THE PORTS OF BASING AND THEIR PRIORY.

In a paper on "The Families of St. John and of Port" I showed that Adam de Port, lord of the barony of Basing, married, as his second wife, "Sybil the countess."[1] It is a curious illustration of the antiquity of the practice dealt with in the recent Cowley case, that in the twelfth century there are several cases of the widows of earls re-married to men of lower rank and retaining the title of "countess." As they were spoken of only by their Christian names, the student of the feudal baronage has a somewhat difficult task in determining the identity of a lady styled "the countess" A, B, or C.

To determine this identity with certainty in any given instance, one has to go through the list of all the earls' wives known to have been living at the time. On applying this test to the wife of Adam de Port, we find that the only "countess Sybil" living at the time required was the widow of that William, Earl of Derby, who died at the siege of Acre in 1190. The *Complete Peerage* mentions that she "was living 1224," but knows nothing of her marrying again.[2] Adam de Port was in possession of his barony at the time when she became a widow, and was succeeded in it by his son in 1213. The countess would then again become a widow, and we find her accordingly entered, some years later, as "Sibilla comitissa de Ferariis," then in the King's gift and holding lands in Berkshire worth £40 a year.[3] Of these the only manor that is named is that of "Sibesford" in the Hundred of "Eggeleya," which is not one of the many manors assigned to the Ferrers family by Domesday in Berks. I detect it, however, in the *Testa* record of the Berkshire carucage of 1220—1221, where we read (under "Hundr' de Egel'") :—"De Sipford Com' de Ferrar'" (p. 131).

The solution I propose is that this manor was no other than West Shifford, which, as "Westsipford," was similarly held by the widow of a later lord of Basing and her second husband, Richard de Lucy, as of "the barony of Basing."[4] With this clue, we find it as "Siford" in "Eglei" Hundred, the only Berkshire manor held by Hugh de Port, the Domesday lord of Basing. This, then, affords the proof (if needed) that the countess Sybil of the *Testa* was the widow of the lord of Basing: and it further enables us to extend the entry in the Berkshire carucage as "Sipford Com[itisse] de Ferrar[iis]." It is interesting also to note how successive lords of Basing used this manor as dower.

[1] See vol. xvi, p. 6.
[2] Vol. iii, p. 66.
[3] *Testa de Nevill*, p. 108 (bis).
[4] *Testa*, p. 124 (the entry is quoted by me in *Genealogist* xvi, 4).

In my previous paper I showed that the Ports of Mapledurwell (Hants) were from the first a distinct line, and that when their representative, Adam de Port, was exiled in 1172, he was in possession of wide estates known as "the Honour of Kington."[1] I also showed that his grandfather and namesake, who was established at Kington under Henry I, was a benefactor to Monk Sherborne Priory, an offshoot of the Abbey of Cerisy.

In the light of all this, we can explain a charter at Queen's College, Oxford, which is printed in the Appendix to the Fourth Report on Historical MSS. (p. 452). It records a benefaction by Henry Huse, under Henry II, to the church of St. Martin "de Duobus Gemellis," that is the Priory of Deux Jumeaux (Calvados) near the Norman home of the Ports, which, like Monk Sherborne, was an offshoot of Cerisy. Mr. Riley identified it for the Commission as "the House of St. Martin of Jumielles (or Jumieges)"! The grant is of the tithe of Henry's demesne at "Littetuna, quam monachi predicti habuerant antiquitus ex donatione Adæ senioris de Port." The reference is to that Adam, of Kington and of Mapledurwell, who lived under Henry I; and as manors in Dorset held by his line can be traced as having been held by William d'Eu in Domesday, I have no doubt that the above place was that Wiltshire Littleton which Domesday shews us in the hands of William d'Eu (fol. 71b).

Another charter at Queen's, printed in full by the Commission (p. 453), is of some interest, when explained, for the early history of Portsmouth. Mr. Riley did not identify the "Froditonia" to which it relates, and which was Fratton in Portsea, now buried in Portsmouth.[2] The charter purports to be a grant of a virgate of land there, with two men dwelling on it and their issue to Monk Sherborne Priory, by—

"Baldwinus de Porteseia, untu et assensu domini mei Johannis de Porteseia [*sic*], pro animabus Henrici de Porte et uxoris suæ Hadewisæ et patris matrisque meæ necnon pro salute animæ meæ et uxoris meæ Adelidis."

Mr. Riley's grave misreading destroys the value of the charter. For, clearly, his John "de *Porteseia*" was really John de Port, the son of Henry de Port and the lord of Basing.

On referring to John's return of his knights in 1166,[3] we duly find two fees held of him by "Baldewinus de Porteseia"; and we further find Mathew "de Scuris" and Hugh "de Braib[of]," who are among the witnesses to this charter, holding of him, respectively, four fees and one.[4] We have seen enough to assert that this charter, which Mr. Riley thought "of the time, probably of King

[1] See vol. xvi, pp. 8—12.

[2] Fratton Station preserves (as did Fratton Road) its name.

[3] *Red Book of the Exchequer*, pp. 207-9.

[4] The names of these witnesses also throw light on a very obscure part of the return. The editor of the *Red Book* there reads "Radulfus de P[ort] -landis de Matheleiga ij milites," but among the above witnesses we find "Rnelendus de Mathingeleia; Ricardus et Jacobus filii ejus." The father's name is obviously that of which "landis de Matheleiga" (the "Matingelege" of Domesday) remains in the transcript of John's return.

John," was of about the same date as the return (1166), and was, in any case, previous to the death of John de Port (*circ.* 1170). This gives a special interest to the appearance among the witnesses of Ralf "presbyter de Porteseia" and Roger "prætor de Froditonia" (whatever that officer may have been), and to the grant of fuel from the "boscus de Porteswalt," a local name perhaps unknown and formed like Portsea and Portsmouth themselves. Such is the use that it is possible to make of an early charter when it is properly treated.

Before leaving these charters at Queen's, I would speak of three others printed on the same page. They relate to the church of "Sagie," "Sagees," or "Sageys," which was identified by Mr. Riley as "the church of Seez." In the first of these documents Philip de Columbariis grants this church to the priory of St. Fromond (Manche); the second is a grant of it from that priory to the priory of Monk Sherborne; and the third is a notification of that grant from the prior of St. Fromond to the bishop of Salisbury. Now "Sagie" is, no doubt, suggestive of the Latin name of Seez, but a moment's thought should suggest that it was not in the power of a private individual to hand about the cathedral church of a Norman diocese! We also, naturally, want to know what a bishop of Salisbury had to do with this astounding gift. Yet the whole thing is quite simple when the place is rightly identified. In my "Calendar of Documents Preserved in France" (pp. 108, 652) I had to deal with an early grant of tithes at "Sages" with no clue to its identity. I determined the place to be Shaw in Berkshire, of which the name does not occur in Domesday, so that we have not the usual test. In the case of the charters at Queen's, an easy test is afforded us. The *Inquisitiones post mortem* prove that Shaw was held by the Columbers family,[1] and the "Taxation of Pope Nicholas" shows us the rights of Monk Sherborne Priory in its church (p. 187). It was therefore the village church of Shaw, not the cathedral church of Seez that Philip de Columbers gave. But how is our topographical history to be ever correctly written if the evidences are placed before the student in this inaccurate fashion?

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[1] *Calendar*, I, 61.