SOME NOTES ON WILLIAM DE COURTENAY, FOUNDER OF WORSPRING PRIORY, HIS WIFE ADA OF DUNBAR, AND HIS PROBABLE PLACE IN THE COURTENAY PEDIGREE.

By JOSEPH BAIN, F.S.A. *Scot.*

There is one member of the illustrious family of Courtenay in whom I have long felt interest in connection with Scottish history, chiefly from the fact that Dugdale, Chalmers and others, have been unable to fix his true place in the lineage. This is William de Courtenay, who, in right of his wife, was a Scottish landowner, probably the only one of his name. He married a wife of the highest rank, Ada of Dunbar, daughter of the first Earl Patrick by his wife Ada daughter of King William the Lyon. The Earl gave his daughter the lands of Home in Berwickshire, *in liberum maritagium*.[1] The husband died without issue, and thus ended the short connection of the Courtenays with Scotland.

This is about all we learn of the alliance. The Scottish authorities know nothing more about William, the English nothing of Ada but her christian name. Dugdale no doubt suggests[2] that William was the son, born in Normandy, by a first wife, of Reginald de Courtenay, who flourished from 1168 to 1194, whose son Robert, (by a second wife Hawise de Abrincis) was the undoubted ancestor of the Earls of Devon. He assigns to William as his wife, Matilda daughter of Robert (a natural son of Henry I.,) and his stepmother Hawise; adding that he founded Worspring Priory in Somerset, and in 9 John gave a fine of 400 marks to that King for the lands of Baldwin de Bollers, which were of his inheritance. He could not fix the date of his death, but says that he died *s.p.* Now, this want of exact information, about a man of such rank as to ally himself with a daughter of the house of Gospatric, is remarkable, and I have always kept in view the possibility of finding out his real position in the line of the Courtenays. Dugdale, in concluding his brief notice of him, remarks that William de Cantilupe and Vitalis Engaine preferred some claims on his death to the lordship of Badmundesfelde (part of the De Bollers inheritance). These names led me some time ago to a quarter that may show his right place among his kindred.

First, as to his marriage. Chalmers says that Ada his widow married secondly her own cousin William son of Patrick of Greenlaw, a younger son of the [third] Earl Gospatric. They

[1] Chalmers, *Caledonia*, vol. ii. p. 246, citing Chart. of Kelso.
[2] *Bar.* i. p. 634.

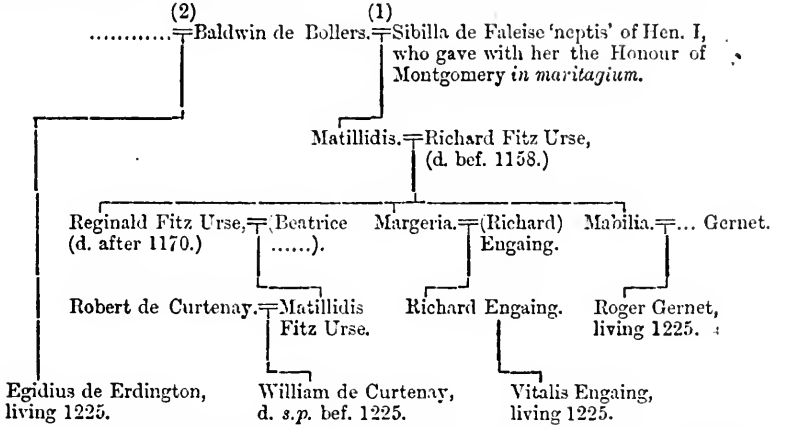
founded the family now represented by the Earl of Home. But it is certain that *an* Ada widow of *a* William de Courtenay married as her second husband a member of another great English family, Lascelles. On 5 October, 1217, Henry III. commanded the sheriff of Essex to give seisin to Ada widow of William de Courtenay, of her husband's lands in Uppeminster, of which Viellus Engaine had disseised her. And on 5 April, 1218, the case was settled by Viellus paying the King ten marks for the manor, and Ada retaining her dower as Courtenay's widow.[1] She next appears as the wife of Theobald de Lascelles, in Hilary Term 1219-20, where they claim her dower as Courtenay's widow, in Bulewic, Northamptonshire, against William de Cantilupe. From the pleading it seems to have come to Courtenay as heir of Reginald Fitz Urse and his wife Beatrice.[2] In October, 1225, Ada was again a widow, and claims dower in Theobald's lands in York and Lincolnshire, against the Prior of Giseburn and Roger de Lascelles.[3] After this she appears no more in the English records, and doubtless returned to her own country, still a young and well dowered widow, where her marriage to her cousin William took place.

Now it appears to me that this William de Courtenay is the same man as the William styled by Dugdale the eldest son of Reginald by his first wife—an error, as will be shewn by-and-bye. But he is also wrong in making him marry Matilda, called the daughter of his reputed father's second wife Hawise de Abrincis. And there is no evidence of more than one William, who was a man of considerable possessions in Shropshire, Somerset, Northampton and Essex. Besides, I have shewn that William the husband of Ada succeeded to lands as heir of Reginald Fitz Urse, while Dugdale's William was also an inheritor of lands derived from Baldwin de Bollers, Fitz Urse's ancestor; and that the succession in the case of both was disputed by William de Cantilupe and Viellus (or Vitalis) Engaine, claiming through the same ancestry. And finally, both Williams died without issue, mine shortly before 1215, and Dugdale's some time after 1209, the precise date unknown to him. Moreover, some years ago, while pursuing my search in the Records for documents relating to Scotland, I found on a Coram Rege Roll of 9 Henry III, a plea relative to the succession to Baldwin de Bollers in the Honour of Montgomery in Shropshire, where the name of William de Courtenay occurred, which at once attracted my attention, as Vitalis Engaine appeared as a plaintiff. It has a close bearing on the question of identity, and runs as follows:—

Salopia. Vitalis Engaing apponit clamium suum in Honore de Mungumery ut ille cujus jus tale est. Dominus Rex Henricus senex dedit terram illam in maritagium

[1] *Calendar of Documents, Scotland*, vol. i. Nos. 677, 694.
[2] *Ib.* No. 753.
[3] *Ib.* Nos. 919, 921

Baldewino de Bollers cum Sibilla de Faleise nepte ipsius Henrici Regis. Eadem Sibilla habuit unam filiam Matillidem de ipso Baldewino quam dominus Henricus Rex dedit Ricardo filio Ursi, qui de ea habuit unum filium et duas filias, scilicet, Reginaldum filium Ursi et Margeriam primogenitam et Mabiliam. Reginaldus habuit unam filiam Matillidem nomine, uxorem Roberti de Curtenay et matrem Willelmi de Curtenay qui mortuus est sine herede de se. Unde per defectum heredis debuit terra illa reverti ad predictas Margeria[m]et Mabilia[m]. Margeria habuit unum filium Ricardum Engaing nomine. Ricardus unum filium Vitalem nomine qui nunc. Mabilia fuit mater Rogeri Gernet. Unde ad eos debet hereditas predicti Willelmi de Curtenay reverti. [*Then follows the claim of Egidius de Erdington as descended from Baldwin by a second wife*]. In Tabulated Form as under :—



On consulting Eyton's Shropshire, I found that painstaking antiquary had previously seen this pleading, of which he gives an abstract (vol. xi. p. 127). It identifies my William de Courtenay with Dugdale's, proving his descent from the Fitz Urses and De Bollers, which latter family, as Mr. Eyton shews, failed in the male line in 1207.[1] He also names Ada as wife of William, and her subsequent marriage to Lascelles. But says nothing more of her, probably not knowing who she was. The pleading also shews that William was the son of Robert de Curtenay and Matillidis Fitz Urse, the only child of the notorious Reginald, murderer of Archbishop Becket.

These notes, which had been laid aside for a time for further evidence, were revived by an original and most interesting charter recently discovered among the Dunster Castle or Luttrell MSS. by Mr. Maxwell Lyte, (now Deputy Keeper of the Public Records), which he has kindly communicated to me. In this deed Robert de Curt',[2] addressing his friends and men, French and English, clerks and laymen, confirms to Robert Fitz Urse and his heirs the lands of Swallowcliff[3] and Williton,

[1] This explains his making the fine for the De Bollers succession, mentioned by Dugdale, which indicates that his mother Matilda Fitz Urse, through whom only he could claim, was then dead.

[2] So contracted throughout. An abstract of this document appears in the 6th appendix to the 10th Report of the Historical MSS. Commission.

[3] Süalüeclevé, in the deed.

which his brother Reginald Fitz Urse gave and apportioned to him. And ratifies an agreement by himself, on behalf of his wife Matilda, with said Robert, concerning land at Lokinges, &c. The first two of the twenty witnesses are Reginald de Curt' and William de Curt'. The deed is undated, but from its style is probably of 1180-90.

There can be little doubt that the granter is the Robert who married Matilda Fitz Urse, and therefore the father of William. But the relationship of the witnesses Reginald and William to the granter is not stated. Was this Reginald his elder brother? And what position in the family did the granter himself occupy? Can it be that he was the Robert de Curtenay, 'cognatus' of Queen Eleanor, through whose means he married, as her second husband, a great north country heiress, Alicia de Rumeli, one of the three sisters of William, the Boy of Egremont?[1] *This* Robert, who married Alicia before 1195, was thus contemporary with the granter of the Dunster charter. To the objection that the latter had a wife Matilda, it may be answered that the other Robert, like Alicia, may have been married before. This conjecture is strengthened by the circumstance that in several fines between Robert and Alicia and their Cumberland vassals in 1208,[2] the holding of the latter is declared to be of Alicia's heirs, not her husband's. This looks as if he had been a widower, with issue by a previous wife already provided for. At all events, he and Robert de Courtenay of the Dunster charter must have died about the same year, 1209 or 1210, in which latter year William de Courtenay founded Worspring. In his letter to Joceline, Bishop of Bath,[3] signifying his purpose to found a house of Austin Canons, he says that his father Robert de Courtenay is buried in the Chapel of the Blessed Thomas Martyr on his domain at Worspring. This is a curious proof of the connection of his mother's family, the Fitz Urses, with the Archbishop's murder, as it was in all probability an expiatory chapel.

Moreover, Alicia de Rumeli being the second cousin of Earl Patrick, father of Ada de Courtenay, it may well be that through this relationship her husband's son William came to marry the Earl's daughter.

The close connection of Alicia's husband Robert with the main line is shewn by her making an essoin from illness at *Sutton in Berkshire*, on 9 May 1209.[4] No day was fixed, on account of Robert de Curtenay's transfretation, presumably her husband.[5]

[1] She was the grand-daughter of Duncan II, King of Scotland, and his wife Ethelreda daughter of Earl Gospatric.

[2] *Calendar of Documents, Scotland*, vol. i, Nos. 427, 430.

[3] Dugdale, *Mon.* vi, p. 414, from the original, Cotton Library.

[4] The more probable year, though it might have been 1210, from the well-known circumstance of Ascension Day, when John's reign began, being moveable.

[5] *Calendar of Documents, Scotland*, i, No. 473. Dugdale, *Bar.* i, p. 636, states, on the

Cleaveland, the historian of the Courtenays, makes William de Courtenay (husband of Ada), Robert (husband of Alicia de Rumeli), and a Reginald, to have been sons of an earlier William, a younger brother of Reginald of Okehampton. But there is no room for two Williams, father and son. Yet Cleaveland may be right in making the second William's father the younger brother of Reginald, and in error merely in calling him "William," instead of "Robert." He was an important personage, even if a younger brother. But the fact that on the failure of his line in the person of his son William, their extensive estates did not go to their relations by the father's side, but to Cantilupes and Engains, who claimed through maternal descent, tallies with their position as a junior line. The bulk, if not all of their lands, came from the mother's side, and therefore fitly reverted there, failing direct issue.

A DIARY OF TRAVEL IN 1647-8.

(*Concluded from Vol. II., N.S., p.* 121.)

ROME within y^e^ Circuit of y^e^ walles without doubt is one of the greatest cities of Europe, which Circuite is and hath allway bin accounted 18 miles, most of y^e^ old wall (built by Bellizarius Liuetenant to y^e^ Emp: Justinianus) is yet standing, which is of brick, full of little Towres, and high; the part that is new (built by P: Vrban 8) is of white stone, and low. It is seated low vppon y^e^ Tyber, in Ital: *Tenere*, [*d*] which most yeares drownes y^e^ lower rooms of a great part of y^e^ towne, that they are forc'd to relieve y^e^ inhabitants with necessaries by boats. Rome is allsoe seated amongst so many Hills [*e*] y^t^ y^e^ towne is not discried to be of any greatnes til you are

[*d*] The Riuer Tenere or Tiber riseth from y^e^ Appenine Mountaines on y^e^ edge of y^e^ D: of Toscany's Cuntry, and emptyeth it selfe at Ostia, 15 miles from Rome; it is a riuer very meane (though so much admir'd by y^e^ Poets), not soe good as our Seuerne, rapid, muddily, and nigh Rome dangerous, being in many places almost stank'd vp with ruines, which y^e^ Genueses offer to cleanse, beside to giue a good somme of money, in hopes of y^e^ riches there buried.

[*e*] Rome famous for 7 Hills :—

Capitolinus, or Rupis Tarpea[1]	now call'd		Campidoglio[2]
Palatinus			Palazzo Major
Auentinus			Santa Sabina
Æsquilinus			St. Pietro in vinculo
Cœlius			St. Igovani Lattrano
Viminalis			St. Laurenzo
Quirinalis			Monte Cauallo
The 2 other Hills of Rome are:—			
Pincius	now		Trinita de Monte
Janiculus			St. Pietro Mortorio

---

authority of the Pipe Roll, 11 John, that Robert the son of Reginald and Hawise, was constrained to give the King 400 marks more and 2 great horses for the manor of Sutton in Berkshire formerly belonging to *Robert his uncle*, although he already held it by inheritance from his father in King Richard's time. This uncle could be no other than Robert the husband of Alicia de Rumeli.

[1] "Capitolinus, call'd *'rupis Tarpea'* from Tarpea daughter to a Roman that defended it against Titus Tacius, king of the Sabines, who, being taken by a perdue of the Sabines, fetching water from the Tyber, vppon promise of marriage promis'd allso to steale y^e^ keys from her father in her brothers habitt, and betray y^e^ Capitol, which she did, but was in the confusion, being in mans habit, thrown of y^e^ Rock amongst y^e^ Ro: Soldiers and fownd dashd to peeces."

[2] "The famous capitall, call'd *Sedes Jouis optimi Maximi*, full of Antiquities."