OUR ENGLISH HAPSBURGS: A GREAT DELUSION.

Romantic in its story, unique in its splendour, the descent of the Feildings, Earls of Denbigh, is without a rival in the English Peerage. Their Earldom, comparatively ancient (1622) though it be, is, as it were, but a creation of yesterday by the side of that dignity of Count of Hapsburg, which they have held for centuries in the male line as members of the proudest and one of the mightiest of the reigning houses of Europe. For it is no mere question of pedigree that is involved in their illustrious descent: the Earls, according to Burke's *Peerage*, are Counts of Hapsburg, Lauffenburg and Rheinfelden; an eagle of Austria bears their arms, which are surmounted by the cap of a Count of the Empire; and the name of Rudolph, which the heads of the house have borne now for two generations, keeps before our eyes a descent immortalised by the pen of Gibbon.

Nor is it only in Burke's *Peerage* that this descent is fully recognized.[1] In Dugdale's *Warwickshire* and in his *Baronage* it is accepted as an undoubted fact. It has been recognised, one may say, by the English Crown in the patent of creation for the Barony of St. Liz. (1664): it is said to have been always recognized by the Emperors of Austria themselves, and is at least, as I am credibly informed, admitted by the reigning sovereign. Indeed, I have seen it stated, on what ought to be good authority, that an Earl of Denbigh has been treated by the Imperial Ambassador at Rome "in all respects as a member of the Imperial House," and "as if he was one of the Grand Dukes."

There is no lack of documentary evidence in support of the family claims. In addition to the documents given by Dugdale, many others will be found in the elaborate history of the family, composed for its head in 1670 by the Rev. Nathaniel Wanley, and printed in what is perhaps the best known of our county histories, Nichols' *Leicestershire*.[2]

The story, as I have said, is somewhat romantic. Geoffrey, Count of Hapsburg, Laufenburg and Rheinfelden (d. 1271), head of the younger line of Hapsburg, is said to have been reduced to comparative poverty by his cousin Rudolph (afterwards the first Hapsburg Emperor) and to have sent his son and namesake Geoffrey to England, *temp.* Hen. III. This younger Geoffrey married Maud de Colville over here, took the name of Feilding ("Felden"), and had issue a son and heir Geoffrey, who, by his wife Agnes de Napton, was the direct ancestor of the Earls of Denbigh. Geoffrey, the father, returning to Germany, was refused his inheritance for having married Maud de Colville without his family's permission; and Geoffrey his son, likewise

[1] So, in Mr. Shirley's well-known "Noble and Gentlemen of England" we read:—"The princely extraction of this noble family is well-known; its ancestor Galfridus, or Geoffrey, came into England in the twelfth year of the reign of Henry III, and received large possessions from that monarch. The name is derived from Rin*felden* in Germany, where, and at Lauffenburg were the patrimonial possessions of the House of Hapsburg."

[2] Vol. 4, Part I, pp. 273-290. It is there stated that there was another similar history of the family executed "before the year 1658," which being sent to London by command of George II, for his inspection, "unfortunately perished by fire."

disinherited, eventually (1309) obtained from Count Rudolph, the uncle who had supplanted him, a sum of 7,000 marcs in compensation for his claim on Rheinfelden. The deeds relating to this transaction are carefully preserved by the family.

I have, for some time, been interested in this unique story, because, unless it is wholly false, it must be wholly true, in which case it is difficult to exaggerate the splendour of the claim it involves. A certain John Vincent, of whom we shall hear again, spoke of Feilding's "originall from that greate German family of Hapsburg, that hath produced so many emperors, kings, and great nobility, in many countries of Christendome,"[1] and the worthy Wanley urged their right "to claime alliance with the godds, meaning crowned kings."

But now comes the strange point that first raised my suspicion. I found that although the family had come here, we are told, under Henry III., their earliest assumption of the German *dignities* seems to have been under Charles II. (1675-1685).[2]

As to the German *descent* it first appears in print, so far as I can find, in Dugdale's *Warwickshire* (1656).[3] In short, as was observed in the *Quarterly Review*,[4] it was only after their lucky rise, through marriage with Buckingham's sister,[5] that, "in due course, the family revealed a fact which they had hitherto kept to themselves, namely that they were not of English origin, but were descended, in the male line, from the mighty house of Hapsburg." Let us turn for proof of this assertion to four sources of information: (1) the family monuments, (2) a glass window put up by the family at their seat, (3) the family pedigrees, (4) the family patents.

On the family monuments and brasses, of which several are recorded, we find neither mention of the Hapsburg descent, nor use of the Hapsburg arms.[6] To the family window of painted glass I attach considerable importance. It may be remembered that the famous imposture by which the Cambridgeshire Stewarts were derived from the Royal Stuarts of Scotland was supported by a similar glass window, which was made to confirm the descent. The Feilding window was put up (or at least completed), it would seem, about the close of the sixteenth century, for the first Lord Denbigh's parents are the last members of the family that it depicts. Erected *ad majorem gloriam gentis*, we might fairly expect it to make the most of their pedigree, especially at a period, in these matters, so unscrupulous. Yet it only begins with Geoffrey Feilding who married Agnes de Napton, an heiress, under Ed. II. or Ed. III. Coming now to our third source—

[1] Nichols *ut supra*, 278.

[2] This is the date of the third Earl, in whose time there was executed an engraving of the family seat, on which he was assigned the style of "Comes de Hapsburg, Dom's Loffenburg & Rinfelden in Germania, Baron of Newnham Padox & S^{t} Liz, Viscount Feilding & Earle of Denbigh in England," etc., etc. It is probably to this that Burke refers when he says that "William, third Earl of Denbigh, resumed the ancient denomination of HAPSBURG, which his descendants still use."

[3] In Burton's *Description of Leicestershire* it had not yet appeared. (See Nichols, p. 251.)

[4] Oct. 1893, p. 390.

[5] See Gardiner's *History of the Civil War* and the *Dictionary of National Biography*.

[6] See Dugdale's *Warwickshire* and Nichols' *Leicestershire*.

the pedigrees—we find the Visitation Pedigree of 1563[1] beginning in the same way with this Geoffrey and Agnes. The Visitation of 1619 raises a difficult question. The copy of this Visitation among the Harleian MSS. is in the actual handwriting of Sampson Leunard, Bluemantle, and bears his arms upon the cover, as we learn from the official catalogue. Now he was one of the deputies who actually took this Visitation for Camden. We may therefore claim this MS. as the very best authority. Humphrey Wanley, to whom, I believe, we owe the long note on it in the official catalogue, discusses its relation to the College copy (C. 7), which is less full and, in that sense, imperfect. This discussion is worth reading by all who are interested in the genesis and *modus operandi* of Visitations. Now the Feilding pedigree, which is duly found in Bluemantle's own copy,[2] is here carried back for two generations to a "John Feldinge," but an alternative descent is also entered as "out of Mr. Feilding's pedigree." This carries back the descent from Geoffrey and Agnes for *nine* generations (!), and is one of those familiar concoctions that nobody nowadays accepts. Its only value lies in its witness that the family were already trying to get beyond Geoffrey, though the glorious vision of Hapsburg had not yet burst upon their view.[3]

Turning next to our fourth source, a comparison of the family patents of creation leads us to the same conclusion. The original patent for the Barony (30 Dec. 1620) recites that "Willelmus Feilding miles genere et nomine clarus et illustris ex antiquâ Willingtoniorum quondam baronum hujus regni familiâ per multas baronum et equitum auratorum successiones oriundus est."[4] This claim can scarcely be said to err on the side of modesty, for according even to Dugdale, the panegyrist of the family, the new peer's ancestor was William Willington, "a wealthy merchant of the staple," who bought a property at Barcheston, Warwickshire, 14 Sept. 23 Hen. VII, "depopulated the town" in the following year, and died in 1555. According to Dugdale, he was

> "son to John Willington of Todnam in Gloucestershire, and he of William Willington of the same place, son of another John; descended, *as 'tis probable*, from that Ralph de Wylinton, who lived in E. I time, of which line *I conceive that* John de Wylinton and Ralph de Wylinton were, who in the times of King Edward 3 and Ric. 2 had successively summons to Parliament amongst the Barons of this Realm."[5]

So much for the long succession of Barons and *equites aurati* from whom, according to this veracious patent, Lord Feilding derived his descent. But even in this patent there is, we see, no trace of the Hapsburg claim. Nor is it found two years later, when the Earldom was created (1622). But when we come to the St. Liz patent of 1664, we read:—

[1] Coll. Arm. G. xi, fo. 46; H. xii, fo. 31.

[2] See the Harl. Soc. edition of the *Warwickshire Visitation* (1619).

[3] The case of the "Carringtons" is very similar. In the Leicester Visitation of 1619, their pedigree began with Sir John Smith (1539), but on receiving a Peerage (1643) they took the title of Carrington, in consequence of "a traditional descent" from a Carrington who had "expatriated himself" and taken the name of Smith. (See G.E.C.'s *Complete Peerage*, ii, 167.)

[4] Nichols, 289.

[5] *Warwickshire* (1730) 601.

Cum Basilius comes Denbigh a celeberrima et antiquissima prosapia comitum de Hapsburg in Germania, per Galfridum quondam comitem de Hapsburg oriundus, etc, etc.[1]

Having thus made good my point that in England, this splendid descent was not revealed till about the middle of the seventeenth century, I shall now shew that on the *German* side the alleged descent has not been recognised by historical or antiquarian authorities, nor even by the House of Austria itself, as alleged, in the past.

I select for this purpose three typical authorities from the seventeenth, the eighteenth, and the nineteenth centuries. The first of these is Francis Guilliman, whose "Habsburgica," dedicated to the then Emperor Rudolf, was published in 1609. I have quoted from the revised edition of 1696. The title runs :—

Francisci Guillimanni Habsburgica
sive de antiqua et vera origine domus Austriæ
* * * *
Ad Rudolfum II
Habsburgi—Austriacum Imperatorem semper Augustum (Editio nova, a plurimis mendis purgata).
Ratisbonæ . . . 1696.

The subject was taken up where Guilliman left it by a writer of unimpeachable, because official authority. I allude to the great work of Herrgot, the Imperial Historiographer, based on original documents throughout. It was executed for and dedicated to the Emperor Charles.

Genealogia Diplomatica Augustæ gentis Hapsburgicæ, quâ continentur vera gentis hujus exordia, antiquitates, propagationes, possessiones, et prærogativæ, chartis ac diplomatibus maxima parte ineditis asserta . . . opera et studio R. P. Marquardi Herrgot . . . sacræ Cæsareæ Regiæque Catholicæ Majestatis Consiliarii et Historiographi . . . Viennæ . . . 1737.
[Dedication]
Augusto Cæsari Carolo Hapsburgensi D. Leopoldi F. patriæ patri optimo maximo.

Guilliman devotes his seventh book to the Counts of Hapsburg of the Laufenburg line, and, combining his work with that of Herrgot, the pedigree runs as follows :—

Rudolf ("the taciturn"), Count of Hapsburg.

- [Elizabeth of Ochsenstein][2] F
- Gotfrid, Count of Hapsburg and Lord of Lauffenberg, d. 29 Sept. 1271, bur. at Wettingen.
  - [GOTFRID, ob. puer, bur. with his father at Wettingen.][3] F
  - Rudolf, Count of Hapsburg, Lord of Lauffenburg, and *jure uxoris* of Rapperschwyl, d. 1314.
    - John, Count of Hapsburg, Lord of Lauffenburg.
    - Rudolf, Count of Hapsburg, Lord of Rapperschwyl, slain at Morgarten 15 Nov. 1315.
- Rudolf, Bishop of Constance, d. 3 April 1293.
- Eberhard, Count of Kyburg, *jure uxoris*. ↓
- Wernher, ob. s.p. —
- Otho, ob. s.p. —
- Hartmann, ob. s.p.

[1] Nichols, 291.
[2] In Guilliman only.

The scene of our story, it is needful to explain, is on the south or Swiss bank of the Rhine from Basle on the west to Constance on the east. Ascending the river eastwards from Basle, we first pass the town of Rheinfelden—of which more anon—then Säckingen, the site of an Abbey, with which the Hapsburgs were connected, and lastly Laufenburg, the "castle of the rapids," the picturesque and ancestral home of our Counts.

Their line was founded by Rudolf, "the Taciturn" (d. 1249), from whose elder brother descended the Hapsburg Emperors of Austria. With Gotfrid, his son and heir, our story begins. This Gotfrid was Lord of Laufenburg, which he held of the Abbey of Säckingen. In one document he occurs as "Comes de Laufenburg" (1258); in all others as "dominus Lauffenburgi," or Count of Hapsburg only. Guilliman assigns him Elizabeth Ochsenstein as a wife : Herrgot says the fact rests on Guilliman's authority alone. By the latter he is assigned two sons, Gotfrid (the Feildings' alleged ancestor), who, dying shortly after his father, was buried at Wettingen in the same grave, and Rudolf,—both of them left in ward to their uncle, Bishop Rudolf.[1] Herrgot ignores Gotfrid altogether (p. 236)—probably from his dying too young to be mentioned in any documents. That, in any case, he cannot long have survived his father is shewn by an important deed of 1274, printed by Herrgot,[2] from the archives of Wettingen,[3] which runs : "per legitimum tutorem aut tutores *Ruodolfi* domicelli nostri, filii videlicet bonæ memoriæ Comitis Gotfridi."

Herrgot lays special stress on the fact that this Rudolf alone continued the line :—

"totam progeniem lineæ Lauffenburgo—Habsburgicæ, absque controversiâ, Rudolpho ejus [Gottridi] filio, de quo hic agimus, esse adscribendam."

Rudolf remained in ward till 1288,[4] and we have accordingly a deed, of 5 June 1287, printed by Herrgot "ex Archivo Wettingensi,"[5] in which the Bishop, his uncle and namesake, styles himself—

R. dei gratia Constantiensis episcopus, tutor pupilli R[udolfi] Comitis de Hapsburg.

and refers "prædicto R[udolfo] Comiti nostro nepoti." This long minority, Herrgot observes, greatly improved the family estate.

I now pass to my third authority, representing the results of the latest German research on the subject (1879). This is the article on the house of "Hapsburg-Laufenburg" in the *Allgemeine Deutsche Biographie* (Vol. x, p. 284), which is based on the monographs of Münch in *Argovia*, the local historical organ, supplementing Herrgot's work. The pedigree there given is as follows :—

[1] Uxor fuit Elisabetha Ochsensteinia. Ex quâ filii Gotfridus, qui paullo post patrem excedens, eodem tumulo insertus est, et Rudolfus : uterque sub tutelâ Rudolfi præpositi et post episcopi, patrui," p. 449.
[2] p. 447.
[3] The great Abbey of Wettingen, the burying-place of the family, is situated on the line from Basle to Zurich, considerably south of the Rhine.
[4] *Allgemeine Deutsche Biographie.*
[5] DCXLII, p. 533.

Rudolf, the Taciturn, of Laufenburg,
d. 6 July 1249.
|
Gottfried, of Laufenburg,
d. 1271.
|
Rudolf, of Laufenburg (and afterwards of Rapperschywl, *jure uxoris*), b. 15 July 1270, in ward to his uncles till 1288. ==Elizabeth, heiress of Rapperschywl, widow of Ludwig von Homberg, mar. 1296.

It is here positively stated that Rudolf was the *only* son ("der name H[apsburg] L[aufenburg] blieb jetzt dem *einzigen*, am 15 July 1270 geborenen, *Sohne* Graf Gottfrieds I, Rudolf III.") The Feildings' alleged ancestor is wholly ignored: and Rheinfelden is not included in the possessions assigned to the house. The date of Rudolf's birth, which this article gives us, explains his long minority from 1271 to 1288. Had the original concoctor of the pedigree known of these dates, he would have hesitated to make Rudolf's *brother* come to England under Henry III (1216-72).

Now, bearing in mind the true pedigree, as given by the German authorities, let us see how the original concoctor of the Feildings' spurious pedigree set to work. He had to affiliate their undoubted ancestor and founder of their house, Geoffrey Feilding, husband of the Napton heiress, who must have lived under Edward II and Edward III. For this purpose he boldly pitched upon Gotfried,[1] the son of Count Gotfried, who died according to Guilliman, just after his father. Probably, as I have said, he was unaware that Gotfried was an infant at his father's death (1271) and that his brother, as we now know, was only born in 1270. Wanley had read, it is true, in Bucellinus:—"Gotfridus secundus obiit in juventute;" but he got over this difficulty by holding that this "*juventus*, in the gradations of the yeares of man, may be extended to the period of fourty yeares"! This enabled him to assign to Gotfried a career of which, on the German side, there is no trace. Bringing him to England, in his father's lifetime, at some unspecified date in the reign of Henry III (1216—1272), he made him there marry Matilda de Colville and have children. Then, at a date equally unspecified, he made him return to Germany, to satisfy the authorities who say that he was buried at Wettingen. A difficulty faced him, of course, in the fact that in *all* the English documents the Christian name is "*Gal*frid us," and in *all* the German ones "*Got*fridus." The two names might occasionally be confused, but such unanimity as this cannot be explained away. He got over it, however, by simply converting every "Gotfridus" of the House of Hapsburg into "Galfridus."

But the chief obstacle, of course, in his way was the utter absence of any evidence for his story, combined with the utter ignoring of it by every German authority. Now I shall not profess to state each step in the growth and development of the legend. I can only take the alleged proofs as they stand. First then, in an evil hour for himself, the concoctor endeavoured thus to explain the name of Feilding:—

"Memorandum quod Galfridus Comes Hapsburgicus propter oppressiones sibi illatas a Comite Rodolpho, qui postea electus erat Imperator, ad summam paupertatem redactus, unus ex filiis suis, nomine Galfridus militavit in Anglia sub Rege Henrico tertio. Et quia pater ejus Galfridus Comes habuit pretensiones ad certa dominia in Lauffenburg & Rinfelden, *retinuit sibi nomen de felden, Anglice Filding.*"

[1] See pedigree *supra*.

Dugdale, who printed this "Memorandum" in his *History of Warwickshire*,[1] declared the MS. to be "written about K. Edward 4 time," but, even if genuine, the style of the handwriting, it will be found, is of the time of Henry VIII. We shall see that this unlucky derivation has proved fatal to the whole imposture. In the meanwhile, we may note that the excellent Wanley was somewhat puzzled by the occurence of a "Feilding" at Lutterworth (their abode) before the arrival of the mysterious German, the alleged founder of the family;[2] but he suggested that perhaps the exile adopted Feilding, as "by a double reflection the fittest surname for this family"!

Let me now enumerate the deeds and documents on which rests the alleged descent:—

(A) Six German deeds, two of 1307, two of 1309, and two of 1365.[3]
(B) Eleven English deeds (as I reckon them) of the fourteenth century.
(C) Several English documents or memoranda (printed in Dugdale's *Warwickshire* and Nichols' *Leicestershire*.)[4]

Taking these in order, I begin with the German deeds. The first point to strike the expert is a strange air of unreality, a sense of there being "something wrong"; the expressions are strange, the language unusual. The next point is that their concoctor has overdone his part: in his extreme anxiety to introduce the story of Count Geoffrey's settlement in England, in his eagerness to connect the name of Feilding, through Felden, with Rheinfelden, he has shown his hand too plainly and only raised our strong suspicions. The third point is that "Germania" is used throughout for Germany, whereas the right name, in deeds and documents of the time, is, of course, "Alemania." I may add that, as we might expect, "family" is rendered "familia"!

Let us, however, examine in detail the first two charters. Wanley describes them as being "jointly in one deed," but the first is dated at Säckingen "primo kalend Junii"(!) 1307, and the second at Rheinfelden "decimo kalend' Decembris," 1307. In the first of these documents, John "de Rotbery," as "procurator specialiter delegatus" for the Abbey of Säckingen, testifies that John "Steine," the "servus familiaris" of the exiled noble's son and heir, has come to claim on his behalf "omnia dominia, feoda, et servitia tam in comitatu de Rhynfelden quam in diversis aliis locis in Germania," and that the Abbess and Convent can only pray to God "et omni curie celestium animarum"(!)

"ut exaltent illum ad dignitates non indignas viro tam alti sanguinis, ut qui a longa serie comitum et principum de Hapsburg, tandem a primis Francorum regibus genus suum deducens, mereatur honorem et estimationem in illo glorioso regno Anglie, sicut justum et decorum esse videatur."

[1] (2nd Ed.) I., 86.
[2] Nichols, pp. 278-9.
[3] All in Nichols (pp. 280, 281, 286).
[4] Two in Dugdale (p. 86), the rest in Nichols.

This extract may serve as a sample of these ridiculous documents, of which the dog-Latin is at times exquisitely funny. But their concoctor might at least have avoided introducing into those of 1307 the clause "regnante domino *Adolpho* Imperatore," considering that the Emperor Adolph had died in 1298—nine years before!

The hand of the forger stands revealed.

After this it is useless to waste time over the deeds of 1309, of which the first has the seal, alas! "broken off from the label." This reminds us that the Abbess of Säckingen had, we are told, reasons of her own for not affixing her seal to the first of these deeds, so that her proctor used his own by her orders ("ex ordine suo"). So with the two deeds of 1365, of the first of which we read that "the bishop's seal was, by the motions of several journeys broken off, but exactly copied out before." The last of these documents has, indeed, the seal of "Sir George Hirschorn, knight," still "entire;" but this proves to be only a fancy rebus on his name, which anyone could invent. It is singular that an English deed (2 Ed. III) of considerable importance for the descent "had the seal of the eagle affixed to it, but by accident broke off" (p. 284). Another English deed (28 Ed. III) was "so defaced as not thought fit to be made use of amongst other evidences whose originals remain so clear and entire,[1] especially since the seal, which had the impression of a lion rampant, in its passage from London into Warwickshire, was unfortunately thrown into the water with the sumpter-horse, wherein it was (as also by the motion of the horse) broken off and mouldered to nothing; the type of which seal was taken long before, and remains yet in the Earl of Denbigh's Book of Evidences." How provoking these seals were! There was a deed of 3 Ric. II which "had affixed to it the seal of an eagle," which is what we want, but—"by often removals broken off, though before entered into the Earl of Denbigh's Book of Evidences" (p. 285). How prescient it was to enter these seals, and how invaluable are the entries now!

But to return to the German deeds of "1365," which are respectively dated "tertio die mensis Martii" and "tertio Calend' Martii"—rather an awkward combination (p. 286). I must explain at the outset that though they are composed in the same queer Latin as the others, they ought to be in old German. Herrgot prints in his great work, some seventy charters for the period 1360—1390; they relate to the same parties as these two documents, the Duke of Austria, Bishop of Basle, Counts of Hapsburg, etc., etc., and, *without one exception*, they are all in old German. But doubtless old German was more than the forger could attempt. The story these deeds tell is really rather a clever one They relate to "William Filding, Esq., of Lutterworth," whom they transform into "Willielmus de Hapsburg, natione Anglus vocatus autem in Angliâ *Felden*, ex antiquâ prosapiâ comitum et principum de Hapsburg in Germania oriundus." According to them, "post multas devastationes ab Anglicis commissas in Alsatiâ et aliis partibus Germaniæ," this William "in illo exercitu[2] prefectus equitum," was taken prisoner, "fortiter dimicans," near the Rhine, by the Bishop of

[1] No doubt!
[2] "in exercitu Anglorum," in the other deed

Basle's men. His alleged kinsman, Duke Leopold of Austria, heard that he was undergoing greater hardships "quam convenire poterit dignitate (*sic*) Germanicæ gentis, vel nataliis ipsius Willielmi, qui ab antiquis comitibus de Hapsburg originem suam deducit." He intervened therefore to help him in his distress ("in tempore distressus sui"!), and procure his liberation at the hands of the Bishop. Now, what, it may be asked, could an English army be doing at this time in Alsace? Well, a celebrated leader of the time, Enguerrand de Coucy, Earl of Bedford and Knight of the Garter, son-in-law of Edward III, maternal grandson of Duke Leopold of Austria, and son of the proudest Baron in Europe, raised an army to enforce his claims, through his mother, on Austria, in which was comprised a picked force of 6,000 Englishmen. Hence this army was known as the "English" bands, and the scene of its defeat between Basle and Lucerne is still known as "the English Barrow." Moreover, it actually did march to the banks of the Rhine, and—through Alsace—into Switzerland. But, alas, all this took place, not in 1365, but in 1375, and the ingenious forger has clearly confused it with the raid of Cervole's French freebooters in 1365! This is sad, for had he only made his document quite accurate, it would have gone far to support the Hapsburg claim.

Passing to the English deeds and documents, I select as the simplest test, their mention, among the family dignities, of Rheinfelden. The best known, probably, of these evidences is that letter of attorney of 1316 (9 Ed. II), in which Geoffrey Feilding (the real ancestor, as I term him) styles his grandfather "Comes de Hapsburg et Dominus in Laufenburg et Rinfilding in Germania." For, Dugdale having selected it for insertion in his *Warwickshire* and his *Baronage*, it found its way into Collins' *Peerage*, etc., etc. The attempt to make the name of the place approximate to that of the family will, of course, be observed. The same form recurs in a deed assigned to Geoffrey, his alleged father (the one who came to England temp. Hen. III).[1] There are several other of these documents in which the name is found; and in two of them at least the style runs, not "dominus," but "*Comes* de Hapsburg, Laffenberg, & Rinfelden"—which is that now used by the family. If it can be shewn that the Hapsburgs of Laufenburg were neither Lords nor Counts of Rheinfelden, and did not so style themselves, these documents are, obviously, forgeries. I turn, therefore, to the German authorities for information on the subject.

In his chapter "de dominio et burggraviatu Rhinfeldensi,"[2] Herrgot, who elsewhere tersely says: "in nostris monumentis nullus occurrit Comes Rhinfeldensis," discusses the early history of Rheinfelden, and shows that the town, at an early period, belonged directly to the Emperor. An imperial charter of 1225 guaranteed this position, and promised that the town should not be severed from the imperial domain.[3] Accordingly in June 1243 we find it administered by Ulric de Liebenberg "Sacri Imperii Ministerialis et Burgravius in Rinfelden."[4] So

[1] Nichols, 277.
[2] Lib, i, cap. xi.
[3] Vol ii, p. 231.
[4] *Ibid*, p. 269.

again we find the Emperor Rudolf granting liberties to "omnes nostros de Rinvelden (31 July 1276).[1] It would, therefore, he observes, be waste of time to discuss the supposition that the Laufenburg Counts had any connection with Rheinfelden. And indeed in his vast collection of charters relating to the family, there is not one to be found in which they occur as Lords of it, or claim any rights over it. Guilliman had written no less positively :—

De Hapsburgi Comitibus qui ad avitum præter Lauffenberg dominium nihil tituli addiderunt . . . Hapsburgi comitum nomen retinuerunt, neque ad id adjunxerunt aliud, quam ex Lauffenbergo Oppido rheni denominationem.

Lastly, the *Allgemeine Deutsche Biographie* (1879), enumerating the possessions of these Hapsburg Counts, wholly omits Rheinfelden, and gives Laufenburg as their residence, till their marriage with the heiress of Rapperschwyl made them occasionally reside there also. This point is the more important because the second, third and fourth of the spurious *German* deeds are all dated from Rheinfelden, an obvious attempt to introduce the name which has merely increased the evidence against them.

But how, it may be asked, did the daring concoctor come to make Rheinfelden the keystone of his story? This raises the difficult question whether Rheinfelden was merely introduced to patch together a connection between Feilding and Hapsburg, or was itself the origin of the whole story by the tempting termination Rhein*felden*. In either case he had clearly got hold of some foreign work which assigned Rheinfelden, in error, to the Laufenburg Hapsburgs. Exactly such a work is found in the *Basilikon* of Elias Reusnerus, of which the first edition was published in 1592, and which is actually referred to throughout by Wanley.[2]

Now this writer gives us (p. 26) the following pedigree :—

Rodolphus Taciturnus Comes Habsburgius, facta divisione cum fratre, Lauffenburgi et *Rhynfeldæ* sortitus est comitatus, cum Advocatia Seckingensi . . . tandem a fratruele Rudolpho Cesare[3] . . . proscriptus, obiit in exilio.

Eberhardus, etc., etc.

Gotofridus Comes Hapsburgius Dynasta Lauffenburgi & *Rhynfeldæ*. Naturæ concessit 1271. Tumulatus Wettingæ.

Rudolphus Episcopus Constantensis etc. etc.

Joannes I. Comes Hapsburgius et Lauffenburgius in cœnobio Wettingensi prope fratrem sepultus. Uxor N. Comitissa á Niddar.

Gotofridus II Comes Lauffenburgius et *Rhynfeldensis* Bernates . . . bello aggresus aliquamdiu quidem afflixit, sed . . . arma vertit in Rudolphum Augustum . . . In quo sane bello occubuit. Sepultus in cœnobio Wettingensi.

Joannes II Comes Hapsburgi et Kiburgi.

Rudolphus II, Comes Lauffenburgi, Palatinus Burgundiæ . . . [ob.] 1314.

[1] p. 269.

[2] His general reference at the end is to "Hemminges, Reusnerus, Albicius, Bucelinus, and all the German writers on this subject as well ancient as modern." (Nichols, 290) !

[3] Rudolph, of course, was not Emperor till many years after the Count's death.

To show how wildly erroneous is this pedigree, I need only print its outline by the side of the true one :—

TRUE.	FALSE.
Gotfrid.	Gotfrid.
[Gotfrid]. — Rudolf, d. 1314.	John. — Gotfrid.
John. — Rudolf	John. — Rudolf, d. 1314.

But, indeed, even Wanley tacitly rejects this erroneous pedigree, and points out that Reusnerus had confused Gotfrid [d. 1271], who fought against Berne, with his son. Yet it is to such untrustworthy writers that we are referred throughout, and when appeal is made to the *Annales Murenses* for confirmation,[1] we find they do not include Rheinfelden among the family possessions.

We may therefore safely reject every Feilding deed or document in which Rheinfelden occurs; and difficult—almost impossible—though it be to believe that all these evidences were forged to prove the pedigree, the facts leave us no alternative to this astounding conclusion.

I now pass from the pedigree to the arms.

Strenuous efforts were made by those who were responsible for the Hapsburg descent to connect the arms of Feilding with those of Hapsburg. The former are "Arg. on a fess Az. three lozenges Or," the latter, "Or a lion rampant Gu." (now "ducally crowned Az."). The attempt to prove the user of the latter having virtually failed, another line was adopted. The arms of Austria—which are quite distinct from those of Hapsburg and are now borne, separate, by their side on the Emperor's shield—were pressed into the service. These are Gu. a fess Arg. It is needful to remember that the *Laufenburg* Hapsburgs had nothing to do with Austria, and of course (as their seals prove), did not use its arms. Undaunted, however, the bold concoctor produced a document "Extract' ex antiquis historicis et evidenciis comitum de Hapsburg,"[2] of which "the handwriting cannot be of lesser antiquity than the latter end of King Henry the Sixth, or the beginning of King Edward the Fourth of England." This precious document narrates that:—

"Galfridus comes de Hapsburg filius Rodulphi comitis, cum ambiret in uxorem Margaretam viduam et hæredem Austriæ, in signum amorosi obsequii [!] sæpe in hidis equestribus et in sigillis usitare solitus erat tramitem cum tribus cuneis ornatum, postpositis armis suis gentilitiis, scilicet leone."

Then it goes on to say how he sent his son Geoffrey, "tunc exutum patrimonio in comitatu *Rinfeldensi*," to England, temp. Hen. III. A variant (in English) of this document is quoted by Nichols (p. 251) "from a MS. written about the middle of the seventeenth century"—a significant date. Wanley follows it by some sapient remarks, with which should be compared those he makes on p. 286. As to the palm tree crest now used by the family, he opines (p 275) that it may refer to a tournament "in the time of Frederick the Second," at which their ancestor was "said to carry away the palme"!

I do not undertake to identify positively the original culprit (or culprits) in this colossal imposture. According, indeed to Dugdale, the

[1] Nichols, 275.

[2] Nichols, 276.

belief is of great antiquity: but where the whole evidence is so tainted with forgery, one cannot be blamed for looking on every document with suspicion. I cannot at present find that the claim was advanced even by the first Earl of Denbigh; but when we come to his son, the second Earl (1643—1675), we find him identified with it at every point. It was by his command that Nathaniel Wanley drew up the family history; it was in his time that Dugdale was induced to publish the claim for the first time, in his *Warwickshire* and *Baronage*; it was he who obtained the St. Liz Patent, in 1664, containing a formal recognition of the claim;[1] it was he who put up, at his family seat, a window, introducing for the first time, as it seems, the palm tree crest;[2] it was he who corresponded, we shall find, with Ashmole (1670) about the Hapsburg claim; it was he (*I am told*) who subscribed to rebuilding the College of Arms, and thus secured the entry in the book of "benefactors" of his Hapsburg descent; and it was he who employed John Vincent, that "needy, scedy" man, as I have heard him described, in connection with it. For we find an entry by Vincent, in Lord Denbigh's *Book of Evidences*, concerning a chimney-piece he had seen at Lutterworth in 1665, "having some relation to the renowned family of Hapsburg, from whence the right eminent family of Feildings thereabouts (most truly and clearely deriving their discent) doe very frequently use a lyon rampant crowned in theire scales."[3]

Now this clue is worth following up, for John was the son of Augustin Vincent and inherited his heraldic collections. According to Noble,—

"John Vincent was . . . a good genealogist, herald, and antiquary; but so ill an economist and so fond of liquour that he frequently pawned some of his father's literary labours to pay tavern expences."[4]

This character may be derived from a remark by Anthony à Wood, in a letter of 14 Oct., 1685, on the Sheldon MSS. (now among the treasures of the College of Arms[5]):—

"John Vincent, the sometime owner of them had pawned several of them in alehouses before he died."[6]

A further statement of Anthony à Wood serves to clinch the connection:—

"You must know that John Vincent was a boone companion and a great company keeper with noblemen, *especially with Basil Earl of Denbigh*, and being always inquisitive and happy in a good manner might learn these things."[7]

[1] *Ante*, p. 195. This title represented his claim to descend from St. Liz, Earl of Northampton, through the Seytons (who were alleged to be "*alias* St. Liz."). As G.E.C. points out, under Denbigh, he held already a Barony of earlier date (1620), which renders strange his desire for this one. But besides gratifying his evident craving for ancient descent, it gave him (as a friend has pointed out to me) the opportunity of introducing the Hapsburg claim into the Patent.

[2] He also introduced an eagle crest. Dugdale asserts (*Warwickshire* i, 87) that they had used "for their crest sometime an *Eagle*, and at other a *Palm Tree*, though of later times alterned." But the old glass window and the Visitation Pedigrees shew only the true crest, a nuthatch with a fructed bough.

[3] Nichols, 278. This makes an important addition to the memoir of Vincent by Nicholas, in which it is stated (p. 100) that "no trace has been found" of him after 1653.

[4] *History of the College of Arms.*

[5] Nicolas terms it "that unrivalled collection."

[6] Nicolas, *Memoir of Augustin Vincent*, p. 99.

[7] Harl. MS. 1056, fo. 44 (Nicolas, p. 94).

Have we then in John Vincent the clever forger, who—as Meschini in *Sant' Ilario* forged the documents for Prince Montevarchi—supplied the too ambitious Earl with the evidences he required. We cannot say, as yet, for certain; but if Marlowe died in a tavern brawl, there is nothing, perhaps, derogatory in the thought that the Hapsburg evidences may have been concocted to pay for pots of ale.

Now that we have so closely identified the second Earl with the Hapsburg claim, we can approach the very remarkable letter he wrote to Ashmole, 26 June, 1670:—

". . . The other day, ransacking among my papers, I found three letters from Prince Thomas of Savoy; one of them I send you inclosed to be restored at our next meetings, wherein hee stiles me his cosen. This putt me in minde of the curious serche Duke Vittorio Amadeo, the eldest Prince of that family, made after my armes and descent both in my private travells and when I was the late Kings ambr of glorious memory with his highnesse, who asking me which were the cristen names of my ancestors, I replied Jeffrey, John, Everard, Basill, and hee presently declared by my armes, sirname, and these christian names, I must descind from the howse of Hapsburg, with whom, espetially the Earles Geffrey and Everard, his ancestors had bene engaged against in the warrs and att other times in treaties of correspondence, upon wch occasion, joynd to the dignity of a viscount in England, hee treated me ever in his letters with the stile of his cousen, an honor not given to any, as I was told, under the degree of a duke and peer of France. That Prince's letters I cannot yet finde, but I am certaine they are amongst my papers. Upon the same account Monsieur Bernegger of Strasburg, a great historian and antiquary of Germany, gave me those lights wch beefore ware not so cleerely discovered to mee, nor indeed ware my studies and inclinations att that time taken upp with notions of this kinde. For that reason did the city of Basill treat me with great honor and respect in my private travells, and my brother-in-law, Duke Hamilton, beeing entered into Germany with a great army (1631) to second the King of Swedes attempts and designs, the Emperor, then Ferdinand the Second, att Ratisbone thought my honor a sufficient tye to separate me from all other interests but his owne if I would have accepted of those great advantagious offers he made me," etc., etc.[1]

It is not pleasant to be obliged to say what one thinks of this letter. In the first place, the names of the writer's ancestors[2] were Geoffrey (*one*), John (*one*), Everard (*one*), Basil (*two*) and *William (five)*. It is odd that he should have omitted the chief one, which happens not to suit his theory. More serious, however, is the statement that the Prince "declared by my armes, sirname, and those christian names, I must descend from the house of Hapsburg." The arms of Feilding are totally distinct, we have seen, from those of Hapsburg: the sirname of "Feilding" cannot possibly have suggested that of Hapsburg. As to the christian names, there was nothing in "Basil" to suggest the Hapsburgs, while Geoffrey, John, and Everard were common names enough. It is thus absolutely certain that the writer must here have been romancing. We must therefore doubt what he tells us about "the city of Basill" (the spelling suggests that he connected its name with his own); nor can we believe that the Emperor's offers were connected with his alleged Hapsburg descent, when we find it so completely ignored in Herrgot's great work. And, for my part, I doubt "Duke Vittorio," in the seventeenth century, recollecting and taking so keen an interest in the

[1] Fourth Report on Historical MSS. i, 262.

[2] Visitation of 1563, and the glass windows.

Hapsburg cadets of the thirteenth. The letter is, throughout, that of a man trying to make out a case for the descent on which he has set his heart.

But when we come to "Monsieur Bernegger," I must confess that it looks to me as if we may have in him the ingenious antiquary who supplied (or gave the "local colour" for) what I term the "German" deeds. The name of "Stein," for instance, savours of a local knowledge which even the "inquisitive" Vincent is scarcely likely to have acquired. And the story told in the deeds of "1365" might well have occurred to a Strasburg man. Still, they are rather poor imitations, and "a great historian and antiquary" would, perhaps, have done better.

It will have been seen that two questions are raised by this paper. That the Hapsburg descent is an absurd fiction has been abundantly demonstrated, but its actual author and the date of its origin cannot be so surely decided. Everything points to Basil, second Earl of Denbigh (1643-1675); but if all the documents were concocted for him, it is difficult to see how Dugdale could speak of those known to him[1] as "authentique evidences" in the middle of the seventeenth century. Either his honesty or his critical power is thereby gravely impugned. If on the other hand some of these "evidences" were, as alleged, of earlier date, they could not have been concocted till the error about Rheinfelden found its way into England about the beginning of the seventeenth or end of the sixteenth century. Thus in no case should they have seemed in Dugdale's days "authentique." Perhaps the great Herald looked with partial eyes on documents produced by a Peer of the Realm, who was also a Warwickshire man.

As to the recognition, whatever it may be, that this claim has now obtained abroad, it is sufficiently explained by the natural belief that a descent recognised by the English Crown and certified by the most famous of all our officers of arms, could not be a sheer invention, and must therefore be true.[2] The evidence of the deeds proves the descent, and no one could suppose that a noble family would rely for its pedigree on spurious documents. The strange thing is that this pretended descent should be coveted by such a family as that of Feilding. For whether the antiquity of their Earldom be considered, or that of their position as county gentry, they must rank high among what in England is deemed *ancienne noblesse*. It is, however, only right to add that the family do but inherit this claim from their ancestors, and, though it has been, no doubt, accentuated by the introduction of the name Rudolph, they are wholly guiltless of its original concoction, and could scarcely, indeed, be expected to abandon it, till it was, as now, disproved.

J. H. ROUND.

[1] Wanley seems to have had access in 1670 to many more than Dugdale.

[2] In Vol. xxv. of "Johannes von Müller sammtlich Werke, Herausgeben von Johann Georg Müller" (Tubingen, 1817), we find it recognised on Dugdale's authority only: "Wenn Dugdale's Briefe . . . wen diese Schriften ihre Richtigkeit haben."