Calvely, died 28th August 1682, unmarried. (8) Francis, born 6 March 1685, became an admiral and died without issue in October 1737. (9) John, born 10 October 1683, drowned in the water before the house at Lyme, about 28th May 1688. (10) Elizabeth, born 22 May 1666, married Sir Streynsham Master, knight. (11) Frances, born 5th June 1667, married 1st, in January 1689, Robert Tatton, of Withenshaw; 2nd, Sir Gilbert Clarke, 3rd, George Oldfield, esq.; 4th Dr. Shippen. (12) Isabella Katherine, born 3 Jan. 1680 married Dr. Green. (13) Lettice, married 1st, William Bankes, of Winstanley; 2nd, Thomas Fleetwood.

Most of Mr. Legh's ancestors had filled conspicuous stations, and been active in public affairs. Five of them had been knights and some of them had been made bannerets on the field. The first of the house had died a martyr to his loyalty; the second, who shed his blood at Agincourt, never recovered of the wounds he received there. The third joined the Yorkist host on several important occasions. A later Legh, who in his youth had won honours with his sword, and afterwards increased it as a wise administrator of a Crown possession, finally took the tonsure, and died a priest.

Each of the last two Sir Peters all through life had been before the country and been distinguished for their public services, and even Francis Legh, Mr. Legh's short-lived immediate predecessor, marched with Lord Strange to the siege of Manchester.

Succeeding unexpectedly to the Lyme estate after the death of so many of his relations, Mr. Legh, upon the inheritance falling to him, was still very young, and had hardly, when he died

¹⁹⁰ Oldmixon's *History of England*, III. 283

¹⁹¹ Dr. A. Legh's letter from Brasenose at Lyme

in 1687, attained to middle life. In 1636, Sir Peter Legh had died in possession of the estate, his son Thomas died in 1639, his son Peter in 1641, his son Piers [Piers X died in 1624. Ed] and his grandson Peter in 1642, and his son Francis in 1643, that is in scarcely half a century seven members of the same family, several of them in the direct line of descent, and most of them at an early age, had come like shadows and disappeared from the scene. Something like a parallel to this occurred in the Royal Family of France on the death of Louis XIV, in 1715, the monarch having in the space of only three or four years before lost his only son, his eldest and youngest grandson, and his eldest great grandson. The great mortality of the Leghs after the death of Sir Peter may be taken to explain how it happened when in answer to a call of the House in Cromwell's last Parliament, Mr. Legh was reported to be "gone into the country dangerously sick." It may be that he then had his first feeling of constitutional weakness, and was warned by it to take in sail, and not to expose himself too much, or to venture upon the harassing warfare of Parliament, which, full of trouble as it had been under Cromwell, was even worse after the Restoration, when plots and cabals became chronic and were a perpetual epidemic, which made the House of Commons an unfit arena for a man who had the will and the means to serve his country at home, but was unequal to other more exciting service. At all events, after retiring sick from Cromwell's last Parliament, he never sat in any other except Richard Cromwell's first and last Parliament, when he sat for Cheshire, and except also the Convention Parliament, when he sat for Newton. On each of these two occasions he may have thought he saw signs that the country was settling after its convulsions, and that a moderate man might help to steer the ship into smooth waters.

Such was the state of politics, when Mr. Legh came of age that he almost naturally desired to see the King restored, and he almost as naturally retained his Stuart leanings without disguise to the end. But though prudence put a curb upon his ambition, it was not that he might dream life away in idleness or neglect the duties within his reach at home. He was, therefore, active both as a county magistrate and a deputy lieutenant, offices which gave him plenty to do. As owner of Newton he had naturally great influence in the return of the members for that borough; but in using such influence he was careful to use it for no private end, but only to send up to the House good men and true to support the best interests of the country, as the following list of the members may serve to show: - In the Convention Parliament in 1660 Mr. Legh, who had before sat twice for the county of Chester, was returned for Newton, and sat with William Bankes, Esquire. In 1661 Edward Herle and John Vaughan, Esquires, were the members. Mr. Herle, who was the son of the learned rector of Winwick, is thought to be the same person as Captain Edward Herle, one of the parliamentary commissioners appointed to treat with Lord Hopton in 1646, and if so, he was a man of experience in business. Mr. Vaughan, his colleague, vacated his seat by electing to sit for Cardiganshire, for which he had also been returned; and Sir Philip Mainwaring, who was chosen in his place, dying soon after, was succeeded by the Irish peer Lord Gorges, of Dundalk, a descendant perhaps of that Sir Ferdinando of his name who refused to fight against the Protestants of Rochelle.

When the King made known his intention to use his alleged supreme power in ecclesiastical matters, and assumed by his declaration alone to dispense with all the penal laws enacted against Nonconformists and recusants and also assumed to grant to Protestant Dissenters a right to the public exercise of their religion, and to Roman Catholics the same right to use theirs in private houses, an illegal procedure against which the House of Commons not only protested but which the Lord Keeper refused to authorise by his seal; and Mr. Legh was informed by a news letter that "the design was to kick up the heels of the Church, and that the

Lords agree not with the Commons, and the mob say that the Lords shall agree with them.”¹⁹² A contemporary copy of the Commons’ spirited protest against this usurped dispensing power which remains in the archives at Newton, seems to show that the members for that borough joined in the protest.

In 1678 and 1682, Sir John Chicheley, baronet, and Andrew Fountain, Esquire, of Bellebarre, in Hertfordshire, sat for Newton. Sir John Chicheley was a lord commissioner of the Admiralty, and Mr. Fountain was probably a barrister at law. In 1685, Sir John Chicheley was again elected with Peter Legh, Esquire, of Bruche. as his colleague. The members for Newton, who had opposed the dispensing power, afterwards also opposed the Exclusion Bill, which was promoted by the friends of the Duke of Monmouth, believing that to unsettle the succession would be to bring back the times of trouble from which the country had so lately escaped. Though far from approving all that was done by the Court, Mr. Legh held fast by his allegiance, which, as many of his neighbours favoured the cause of Monmouth, sometimes placed him in disagreeable positions and imposed on him the discharge of painful duties towards his friends. At the same time, he lived much at home, looked well after his estate, maintained a suitable hospitality at Lyme, and was an example to all in the discharge of his social, moral, and religious duties. Mrs. Legh, his wife, traced her descent from the Chicheleys through one of the mercantile brothers of the Archbishop of that name, the munificent founder of All Souls, Oxford, by one of the statutes of which college all such of his relations as should be *bene nati, bene vestiti et mediocriter docti (in cantando)*, that is “well born, well clothed, and moderately instructed in plain song,” were entitled to a preference as founder’s kin. The wits, however, have made merry over these qualifications, by leaving out the words “in plain song,” and making their qualification end at “moderately instructed.”

The founder of All Souls, who had left his native village of Higham-Ferrers, a simple shepherd boy, to go first to school and then to the University, after he had risen to be Archbishop of Canterbury, and the chief shepherd of a great spiritual flock, thought fit to pay a visit to his birthplace. Going thither, his eyes were gladdened at every turn with the sight of those fantastic gables, rich pinnacles, church spires, figures of saints, elaborate carvings and quaint signs which he had known as a shepherd boy. He was received and welcomed with all possible respect and with the greatest state by the chief inhabitants of the place; but he still remembered how he left it in his boyhood, and never forgot to acknowledge with humility and heartfelt thanks to whom he owed his rise.¹⁹³

Prudence, which had always been Mr. Legh’s pole star, never guided him better than when in choosing a wife she led him to the historic house of Chicheley to find one, who to the end of his life proved his true helpmate, who after his death proved as able a defender of their son when he was so unjustly accused. By his marriage with this exemplary woman, Mr. Legh’s descendants became entitled to the benefit of founder’s kin at All Souls. A country gentleman who lives on his estate discharging his duties to his neighbours and setting all an example for their imitation, is like some of the hereditary oaks which adorn his domain, which, while they give shade and shelter, improve and beautify the landscape.

¹⁹² Historical MS. Com. *Appendix to 3rd Report*, p. 269.

¹⁹³ Hook’s *Archbishops of Canterbury*.

CHAPTER 16

Peter XII, 1669-1744

PETER LEGH of Lyme and Bruche, Esquire, the 2nd baron of Newton of his name, and the son of Richard Legh, esquire and Elizabeth his wife, was born on 22nd August 1669, and succeeded his father in his large estates on 31st August, 1687, while he was still a minor. Like his father, he came to his inheritance when the times were critical. The misrule of the late King had been a heavy yoke on the country, and his successor, James II, made it still heavier by pushing forward those unconstitutional measures which, driven too far, not long afterwards cost him his throne. Mr. Legh inherited the loyalty of his house to the Stuart family; and a kinsman of his own name, the member for Newton, who had attended the King's coronation in 1685, wrote a letter to Mr. Legh's father in which he described the ceremony, and descanted upon it in high terms of laudation, and at the same time expressed his regret that none of the Lyme family had been there to witness it. Mr. Legh, who was probably then pursuing his studies at Oxford, was safer out of the way, and he escaped witnessing a spectacle which if he had not been cautioned by his wise father might have drawn him into a political vortex while his judgment was immature.

In March 1687, only a few months before his father's death, Mr. Legh married his cousin, Frances Legh, sole heiress of the Bruche estate. At this period some of the Cheshire gentlemen were in the habit of meeting in a sort of club at each other's houses by turns for social and convivial purposes, and their first meeting, which Mr. Legh seems to have promoted, took place at his own house at Lyme. When the country was distracted, first by the King's measures and then by his flight, it was hardly likely that politics would be avoided, or that the members would be all of one mind upon them. Some if not the majority of the party, adhered to King James II, and after his abdication they did not cordially recognize the new monarch. Taking up the words of a King who had lost his throne, each one of the members of the club perhaps said to himself, "Give sorrow leave awhile to tutor me to this submission." Such a society could not escape the Argus eyes of the new King's ministry, who no doubt had their eaves-droppers to report and give a seditious colouring to what was said and done at their meetings; and this would lead to the members being watched by other Government emissaries. The club long survived the revolution; and a short but interesting account of all its members, and of their portraits taken at the time and now preserved at Tatton, has been printed by the Honourable Wilbraham Egerton. Among the portraits, which were all taken at full length, is Mr. Legh's, which represents him in a wig, a long cutaway coat of russet brown, with a court sword by his side, a waistcoat with deep pockets and flaps, knee breeches and stockings, square-toed shoes and buckles. Mr. Legh being a member of the Cheshire Club, the leaning of the members for Newton to the cause of the exiled monarch, as shown by their speeches and votes in Parliament, which the Court were disposed to think reflected his own, perhaps deepened the suspicion entertained of him, and marked him out as a fair object of prey to the swarm of spies and informers who are the spawn of every revolution. The time had now come for John Lunt, one of these miscreants, to fasten on Mr. Legh a charge of treason; and on the 27th June 1694, he appeared before Sir John Trenchard, the Secretary of State, and deposed amongst other things that in 1689 he came from the Court at St. Germain's bringing with him commissions for various gentlemen to be officers in King James's service, that one of these, a colonel's commission, was delivered to Peter Legh, esquire, of Lime, whom he calls "a Protestant," and with his commission each colonel had blanks for double his inferior officers, and had liberty to raise

either foot, horse, or dragoons, though horse was more especially recommended.”¹⁹⁴ And George Wilson, an accomplice, came forward to confirm the informer’s testimony.¹⁹⁵ On the 19th July 1694, while Mr. Legh was still a very young man, a King’s messenger, with Lunt, the informer, attended by fourteen Dutch troopers, each wearing a blue cloak and armed with a case of pistols, arrived at Lyme, where Mr. Legh was living, between the hours of six and seven in the morning. The messenger, with one Oldham their guide, and two or three of the troopers, immediately ascended the great staircase, and having found Mr. Legh who was in his dressing-room, and not yet dressed, they apprehended him under a Secretary of State’s warrant, charging him with high treason. From his dressing-room they led him attired only in his night gown, to his closet, where were Mr. Lunt and two or three more of the troopers. There the messenger and Mr. Lunt began to search his papers, and continued their search until noon, selecting and putting by from time to time to be carried away such of them as they thought fit. The alleged colonel’s commission, had it been found, would have raised a damning presumption; and the only wonder is that, like the witness against Spratt, Bishop of Rochester, Lunt, who was evidently aware of this practice, had not so contrived as to hide where it should be found a forged commission somewhere in the House at Lyme.¹⁹⁶ After being allowed to dress himself, Mr. Legh was taken downstairs into the parlour, and there left in charge of two of the troopers, while a search for arms was made in every part of the house; the result, however, must have disappointed the searchers, for except a case of pistols and a carbine found in Mr. Legh’s closet, which they seized and carried away, nothing whatever was found. Their quest being ended, Mr. Legh was taken from his house and conveyed the same night, guarded by twelve troopers, to Knutsford, Lunt setting his own saddle upon one of Mr. Legh’s horses and riding away with it. From Knutsford, Mr. Legh was conveyed by the troopers to Chester Castle, where he remained a prisoner until about the first of September following, when Lord Molyneux, Sir William Gerard, Sir Thomas Clifton, Philip Langton, esquire, William Blundell, esquire, and some others were conducted to London, guarded by four messengers and an escort of twenty-one Dutch troopers, commanded by Captain Baker. On arriving at St. Giles’s the prisoners were all committed to the custody of the messengers, who at the end of three days brought them by command before the Duke of Shrewsbury, his Majesty’s Principal Secretary of State, when his Grace, having heard and considered the charge against Mr. Legh, remanded him for three days, and then committed him to the Tower on a warrant, of which the following is a copy:-

“These are in their Majesty’s names to authorize you to receive and take into your custody, the body of Peter Legh, of Lyme, esquire, herewith sent you, being charged before me for high treason in levying warr against their Majestys, and adhering to their Majesty’s enemys; and you are to keep him safe and close until he shall be delivered by due course of law, and for so doing this shall be your warrant. Given at the Court at Whitehall, the 12th September 1694.—SHREWSBURY. To the Right Honorable Robert Lord Lucas, Governor-in-chief of the Tower, or his deputy.”

Whilst he was in the Tower, where he was placed in its worst room, to which he was almost wholly confined, he received much hard usage, all access of his friends being denied him, and his wife being neither allowed to see or speak to him, or even to hear him speak. On the 17th September, however, at the instance of the Queen, some of this severity was relaxed, and permission was granted to Mrs. Legh to see her husband if she would consent to share his confinement, whereupon this warrant was issued to the Governor of the Tower:-

¹⁹⁴ *Trials at Manchester in 1693*, Chetham Soc., pp 17-18

¹⁹⁵ As above, page 30

¹⁹⁶ *Trials at Manchester in 1694*, Chetham Society, pp 91

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“Whitehall, 17th September 1694. My Lord,—Her Majesty would have you permit Mrs. Legh and a maid servant to be with her husband, Mr. Legh of Lyme, in case she shall be willing to be confined with him.—I am, my Lord, your Lordship’s most obedient servant, SHREWSBURY.”

But the Queen, with womanly feeling, on being appealed to, yielded still further to a wife’s pleadings, and relaxed the severity of the prison rules, by ordering the Governor to allow Mr. Legh liberty to take walking exercise within the precincts, taking care not to allow anyone to enter into conversation with him; and the following order was issued to the Governor:-

“Whitehall, 24th September 1694. Her Majesty commands me to acquaint your Lordship with her pleasure that you allow Mr. Leigh, of Lyme, such liberty of walking within the Tower at convenient times as you shall judge consistent with his safe keeping, and that care be taken he do not enter into conversation at that time.—I am, my Lord, your Lordship’s most obedient servant, SHREWSBURY. To the Lord Lucas, Sec. &c.”

He was still watched, however, with great jealousy; for upon his mother, Madam Legh, who was engaged in getting up his defence, coming under his window to ask how he was, one of the sentinels deliberately pointed his musket at her and threatened to shoot her if she spoke another word to him. This occasioned another appeal to the authorities, and the following order was issued, giving permission not only for his mother, but also for his two sisters to visit him:-

“21st Sept. 1694. An order for Mr. Legh’s mother and two sisters to visit him, from the Lord SHREWSBURY.”

On the 7th October. Mr. Legh had notice to prepare for his trial at Chester, and the Governor received orders to admit Sir Thomas Powis, Sir Bartholomew Shower, and Mr. Upton, his counsel, and Sir Thomas Chicheley, Mr. Beresford, Mr. Legh Bankes, Mr. Masters, Lady Chicheley, and Mrs. Abigail Legh, the widow of Piers Legh, of Bruche, to see him:-

“Whitehall, 7th October, 1694. My Lord,— Mr. Legh, one of the prisoners in the Tower, having notice given him to prepare for his trial, in order thereunto it is Her Majesty’s pleasure that your lordship permit Sir Thomas Powis, Sir Bartholomew Shore, and Mr. Upton to have access to the said Mr. Legh as his councill, to advise him, and to be with him from time to time in private either singly or together; and Her Majesty is pleased to direct further, that Sir Thomas Chicheley, Mr. Beresford, Mr. Banks, Mr. Masters, &c., the lady Chicheley, and Mrs. Abigail Legh be permitted to see him from time to time at convenient hours, either singly or so many of them together as your Lordship shall think fit, provided it be in the presence of a warder, or such other person as you shall appoint.—I am, my Lord, your Lordship’s most obedient servant, SHREWSBURY. To the Lord Lucas.”

Soon afterwards, guarded by a party of horse and attended by the gentleman porter, the gentleman gaoler, and two of the warders of the Tower, Mr. Legh was reconducted to Chester Castle, where being called to the bar he was discharged without being put upon his trial. His innocence must have been transparent, when after being taken so summarily and having had his whole house ransacked, nothing could be found to warrant even his being put upon his trial. The depositions printed in the Jacobite trials at Manchester leave no doubt that the

object of Lunt and his associates was to profit by the forfeitures and confiscations which were expected to follow upon the conviction of the offenders whom they charged.¹⁹⁷

Not satisfied to be baulked of their prey by Mr. Legh's acquittal, some of the interested reptile tribe of accusers laid a fresh information against him, upon which, on the 16th April 1696, he was again apprehended and committed to Chester Castle, charged with high treason. But as before so now again, no evidence could be found against him, and when he was brought to the bar, no witnesses being called, he was once more acquitted and discharged. These repeated charges, enough to alarm any man, would have alarmed the object of them much more if he had not been sustained by the *mens conscia recti* and been conscience proof. As to his imprisonment on this last charge, there is at Lyme an order to the High Sheriff of Chester dated 2nd June 1696, directing him to release "Mr. Legh, charged with high treason and treasonable practices, in consequence of His Majesty's gracious directions."¹⁹⁸ A delicate perhaps a royal way of retreating from a false and mistaken position.

The last charge against Mr. Legh so nearly synchronises with Sir George Barclay's plot to assassinate King William, that base, as it was, there may have been persons wicked enough to whisper their suspicions, and try to implicate Mr. Legh in it. The times were indeed perilous in the extreme when spies and informers were so easily found to charge innocent persons with crimes involving no less than treason, assassination, and murder. One of these miscreants had been heard to curse Mr. Legh, and threaten to be revenged on him because he would give him nothing.¹⁹⁹

In the autumn of 1695, when the King called a new Parliament, Mr. Legh's interest in the seats for Newton was solicited for Sir Thomas Shaw by W. Russell, the admiral who had won the great sea fight off La Hogue, and by the Earl of Derby for an unnamed candidate; but the electors, putting aside both these great men's nominees, returned Legh Bancks, Esq., of Gray's Inn, Mr. Legh's kinsman, who had assisted in getting up the evidence for his defence on the two late charges, and Thomas Brotherton, Esq., of the Hey, in Newton. What the nominees of Russell or of Lord Derby would have done is uncertain; but the two candidates elected were bold men, and made no secret of their affection for the exiled King.

In 1699, Mr. Legh followed the good example set him by several of his ancestors, and founded and very liberally endowed the school at Newton, with £55 10s. a year.

In 1705, he and Mr. Cholmondeley, the trustees of Bishop Barrow's Academic Trust in the Isle of Man, on the 9th of April gave good Bishop Wilson of that island, an order to invest £650 of the trust funds for the Master of the Academy at Douglas on good security in Ireland.²⁰⁰

James II died in exile at St. Germain's on the 16th September 1701, and Louis XIV, with as much folly as arrogance, proclaimed with blare of trumpets his son, the Pretender, King of England and Scotland, by the title of James III of England and VIII of Scotland. No wonder that this daring act aroused the old English spirit of independence; and that on the 28th of the following month, it led the Earl of Derby to write to Mr. Legh and invite him to meet him on that day se'nnight [*i.e.* seven nights later, Ed.] at twelve at noon, at Preston, to join him and

¹⁹⁷ *Trials at Manchester*, Chetham Society, p. 1 *et seq.*

¹⁹⁸ *3rd Rep. Hist. Com.* p. 270.

¹⁹⁹ *Jacobite Trials at Manchester*, Chetham. Society, pp. 40-96. The Late Conspiracy, p. 132.

²⁰⁰ Keble's *Life of Wilson*

the county in an address declaring that the French King never pretended before, and had no right now, to name who should be King of England; and that, gloss it as he might, this was what his actions meant.²⁰¹ This letter shows the Earl's confidence in Mr. Legh's loyalty, and that he shared the feeling which the Parliament called soon after showed that the country also felt.

The distance at which the Parish Church of Warrington stood from the population and the buildings in the town had not escaped the notice of the Austin Friars early in the thirteenth century, and to remedy it when they built their church called Jesus Church, they placed it near Bridge Street. There it survived until the Reformation, but it soon afterwards perished and fell into decay, leaving the old inconvenience to be felt in a greater degree, owing to the still greater increase of buildings and population which had taken place since.

This inconvenience having struck the mind of Mr. Legh, who was a great Warrington landowner, he determined at the beginning of the 18th century, to remedy it by building the Church of Holy Trinity, an intention which he carried out by a deed of the 19th Sept. 1709, which after reciting that Warrington was a place of considerable trade and very populous, and that the Parish Church was situate about half a mile distant from the bridge and passage over the river, and from the place where the great road passed, the market was held, and most of the dwelling-houses were situated, and also reciting that Mr. Legh having a great number of tenants in the town, was disposed to found and endow a chapel for the inhabitants to resort unto for their ease and comfort, and was desirous to have it consecrated and set apart for sacred uses for ever, with a saving of all rights and dues of the parish church, and that he was willing to settle a perpetual maintenance for a minister in the Church of England and for a clerk to officiate there, so as that their nomination might be vested in him and his heirs, it was witnessed and he did thereby absolutely convey to the trustees and their heirs and assigns all that edifice or building in or near Sankey Street, in Warrington, lately erected and intended for a chapel; and all that edifice or building in or near the same street, lately erected and intended for a school; and all those four shops also lately erected in or near the same street, near to the before-mentioned several buildings, and all the ground whereon the same stood; and all other his ground near adjoining, and laid to and intended to be used with the said buildings, or any of them: to hold upon the following trusts; that is to say, as to the said first mentioned edifice or chapel, when consecrated, upon trust and confidence, that the same might be used and employed for a chapel, for all the inhabitants of Warrington to resort unto and hear Divine service and sermons, according to the liturgy, rites, and usage of the Church of England, as by law established. And as to the said edifice intended for a school, upon trust that the same might be used for a school for teaching children to read English and write and cast accounts, by such person as should from time to time be nominated by Mr. Legh and his heirs to be the clerk of the said intended chapel, or schoolmaster of the said school, and who should be licensed by the Bishop of Chester to keep and teach such school; and that the profit, benefit, and advantage of the said schoolhouse should and might be had and enjoyed by or employed for the maintenance and benefit of the person so nominated to officiate as clerk of the said chapel during such time as he should officiate there. And as to the remainder of the premises, and also an annuity of £5 thereby granted, to apply and employ the same for the perpetual maintenance of the minister to be from time to time nominated to the said chapel.

²⁰¹ *3rd Rep. His. Com.* 270.

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The chapel which was thus founded was consecrated by the Bishop of Chester on the following day, the 20th September 1709.

In 1712, the sepulchral inscription which has been mentioned as having been placed in Macclesfield Church to the memory of his brave grandmother, Lettice Legh, was placed there by Mr. Legh, and was from his own pen, as was also this further inscription to the memory of her son:-

“Atque Thomae Legh de Lyme, armigeri, reverendi Thomae et Letitiae predict, filii natus secundi qui spe beatae resurrectionis animam. Deo pie reddidit Septembris xxijo., anno salutis MDCXCVII. aetatis suae fere LXI. H.M. liberaliter constituit Petrus Legh armiger MDCCXII.”

It had been customary before Mr. Legh's time for the lord of the manor, at the annual Easter vestry, to appoint one of the Churchwardens of Warrington, and for the head of the house of Lyme to appoint the other. In 1713, however, when the Earl of Warrington was lord of the manor, his lordship, remembering probably that the order to see Lord Delamere, the Earl's father, apprehended on a charge of high treason, had been sent to Mr. Legh's father, was not on very cordial terms with him; and not unnaturally there arose some jealousy between them as to the exercise of their mutual right of appointing the wardens - rights then thought to be of much more consequence than they are now. Mr. Shaw, the Rector, who was also master of the Grammar School, and presided at the vestry, being thought not to have held the scales of justice quite even between the two parties, Mr. Legh remonstrated with him and received from him the following spirited letter, which we presume was satisfactory:-

“Warrington, March ye 30, 1713. Honr'd Sr,—However I may be represented, yet you may assure yr self yt I will not in ye election of a churchwarden or upon any other account do anything purposely to oppose you, and I am fully perswaded that you will not be displeased if I am backward to betray ye rights of ye church committed to my care. If yr business wd allow I cd wish yt you wd be present at ye election yt you might see wh yr own eyes it is mine earnest desire (according to ye direction of ye apostle) yt nothing be done throu' strife or vain glory; and yt ministers may not despise yr parishioners, nor parishioners trample upon God's ministers. Good Sr, if to pray for yr deliverance when you were in danger, if to run to ye church wth my scholars to bless God upon the joyful news of your being acquitted, if to vote on your side (tho' thereby I disoblige some friends, not to say benefactors), if alwaies to speak well of you and to defend yr cause, even in ye presence of ye E. of Warrington, if these are testimonies yt I love to oppose you, I must needs think yt I labor under an hard fate. I had almost forgot to tell you yt Mr. Stretch is not tenant to the E. of Warrington (if his words can be believed), and my kindness to him in making choice of him for a warden was because he is a good man, frequents ye church and ye sacrament, was formerly my usher, and alwaies respectfull to me. I heartily thank you for yr patience in hearing me truly to represent matters at ye meeting of ye feoffees, and for all yr former favors, and I wish I had yr hand and seal, wch I believe you wd never have started from. The election of wardens is on Thursday, Easter week. All our services wait upon yr self, yr good lady, Madam Legh, and all your worthy family, and more especially his who is hd sr—Yr much obliged and most humble and faithful servt, SAMUEL SHAW.— This for Peter Legh, Esquire, at his Lyme, post paid.”

We learn from this letter that Mr. Legh was a trustee of the Grammar School, and that his escape from the danger of the trials which he had undergone was hailed with delight by all, and that the rector and master of the school especially rejoiced in it.

Mr. Legh's father had been in the habit of receiving instalments of political and other intelligence from some of the professional news writers; but newspapers were now fast superseding that class of correspondence; Mr. Legh's steward, however, from time to time in addition to the public journals, still sent him letters of news. In 1714 a mob of Jacobite rioters under the leading of one Syddall, a Manchester peruke maker, styled by his party Colonel Syddall, nearly destroyed the Presbyterian Chapel in Cross Street, Manchester, and the chapel at Monton, near Eccles, for which they were apprehended, and when they were tried for it at Lancaster early in the next year Mr. Legh received from his steward, Mr. Golborne, who had been present, the following undated letter, detailing what had taken place:-

“Hon'd Sir,—I came from Lancaster, and can only inform you that the Manchester rioters have come off better than we expected. Colonel Siddall, as they call him, is ordered to stand in the pillory and to be imprisoned a month for cursing King George; and a boy of about 18 years old, a Presbyterian, is to stand with him for cursing the Church and hoping that all Churchmen would go to h*ll; and another had the like sentence for pulling down the meeting-house at Monton, near Eccles. There are also indictments found against Major Wyrrel, Jebb, Holbrook, and some others of that gang. There were also indictments brought against Mr. James Garthside and 26 more of the town of Manchester, but these were all slashed. We have also a bill found against Owen, the Presbyterian minister of our town of Warrington, for publishing that book which I sent you by your brother Legh, which will whip his pocket, for the copy will cost him £30 or £40, they having set forth the whole book in the bill of indictment. I have several other matters to relate on this account, which I will omit until I wait on you, which Mr. Stirrup and myself have concluded to do on Friday next, therefore I beg to subscribe myself your most obedient servant to command, J. GOULBORNE. We have no news from Scotland that can be depended upon. The Honoured P. Legh, Esq., at Lyme.”²⁰²

The postscript of this letter was ominous and meant more than it said. Queen Anne having died on the 1st August 1714, George I had then mounted the throne. Rumours were rife that Prince Charles Edward, the young chevalier, and the friends of the exiled family, contemplated rising, with good hopes of success, and that the rising was to take place before the new monarch, a stranger to the country and a stammerer in our English tongue, was fairly settled in his seat. And accordingly, in the autumn of 1715 Mr. Legh was in danger of encountering fresh political trouble. Mr. or General Foster, as he was sometimes called, followed by the Earls of Derwentwater, Wintoun, Nithsdale, and Carnwath, and by the Lords Widdrington, and Nairn, hoisted the standard of the Pretender, and at the head of a small army having advanced into England in the beginning of November, reached Lancaster unopposed. The members of the old Club of Cheshire gentlemen, which has been already mentioned, upon this news met upon a summons at Ashley Hall, the house of Mr. Assheton, the constable and governor of Chester Castle, to consider and decide whether they should openly declare in favour of the young Chevalier. Mr. Legh, who is reported to have been present at this meeting, had too much reason to remember the dangers he had already

²⁰² *Jacobite Trials in 1694*, Chetham Society, p. 53

incurred in the same cause; and when the question was debated what course the club should take, his voice was raised against their taking part in the revolt, and the motion, he made upon it being put to the meeting, was carried by the casting vote of the Chairman. (The Honble. Wilbraham Egerton's account of the Cheshire Club.) After this meeting the club abandoned all further hopes of a Stuart restoration, and in 1720 the club was formally dissolved.

In 1725, Piers Legh, Esquire, the son and only child of Mr. and Mrs. Legh, having never married, was carried prematurely to his grave; and the magnificent house of Lyme and all the other great estates of the family seemed once more likely to pass on his father's death to some collateral heir of the family. Though entered in the Warrington Parish Register on the 14th June, Piers Legh's burial probably did not take place there, but at Winwick, the family burial place. On the 17th Feb. 1728, Mr. Legh sustained another great misfortune in the loss of his excellent wife, who had not only chosen to share his confinement in the Tower, but had been of the greatest use in getting up the evidence for his defence. Grief for the death of her son probably hastened her dissolution, and after sustaining this double loss, Mr. Legh, whose affection for his family was unremitting, in the year 1728 made a formal settlement of his estates in favour of his four nephews, who in the event of his own death without issue were to take the estates in succession in tail male. These nephews, the sons of his brother Thomas Legh, esquire, of Bank, were Peter, who succeeded; Piers, a merchant in the African trade at Liverpool, who died without issue in May 1774; Ashburnham Legh, born at Lathom, and baptised at Ormskirk 2nd Aug. 1716, and who died at Golborne in 1775; and Henry, who sought a fellowship at All Souls'.

In January 1744, Mr. Legh, who had attained the ripe age of 75, was removed by death, and on the 16th of that month his remains were committed to the family vault at Winwick, where, alas! there is neither monument nor inscription to mark the event. At Tatton, as we have already seen, there is a full-length portrait of him as one of the Club of Cheshire gentlemen, and there is at Lyme a half-length copy of it, supposed to be by the same artist. He is described by one of the witnesses who visited him when he was a prisoner in the Tower as being small of stature, and as being dressed in a morning gown.²⁰³

Mr. Legh, who spent nearly all his life at Lyme, was greatly esteemed and respected. He kept up there the true old English hospitality in a style befitting his rank, and was visited not only by most of the leading gentry of the county, but also by some of his literary neighbours. John Byrom, the Manchester poet, counted Mr. Legh among his short-hand pupils and friends, and addressed him as such when he sent out to them this poetical invitation to attend a feast of the brethren:-

To Haddon John and Hayward Thomas Greeting,
On Friday next there is to be a meeting
At ancient Bufton's, where the brethren Wright,
Baskervyle, Swinton, Toft's facetious knight,
Legh, Lancaster, Cattel, if he can,
And on the same terms Clowes the alderman,
Have all agreed to hold upon the border
At Altrincham, a chapter of the order!

Byrom possessed not only an abundant fund of information but such a ready power of communicating it as made him always a welcome guest at Lyme, where he so greatly enjoyed

²⁰³ Dr. Kingston's *Lancashire Plot*, 263

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Mr. Legh's society that he could not help praising his kindness and hospitality and his happy manner of exercising both.

Another frequent visitor at Lyme was the eccentric Samuel Johnston, well known everywhere in that day by his pseudonym of Lord Flame, which he got from his performance of that character in his own drama of *Hurlo Thrumbo*. He also has not failed to record and extol his host's great courtesy and the noble example he set in his life as a country gentleman. By becoming one of Byrom's short hand scholars Mr. Legh had shown his interest in learning, and he showed it also by the Latin epitaphs from his own pen which he set up to the memory of his uncle Thomas and his grandmother Lettice in Macclesfield Church.

Mr. Legh's earlier ancestors had evinced their piety by erecting chantries for the repose of the dead; but his was shown in his greater concern for the living, of which his providing at his own expense greater church accommodation for his tenants and other inhabitants at Warrington by founding its Church of Holy Trinity, to the design and carrying out of which he is entitled to all the credit, may be cited as an example.

In his mind, education was the handmaid of religion, and he did not forget either in founding the Church of Holy Trinity and attaching a school to it or afterwards, when he built and handsomely endowed the school at Newton.

On his first coming to the estate he was either too young to seek a seat in Parliament, or his father by precept and example had warned him against it, or else he had a natural apprehension of the consequences to which the King's misguided zeal was hurrying the country; and he wisely thought that in times so critical "the post of honour was a private station." At all events, whatever was the cause, having avoided Parliamentary life before the revolution, he was little likely to seek it afterwards, when he had been twice sent to prison on charges which, though he was innocent of them, might have taken away his life, and which could not but make him and the Government mutually suspect each other.

The rash courses pursued by King James II by driving him from the throne brought about those happy consequences which made men say of him that, without intending it, he was the best friend the country ever had. Though Mr. Legh, a staunch Protestant, neither could nor did approve of the King's measures, he was yet unable all at once to wipe from his heart his old Stuart affections or help feeling something for a King who had lost his crown; and if the members for Newton shared his feelings and did not sail with the full tide at the revolution, their feeling was but natural; and the occasional opposition of the Newton members and of those who thought with them tended at times perhaps to repress some of the excesses into which its promoters might have been hurried.

From the revolution to the death of James II, the electors of Newton selected their members from those who, though they shared Mr. Legh's royalist feelings, would offer no factious opposition to the Government. The following list of them shows that a few of them spoke - often in the House, that one or two were men of mark, and that none of them belonged either to the "Do-nothings" or "Know-nothings;" but all of them were good men and true, which, if he had any interest in the elections, was all that Mr. Legh required.

In the Convention Parliament of 1688, Sir John Chicheley, baronet, a Commissioner of the Navy, and Francis Cholmondeley, Esq., a scion of an ancient and time-honoured Cheshire house, who sat in the late Parliament, were re-elected, and they assisted to settle the country

and place the constitution on its new wheels. In the Parliament of 1689, Sir John, who was again elected, had for his colleague George Cholmondeley, Esquire, another member of the same ancient house; and upon Sir John's death, soon after, his place was supplied by the election of John Bennet, esquire, of Abingdon, in the county of Cambridge, a barrister and afterwards a master in Chancery. In 1695 both the members were changed, and Legh Bankes, esquire, and Thomas Brotherton, esquire, two barristers-at-law, were elected. Mr. Brotherton was a frequent speaker in the House, and sometimes spoke when to speak and maintain his opinions required great moral courage, but he never shrank from his duty. In 1711, John Ward, esquire, afterwards *puisne* judge of Chester, and Abraham Blackmore, esquire, both barristers-at-law, were elected. At the election in 1715, Sir Francis Leycester, baronet, grandson of Sir Peter Leycester, the great Cheshire antiquary, and himself a scholar, and William Shippen, esquire, barrister-at-law, were elected; the latter of whom held the seat very long and deserves a longer notice. A poet himself, and the author of two poems, called *Faction Displayed* and *Moderation Displayed*.

Speaking of Shippen, too, Sir Robert Walpole said he would not say who was corrupted, but he would say who was not corruptible, and that man was Shippen. Shippen, who was bred to the bar, was not only not a silent but a very outspoken member, and when the address was moved in answer to George the First's speech to his first Parliament, in 1715, he commented very freely upon it, and characterized it as more fitted for the meridian of Hanover than for the legislature of a free country. For this speech he was committed to Newgate. Again in 1726, when on the ground of the great services rendered by his great grandfather in opposing ship money, Parliament was asked to grant some relief to Richard Hampden, the treasurer of the navy, who had been a peculator and a public defaulter, Mr. Shippen said he should decline to enter upon the merits of the great grandfather; but he was sure that his great grandson, the treasurer of the navy, had wasted more money than his ancestor had ever saved to the nation or than King Charles I had ever intended to raise by ship money. After sitting in the Parliaments of 1715, 1722, 1727, 1734, 1741 and 1743, and having for his colleague in the first two of those years Sir Francis Leycester, and in the last four Legh Master, esquire, Mr. Shippen died in the year 1743. This list, which contains a few good names, shews that Newton sent to the House some independent members, and that if Mr. Legh had any share in electing them he used his discretion honestly and wisely.

We do not wonder that Mr. Legh retained to the last a keen sense of the harshness and injustice of his treatment in the two State prosecutions to which he had been subjected; to the end of his life he retained a sad feeling of it, but *lenior ac melior fis accedente senecta*, and it became in his later years tempered with a true Christian spirit. In some directions, under his own hand given, not long before his death, he wrote as follows:— "I would have no monument set over me, but a plain brass nailed to the wall to express my innocency in that wicked conspiracy (to ruin me) by false witnesses, imprisonments, and trials in 1694 and 1696, and that I die a member of the Church of England, looking on it to be the best and purest of churches; and that I do most sincerely wish it may continue forever." The monument he desired, is not now if it ever was placed over his remains.

Mr. Legh and his father were alike and yet unlike in this respect. Both of them acted upon the poet's advice as given above, and they both declined public life, but not from the same cause. Delicate health kept his father from it. Mr. Legh, disgusted with the harsh treatment he had received from the Government, never sought either to sit in Parliament or to hold a commission under the Government either as a magistrate or deputy-lieutenant.

CHAPTER 17

Peter XIII, 1708-1792

PETER LEGH, Esq., the third baron of Newton of his name, who upon the death of his uncle of both his names on the 18th January 1745, succeeded him, was the son of the testator's brother, Thomas Legh, Esq., of Bank, by Henrietta, the daughter and sole heiress of Thomas Fleetwood, Esq. He was born at Bank, and on 7th January 1707, he was baptised at Aughton. In 1729, while he was pursuing his studies at Cambridge, he became intimate with John Byrom, the poet, and as *noscitur a sociis*,²⁰⁴ though a trite is yet a true maxim, we may infer that he enjoyed the safeguard of keeping good company. In January, 1737, he married Martha, the only daughter of Thomas Bennett, Esq., of Wilts. In 1745 he had scarcely entered upon his inheritance when England was again alarmed with another Stuart rising.

The old Club of Cheshire gentlemen no longer existed, having dissolved itself in 1720, after the rising of 1715 had ended so disastrously. But the old spirit being not yet dead, some of the former members of the club met to deliberate what steps they should now take, when Mr. Legh proposed that they should decline to espouse the young Chevalier's cause, and the assembly adopted and acted upon his opinion.

In 1748, Mr. Legh, who did not entertain his late uncle's objections to a seat in Parliament, was elected one of the members for the borough of Newton, and in each of the Parliaments called in 1754, 1761, 1762, and 1768 he was again returned. In 1747 Sir Thomas Grey Egerton, baronet, was his colleague. In 1754, 1761, and 1762, Randle Wilbraham, esquire, of Rode, sat with him, and in 1768 his relative, Anthony James Legh Keck, Esq., was his brother member.

The mention of the name of Mr. Keck as Mr. Legh's last colleague may excuse us for giving a short account of an incident which occurred to an ancestor of his in connection with one of the strange accidents which have at times occurred to the great seal of England, as they are told in an amusing lawyer's volume which gives us the particulars of some of the travels and adventures of the *clavis regni* or key of the kingdom. Richard Coeur de Lion, we are told, on going to Palestine, though he left his chancellor at home, took the precaution to carry with him his great seal, which he entrusted to one Malchien, who being not a little vain of his office to the no small admiration of the knights of the King's company, always carried the seal about his neck. Whilst it was thus suspended, and the fleet was coasting by Cyprus, he accidentally fell overboard and was drowned, while the seal with which he was burdened helped to sink him and went to enrich "the ooze and bottom of the sea," and form part of its "sunken wreck and sumless treasury." Charles II marching at the head of his army also carried his great seal with him, and to avoid its falling into the hands of the enemy, after his defeat at Worcester, he threw it into the Severn, where it still remains to enrich perhaps some fortunate finder. James II, to embarrass the new Government, in escaping from Whitehall, on the 10th Dec. 1688, cast the great seal into the Thames. This time, however, the water taking part with the revolution against the monarch refused to hold the treasure, and a fisherman drawing in his net brought up the great seal with it, which he carried straight to the Prince of Orange, to whom, as well as the fisherman, it proved a real gold fish. Among the lawyers who arrived soon afterwards to offer the Prince their congratulations came Anthony Keck,

²⁰⁴ [A rule of language used by the courts to help interpret legislation, under which the questionable meaning of a doubtful word can be derived from its association with other words. Wikipedia, Ed.]

Esq., with Serjeants Maynard and Rawlinson. Maynard had been twice sent to prison by Cromwell, and had often experienced the coarseness of Jeffries' ribald tongue, who interrupting him once as he was addressing the Court, rudely said to him, "Mr. Serjeant, you've lost your knowledge of law; your memory is failing you through age." "It may be so, my lord," said Maynard, "but I am sure I have forgotten more law than you ever knew." A man like Maynard was not to pass unnoticed; and the Prince graciously entrusted to Mr. Keck and the two serjeants the recently recovered seal, with directions to keep and use it for all writs and patents until the 22nd May following, when a new great seal was ordered to be prepared and afterwards used.

Remembering that a neighbouring church was indebted to his ancestor, Sir Peter Legh, for making its steeple more musical by completing its peal by an additional bell, Mr. Legh, in the year 1748, made the bells at Disley more complete and tuneable by adding to it a sixth bell, a circumstance which is recorded on the bell itself.

In 1751, having found that there was no school in Lowton, where he had property, he performed the good work of founding a free school there and endowing it with £20 a year.

In 1755, Mr. Legh had the misfortune to lose his last surviving son, Master Bennet Legh, who was buried at Winwick, with this inscription to mark the place:-

"In the vault beneath lie the remains of Master Bennet Legh, only son of Peter Legh, Esq., of Lym in the county palatine of Chester, by Madam Martha Legh, only daughter of Thomas Bennet, Esq., of Salthorp, in the county of Wilts. He died 8th July, 1755, aged 8 years. *Flebilis ille nulli debilius quam patri afflictissimo.*"

Trinity chapel, in Warrington, founded by Mr. Legh's uncle after the lapse of nearly half a century, having been found too small for the worshippers in it, Mr. Legh, in 1758, lent a willing hand towards rebuilding it on a larger scale, and giving it a better endowment, still reserving to himself and his heirs the right of patronage.

From a very remote date every member of Parliament had enjoyed as such member some exclusive privileges. His person was privileged from arrest, he had privilege of speech, and his land, goods, and domestics, were also privileged. As to privilege of speech, an Act of the 10th year of William and Mary declared that the freedom of speech and of debates and proceedings in Parliament ought not to be impeached or questioned in any court or place out of Parliament, but the privileges of his person, servants, and land were immunities far more ancient, going back even to the time of Edward the Confessor. These formerly included not only privilege from all illegal violence, but also from all legal arrests and seizures at law. And this reference to the privileges of members of Parliament is necessary in order that the reader may understand the reason why Mr. Legh gave to one of his servants the following document as a protection:-

"To all people to whom these presents shall come, I, Peter Legh, of Lyme, within Hanley, in the county of Chester, esquire, send greeting. Know ye that I, the said Peter Legh, have employed and retained the bearer hereof, James Pilling, of Houghton Green, in the county of Lancaster, chapman, as my servant about my affairs and occasions for twelve months from the date hereof, if this present Parliament so long continue. And I do hereby will and require all persons to forbear to arrest, attach, or imprison him, the said James Pilling, but to permit and suffer him peaceably and

quietly to go about his business at his pleasure, without any disturbance, as they will answer the contrary at their peril. Given under my hand and seal this sixth day of December in the year of our Lord 1764. Peter Legh. (L. s).”

But the power of thus protecting an ordinary servant such as Pilling, who was probably only a watcher or gamekeeper, from arrest or imprisonment was found to be capable of being so greatly abused that in 10 George III, an Act of Parliament was passed by which the privilege was entirely and forever abolished; and the protection above given to Mr. Legh's servant which was probably one of the latest instances of the kind, is on that account worthy of being preserved. But there was in Mr. Legh's service another servant still more remarkable than he who was thus privileged and protected, in the person of one Joseph Watson, of whom we have the following obituary notice:-

“Buried at Disley, in Cheshire, June 2nd, 1753, Mr. Joseph Watson, in the 105th year of his age. He was born at Mossley Common, in the parish of Legh, in the county of Lancaster, and married his wife from Eccles, in the same county. They were a happy couple 72 years. She died in the 94th year of her age. He was park keeper to the late Peter Legh, Esq., of Lyme, and his father for 64 years; and did live and show the red deer to most of the nobility and gentry in this part of the kingdom, to the general satisfaction of all who ever saw them, for he could have driven and commanded them at his pleasure, as if they had been common horned cattle. In the reign of Queen Anne, Squire Legh was at Macclesfield, in Cheshire, in company with a number of gentlemen. Among them were Sir Roger Mason, then one of the members of the said county. They being merry and free, Squire Legh said his keeper should drive twelve brace of stags to Windsor Forest as a present to the Queen. Sir Roger opposed this with a wager of 500 guineas, that neither his keeper nor any other person could drive twelve brace of stags from Lyme Park to Windsor on any occasion. Squire Legh accepted the wager from Sir Roger, and immediately sent a messenger to Lyme for his keeper, who directly came to his master who told him that he must immediately prepare himself to drive twelve brace of stags to Windsor Forest, for a wager of 500 guineas; so he gave his master this answer, that he would at his command drive him twelve brace of stags to Windsor or any other part of the kingdom by his worship's directions, or he would lose his life and fortune. He accordingly undertook and accomplished this most astonishing performance, which is not to be equalled in the annals of history. He was a man of low stature, not bulky, of a fresh complexion and pleasant countenance, and he believed he had drunk a gallon of malt liquor one day with another for about sixty years of his time; and at the latter end of his life he drank plentifully, which was agreeable to his constitution and agreeable to himself. He was a very mild-tempered man; he knew behaviour, was cheerful company, and was allowed by all who knew him to be as fine a keeper as any in England. In his 103rd year he was at the hunting and killing of a buck, with the honourable Sir George Warren, in his part at Poynton, and performed that service with astonishment. It was the fifth generation of the Warrens with whom he had performed that service in the park at Poynton.”

There must be some latent truth in the fable of the power of Orpheus to move the brute creation by the power of music, for Playford, in his history of that art, tells us that “travelling once near Royston he met a herd of stags on the road following a bagpipe. When the music played they went forward; when it ceased they stood still, and in this manner the performer

led them all the way from Yorkshire to Hampton Court.”²⁰⁵ Dr. Whitaker also says that he saw a stag which had followed the bagpipes of a Highland regiment from its native mountains to Edinburgh, “*Tractus dulcedine cantus*.”²⁰⁶ But if the music of the droning pipes could work such wonders, the effect of the more perfect instrument which no doubt Mr. Watson used ought to be greater or we should question the animal's taste for music. Unfortunately, however, his portrait at Lyme does not inform us how his purpose was effected, nor are we told of it elsewhere.

Mr. Legh was an active trustee of the Boteler Free Grammar School, at Warrington, one of the most ancient foundations of the place, and which enjoyed then, as it does still, a good reputation amongst the Lancashire public schools. He continued to sit in the Parliament elected in 1768 until its dissolution in 1774, when the disastrous rupture commenced between England and her American colonies. He had, however, retired from Parliament before the declaration of Independence, and he took no further part in public affairs afterwards, but devoted himself to discharging the duties of a country gentleman, improving his estate, filling the office of a magistrate, and remodelling and almost rebuilding his palatial house at Lyme, under the direction of Leone, an architect much employed at that time. This work occupied him many years, and was not completed even at the time of his death.

[Beamont is in error here. It was Peter XII who brought in Leone and the work was done between 1727 and 1734 according to the National Trust's Lyme Park handbook. Peter XII died in 1744. The start of the following paragraph too is in error. Inigo Jones (1573-1652), completed his first building in 1608 and became surveyor of the King's works in 1618. The Lyme handbook reports that the frontage dates from about 1570 and may have been modelled on old Somerset House, built twenty years earlier. Ed.]

The house at Lyme was probably built either by Inigo Jones, or some of his contemporaries, but it is to be feared that its restorer had no just feeling for the original design, or, when he set about to remodel such a house, he would hardly have refaced and covered over all the exterior walls except the gateway in a style which has altered its original character and substituted for it that of a palazzo more suited to an Italian than a northern sky. Inigo Jones and Leone both drew their inspiration from Italian sources, but they chose different periods. As befits the mansion of a great family, Lyme stands in an extensive park, amid scenery of a varied and undulating character, some of the wild and moorland parts of which have not yet wholly lost their original forest features. The principal approach to the house is from the north, through a square court, shut in by a massive iron railing, with a wide gate in the centre, on each side of which there hangs an old-fashioned French hunting horn, which, recalling the forest original of Lyme, has long hung in the same place, to signify that travellers may blow it to make known their arrival, and that they wait there for entrance. The house occupies now, as it has ever done, the same four sides of a quadrangle, but it has now two slightly projecting wings. The principal entrance, which leads into the quadrangle, and remains much as it was at first, is on the north side, and from the quadrangle by a flight of steps the great hall is reached on the eastern side of the court. Behind the hall, and fronting the east, is the dining-room, on one side of which is an ante-room; and on the other a singular apartment with the arms of James I over the mantelpiece (which gives us the date), and above these and round the room, in compartments of painted stucco work, (another indication of the age of the room) is a representation of a stag hunt, with various incidents of the chase; and finally the

²⁰⁵ *Encycl. Met.*, xvi. 438.

²⁰⁶ Dr. Whitaker's *History of Whalley*, 205 in footnotes

death of the deer. The drawing-room, a handsome wainscoted apartment probably another of the original rooms, is in the north-east angle of the house, and has its mantel-piece surmounted with the family arms, [the arms are of England in the time of Elizabeth I, Ed.] and its ceiling ornamented in stucco work. In the south-east angle of the house is the library, also one of the original rooms, which is well furnished with old and rare volumes and some MSS. besides the Legh Missal, a manuscript containing many of the family obits, and some other curious notices. [Beamont is in error about the library which was created from some smaller rooms by Lewis Wyatt for Thomas Legh. Ed.] But the room which most shows its relationship with the original house is a romantic old gallery, such as we see only in houses of the period when Lyme was built. In his alterations, Leone fortunately left this gallery untouched, which from the old portraits and pictures it contains is now doubly interesting. There is a view of the exterior of the house in Aikin's *Country round Manchester*, and in Watt's *Views* there is an imposing view of the south front.

Mr. Legh died at Lyme on the 29th May 1792, and was buried at Disley. Mr. and Mrs. Legh's children were:-

(1) Peter Benet Legh, who was born and baptised at Calveley, 18th October 1741, and died an infant. (2) Bennet, born September, 1748, died 8th July 1755. (3) Henrietta Maria, married 28th January 1763, Robert Vernon Atherton Gwyllim, afterwards called Robert Vernon Atherton, and died 28th Sept. 1799. (4) Elizabeth, married, 1st, James Anthony Legh Keck; 2nd, Bathurst Pye Benet. (5) Esther, who died 8th July 1789, and was buried at Winwick. Mr. Legh having left no male issue, the estate, by the terms of the entail, passed to his brother's son.

CHAPTER 18

Colonel Thomas Peter Legh, 1753-1797

THOMAS PETER LEGH, esquire, of Lyme, the fourth baron of Newton of his name, who succeeded on the death of his uncle, Peter Legh, on the 29th of May 1792, was the son of Ashburnham Legh, esquire, of Golborne, by his wife Charlotte, the daughter of Sir Holland Egerton, of Heaton, baronet. Mr. Legh, who had sat in Parliament for the borough of Newton in the Parliaments of 1783 and 1784, and again in 1790, and who was still in Parliament on the breaking out of the French Revolution and the war with that country which followed it, promptly showed his loyalty by raising for the defence of the country, in March, 1794, a regiment of horse, on which besides the Government allowance he spent more than £20,000 of his own money. Of this regiment, which was called the Third Lancashire Light Dragoons, Mr. Legh, as was fit, became the Colonel. In 1796, when a new Parliament was elected, Mr. Legh by his new rank of Colonel, was again elected one of the members for Newton; but in the following year, while he was doing garrison duty with his regiment in Scotland, he died suddenly on the 7th August 1797 at Piers Hill Barracks, in Edinburgh, from which place his body was brought to Winwick, and there interred in the family vault. Colonel Legh, the absolute owner of the great family estates, made a will, by which he devised the Lyme estate, the barony of Newton, and nearly the whole of his other property, to his eldest (natural) son, Thomas Legh for life, with remainder to his issue in tail male, with remainder to his second (natural) son, William Legh, in like manner. A full-length portrait of Colonel Legh, in the uniform of his regiment, was painted by J. Cranke, a well-known Warrington artist, and is in the house at Lyme. This portrait was afterwards engraved by T. Hardey, and there is a copy of the engraving in the Warrington Museum.

CHAPTER 19

Thomas Legh, 1792-1857

THOMAS LEGH, Esq., of Lyme, the fifth baron of Newton of his name, when he succeeded to the estates devised to him as tenant for life, with remainder to his issue in tail male, on the death of Colonel Legh, on the 7th August 1797, was a minor only a few years old. In 1815, while he was under age,²⁰⁷ and was still pursuing his studies at Oxford, England was startled by news of the escape of the Emperor Napoleon from Elba, and that at the head of a large army he was making his way towards Belgium, the old fighting ground of Europe. Mr. Legh who like many others had been attracted to Brussels, the neighbourhood where the great conflict was expected to take place, and was still there when the battle began at Waterloo, at once offered his services, which were accepted as a volunteer to carry despatches to the outposts.

[The next section is incorrect. Thomas Legh's first trip to the East was during the Napoleonic Wars when he went to Turkey, Greece and Egypt with his tutor the Rev. Smelt. He heard of the defeat of Napoleon before Moscow in 1812 while in quarantine against the plague in Alexandria. When he returned home, in 1813, he was just 21. What is covered below is from this first trip. Ed.]

In 1816, having attained his majority, he was elected by the freeholders of Newton, in whom the right of election had been vested since 1620, a member for that borough, and on the calling of a new Parliament, in 1818, he was again chosen as one of the members. Soon after this time being desirous to see foreign countries, and so like the old travellers to enlarge his mind and "read mankind their laws and arts," Mr. Legh decided to visit the East, which was a journey then far from being as safe as it is now. Undeterred by its ordinary dangers or even by the plague which had broken out in Egypt, after visiting the islands of the Aegean and seeing Mytilene, Scio, Delos, Mycone, Athens, Zante, and Malta, he sailed to Alexandria, and passing on from thence up the Nile he reached Nubia. No traveller up to this time had penetrated as far as Ibrim, the capital of that country; and to Mr. Legh, therefore, belongs the credit of having passed that boundary, a feat which he accomplished by the sword; not, however, by cutting his way with it, but by presenting the Sheik with an English blade, the sight of which so gladdened the Sheik's eyes that it opened the country like a key. M. De Sauley, when he wished to procure a similar favour from the Sultan of Kerak, offered to give him either a Paris weapon, for which he said he had given say 500 piastres, when in fact he had not given half that sum, was rightly served by the Sultan declining to take the weapon, and electing instead to take the 500 piastres. We may doubt whether on this occasion the traveller found it as great a pleasure to be cheated as to cheat.

But the French traveller seems to have viewed deceit in the light of a little harmless pleasantry, for after entertaining another Eastern official with the performances of a musical box, he told him that the music inside was made by a little animal which was shut up in the box.

On his return home Mr. Legh published an account of his travels in a well written volume, which was as free from all trace of *bavardage* [i.e. gossip, Ed.] as even old Norden himself could desire, who in his horror of some former travellers, said, "*ils ont la rage de bavarder*."

²⁰⁷ [This is incorrect; Thomas was born in 1792. Ed.]

Mr. Legh in his volume, drew early attention to the slave trade as it then existed without a check in Egypt, and of which the horrors could hardly be exaggerated. He must have thought Cairo, which boasts herself, "Misr without an equal and Misr the mother of the world," in her cruelty more like a stepmother than a true mother, when he visited the slave market, "where, to say nothing of the moral reflections suggested by the traffic in human beings, the senses were offended in a most disagreeable manner by the excessive state of filthiness in which these miserable beings were compelled to exist. They were crowded together in enclosures like the sheep pens of Smithfield, the consequences of which may be more readily conceived than described." And he afterwards gives an account of the dreadful mortality which attended the transit of these slaves from the place of their capture to their place of sale.

An incident which occurred to Mr. Legh on his Nile boat serves to show that he encountered dangers unknown to the modern voyager on that river.

"An Albanian soldier," he says, "on his way up the river directed his musket and deliberately fired at me, the ball passed close to my head, went through the hat of my dragoman, and hit the arm of my friend Mr. Smelt. When we applied to the cacheff for redress for so wanton an outrage we received for answer that the soldier, like ourselves, was a passenger, and that being on the water he was not liable to his jurisdiction."

The sword given to the Pasha of Ibrim would have been valuable if it could have been used in punishing this Albanian miscreant had he been overtaken.

But the story of Mr. Legh's visit to the crocodile mummy pits, at Amabdi in the desert, will be best told in his own words. Having heard some wonderful stories of these pits, he and some fellow travellers determined to explore them.

"We crept, for seven or eight yards through an opening at the bottom of a pit, which was partly choked up with the drifting sand of the desert, and found ourselves in a huge chamber about fifteen feet high; whilst holding up my torch to examine the vault I accidentally scorched one of the bats that were flying about. We had all of us torches, and we now entered a low gallery, in which we continued for more than an hour stooping or creeping, as was necessary, and following its windings. We at length found the opening of the chamber, which we now approached guarded by a trench of unknown depth, and wide enough to require a good leap. The first Arab jumped the ditch, and we all followed him. The passage we entered was extremely small, and so low in some places as to oblige us to crawl flat on the ground, and almost always on our hands and knees. The intricacies of its windings resembled a labyrinth, and terminated at length in a chamber much smaller than that we had left; but, like it, containing nothing to satisfy our curiosity. Our search hitherto had been fruitless, but the mummies might not be far distant. Another search, and we might still be successful. The Arab whom I followed, and who led the way, now entered another gallery, and we all continued to move in the same manner as before, each preceded by a guide. We had not gone far before the heat became so excessive that for my own part, I found my breathing extremely difficult; my head began to ache most violently, and I had a most distressing sensation of fullness about the heart. We felt we had gone too far, and yet were almost deprived of the power of returning. At this moment the torch of the first Arab went out. I was close to him, and saw him fall on his side; he uttered a groan, his legs were strongly convulsed, and I heard a rattling

noise in his throat—he was dead. The Arab behind me seeing the torch of his companion extinguished, and conceiving that he had stumbled, passed me, and advanced to his assistance, and stooped. I observed him appear faint, totter and fall in a moment—he also was dead. The third Arab came forward and made an effort to approach the bodies, but stopped short. We looked at each other in silent horror. The danger increased every instant, our torches burnt faintly, our breathing became more difficult, our knees tottered under us, and we felt our strength nearly gone. There was no time to be lost. Our American companion, Barthow, cried out to us to take courage, and we began to move back as fast as we could. The windings of the passages through which we had come increased the difficulty of our escape. We might take a wrong turn, and never reach the great chamber we had first entered. Even supposing we took the shortest road, it was but too probable our strength would fail us before we arrived there.

We had each of us separately and unknown to one another observed attentively the shapes of the different stones which projected into the galleries we had passed, so that each had an imperfect clue to the labyrinth we had now to retrace. We compared notes, and only on one occasion had a dispute, our American companion differing from my friend and myself. In this dilemma we were determined by the majority; and fortunately we were right. Exhausted with fatigue and terror, we reached the edge of the deep trench, which remained to be crossed before we could get into the great chamber. Mustering all my strength, I leaped, and was followed by the American. Smelt stood on the brink ready to drop with fatigue. He called for us to help him over the fosse, or at least to wait for five minutes to allow him to recover his strength. It was impossible—to stay was death; and we could not resist the desire to push on and reach the open air. We encouraged him, however, to summon all his force, and he cleared the trench. When we reached the open air it was one o'clock, and the heat of the sun, about 100 deg."

A new danger awaited the travellers on their emerging from the pit without their guides; the whole Arab population threw dust into the air and clamoured for their lives, and the consequences might have been serious if the three Arabs who had not died but only fainted in the pit had not revived and come out in time to prevent the threatened ill consequences.

Mr. Legh made a second journey to the East when he was among the very first travellers who found his way from Egypt to Palestine by the valley of Wady Mousa.

In the last Parliament of King George III, which was called in 1820, Mr. Legh was again elected one of the members for Newton; and in the next Parliament, the first which was summoned by George IV, he received the same honour.

After his return home from his last visit to the East, Mr. Legh, with a view to his own interest, and at the same time not without a sincere desire to improve the town of Warrington, where he had some land, which, though it lay in the direction towards which the town must extend, was yet unproductive, determined to offer it on building leases at eligible rates for very long terms of years. Having formed this determination, he had good plans made of the land, which showed how he proposed it should be occupied; and retaining very pleasurable recollections of his foreign travels he gave to the intended streets and places names borrowed from those he had visited in his travels abroad; and to this we owe it that we have in Warrington a Palmyra Square, an Egypt Street, a Cairo Street, a Suez Street, and until it was

lately changed we had a Pyramid Street. When Choiseul, the minister of France from 1758 to 1770, had taken umbrage at the city of Geneva, and thought to ruin that place by building another city to rival it on the banks of its magnificent lake, he laid out in order to carry out his design long lines of streets, walks, and public places, and called them Richelieu Avenue, Choiseul Street, and the Grand Place, so that on paper the future city seemed already complete, though in reality it wanted houses and inhabitants, of all things the most necessary, to make it perfect; but these never came, and the town, like the base motive of the designer, came to naught. Mr. Legh's plans, however, met with better success; and houses, streets, and buildings soon covered his land, which from being unproductive was found soon to yield a large yearly revenue.

In 1826 there occurred in Lancashire an outrageous case of abduction, the carrying off of the young heiress of Shrigley Park, which was very near to Lyme. As the nearest magistrate Mr. Legh was called upon to act in the case when the offenders were apprehended. Edward Gibbon Wakefield, William Wakefield, Edward Thevenot, and Frances Wakefield, it appeared, had entered into a conspiracy to carry off Miss Ellen Turner, a young lady of fifteen, the only child of William Turner, esquire, of Shrigley Hall, a gentleman of large property, and to marry her under false representations to Edward Gibbon Wakefield, who was then a widower of the age of 31, and the father of a young family.

Frances Wakefield, the daughter of Dr. Davis, the headmaster of Macclesfield school, and the step-mother of the two Wakefields, although up to this time she had been only known as Miss Davis, has the credit of having concocted the plan for securing and carrying out their design. Shrigley was near Macclesfield, and Mrs. Wakefield (nee Davis), knowing that Miss Turner was likely to be a great heiress, suggested to Edward Gibbon Wakefield, that she would be a valuable prize if he could only carry her off and marry her. After their plan had been laid and well considered all the four actors took the parts assigned them. Having bought a handsome carriage with the money which Mrs. Wakefield furnished them, they agreed that she should be the directress of the plot, and that Thevenot, whose name was surely given on the *lucus a non lucendo*²⁰⁸ principle, was to play the part of valet or lacquey to the two Wakefields, of whom Edward was to marry the lady, and William was to assist in carrying her off. Having first ascertained that Mr. Turner was not at Shrigley, but was absent in London, and that Mrs. Turner, his wife, was sick and confined to the house, a letter, which purported to be written by a physician who signed himself John Ainsworth, M.D., was sent to Miss Daulby, of Liverpool, the governess under whose care Miss Turner had been placed. In the letter, which was written with great cleverness, Mrs. Turner was described as being threatened with an attack which might at any time prove fatal; but Miss Daulby at the same time was warned not to disclose to Miss Turner the worst, but to send her home in the doctor's carriage, of which the servant Thevenot, the bearer of the letter, had charge. So well did this person play his part, that on the 7th May, when the letter was delivered, he received Miss Turner from her governess without having excited the slightest suspicion.

From Liverpool he brought her in the carriage through Warrington to Manchester, where Edward Gibbon Wakefield, then calling himself Captain Wilson, was in waiting to receive her. He introduced himself to her with much apparent respect, and very slowly and cautiously informed her that it was not so much her mother's illness as the state of her father's affairs which had led to her being sent for; and that he, as her father's friend, whose uncle had lent him a large sum of money, had been sent to conduct her to her father, who was

²⁰⁸ [Means illogical relating to a pun on the name - Thief Not. Ed.]

then threatened with ruin, from which she, and she alone, could both save him, and preserve the Shrigley estate. William Wakefield, Edward's accomplice, who was now introduced to her, accompanied them from Manchester, whence they posted forward and proceeded with four horses to Halifax, and from thence in the same way to Carlisle, inventing various reasons from time to time to lull the young lady's suspicions and to account for their not meeting with her father at Manchester or Halifax. At Carlisle, which was not far from Gretna, the sight of a carriage and four drew a crowd about the inn door while the horses were being changed. Edward Wakefield there entered the hotel alone, and upon his return he told Miss Turner that there were bailiffs in the crowd waiting to arrest her father, who was in the inn, but durst not come out lest he should be taken, and that he had desired her to hasten forward to Scotland, and there marry him, Mr. Wakefield, as the only means of saving the Shrigley estates. Upon this they hastened on to Gretna, where they were married in the usual way by the village blacksmith, to whom they gave two guineas and some champagne, or as he called it "some chumpine" to drink the married couple's good health. William Wakefield and another person signed the certificate, which the blacksmith gave to the bride and bridegroom, and which to make it look more formal had a rough print of the King's arms at the top.

From Gretna they posted with four horses to London, whither it was now pretended that Mr. Turner had gone with a view of retiring into France, in order to be safe from arrest. In London, Edward Wakefield pretended to receive tidings that Mr. Turner had already gone to France, having left orders for them to follow him thither with the utmost speed. Having reached Calais, they took up their quarters at an hotel; but in the meantime Mr. Turner, whom the news of his daughter's daring abduction had prostrated and overcome, having obtained warrants for the arrest of the two Wakefields, dispatched his brother and brother-in-law and his solicitor to Calais, where on the beach they met Edward Wakefield walking with the young lady, who, seeing her uncle left her pretended husband and immediately rushed into her uncle's arms, and forthwith returned home with him. The two Wakefields, coming back to England a few months afterwards were apprehended and taken before Mr. Legh, the nearest magistrate, who committed them both to Lancaster Castle to take their trial for their offence. At the next assizes, held on the 23rd March, 1827, they were indicted and tried, and being found guilty were each sentenced by Mr. Baron Hullock to be imprisoned for the term of three years. Soon afterwards an Act of Parliament was obtained, and the pretended marriage, which it was proved had never been consummated, was annulled and set aside.

Mr. Legh, on whom the task devolved of investigating the facts of this painful case, and who like a knight of old thus came to the young lady's rescue, must have felt his sympathy painfully awakened by the romantic story of her wrongs. This feeling was akin to affection; and in 1829, with the approbation of her father and the general satisfaction of the neighbourhood, he married the lady who had been thus rescued.²⁰⁹

²⁰⁹ Of Edward Gibbon Wakefield, who figured to such disadvantage in the above case, an obituary notice of his death on 16th May, 1862, at Wellington, New Zealand, appeared in the *Gentleman's Magazine*, of October, 1862. After he was committed to prison for Miss Turner's abduction, he immediately set himself to studying our penal code, and writing a book upon his gaol experiences, which work being well written led to some reforms in our criminal law. He next turned his attention to the convict system in our Australian colonies, and wrote a series of letters all dated from Sydney, where he had never been. These letters led to an exposure of the evils of transportation to the colonies, and brought about its abolition. In 1833 he published his *England and America*, which also had its results, and actually brought about the formation of the colony of South Australia. Turning his attention next to New Zealand, he became a director of the New Zealand Association, through which that colony was founded. He afterwards went to Canada as private secretary to Lord Durham, and when he returned again to England his health gave way, and he retired first to France and then to New Zealand, where he had some relations, with whom he died. Very recently (1876) a bust of him, the work of Joseph Durham,

The Shrigley domains were near to Lyme, and by this marriage there was a prospect of these two properties being united in one ownership; but, alas! this hope proved fallacious, for Mrs. Legh, after giving birth to a daughter, was carried to a premature grave. A beautiful piece of Italian²¹⁰ sculpture placed over her remains in the family chapel at Winwick, in which Mrs. Legh is represented commending her infant child to her husband's care in the last parting scene, commemorates her death and the grief of her husband over his loss. Upon the monument is this inscription:-

“In the vault of this chapel are deposited the remains of Ellen, the dearly beloved wife of Thomas Legh, esquire, of Lyme Hall, Cheshire, and daughter of William Turner, esquire, of Shrigley Park, in the same county. Born 12 Feb. 1811. Died 17 Jan. 1831. Leaving an only surviving child, Ellen Jane Legh, born 20 Feb. 1830.”

Mr. Legh, who after the dissolution of the Parliament to which he was elected in 1820, had not afterwards sought parliamentary honours, in 1831 saw the borough of Newton, which had then existed for two centuries and a half, and in which he had a paramount interest, consigned to “the tomb of all the Capulets ” by being included in schedule A of the Reform Act. Not being then in Parliament he was spared the pain of hearing what must have been painful to him to hear the singing of its last dirge. If the circumstances which have happened since, and which by making Newton an early centre of the railway system and thus drawing to it a large population had happened sooner, the place might fairly have retained at least one of its two representatives in Parliament. Mr. Stephenson, the great father of railways, who made Newton his place of abode at the time of the building of the great Sankey viaduct, used to tell in after life this story, which has not found its way into his biography. His well-earned reputation as the inventor of railways having made him known abroad, he was sent for by Leopold, the King of the Belgians, to advise him as to the first railway in that country; and on his return he said, “As I was sitting wi’ the King there was a knocking at the door, to which the King said, ‘Come in!’ and who do you think it should be but the Queen? and she said to me, ‘Noo, Mr. Stephenson, be sure you don’t kill my good mon upo’ the railway as you kilt Mr. Huskisson.’” A few years after Mrs. Legh’s death Mr. Legh married for his second wife Maude, the daughter of Georges Lowther, esquire; and after much suffering in his later years from violent attacks of rheumatic gout, supposed to have been brought on by exposure during his extensive foreign travels, he died at Lyme on the 7th May, 1857.

CHAPTER 20

Thomas Burnaby Legh

THOMAS BURNABY LEGH, a lieutenant in the Royal Navy, the eldest son of Mr. Legh’s late brother William Legh, esquire, and the next tenant in tail in remainder of the family estates expectant, on the decease of Mr. Legh, the tenant for life, having attained his full age, joined his uncle in destroying the old entail and resettling the estates. Lieutenant Legh, however, did not live to enter upon the great inheritance he had in prospect, but died unmarried at Richmond in the lifetime of his uncle in the year 1855.

A.R.A., has been placed in a suitable position in the New Colonial Office. It is not often that so questionable a beginning makes such an ending.

²¹⁰ The plaque is not Italian but by Alfred Gatley, a sculptor from Bollington in Cheshire.

CHAPTER 21

William John Legh, 1st Lord Newton, 1828-98

WILLIAM JOHN LEGH, the present worthy representative of the family, succeeded on the death of his uncle to the family estates, under both the new and the old settlement, on the 7th May 1857. At the death of his brother, Mr. Legh was serving as captain with his regiment, the 12th Fusiliers, in the Crimea, where he took part in the battle of Inkerman. At the general election in April, 1859, he was elected one of the representatives of South Lancashire, and at two elections he has been returned for East Cheshire, of which he is one of the present members. Mr. Legh married the daughter of the Rev. Canon Wodehouse, and having a family both of sons and daughters, his ancient house, we may confidently hope, will be long transmitted in a direct line of succession; and so, wishing and hoping, we conclude this account, which has traced the family through half a millennium of years.