An Account of the Family of Nicholl, Nicholls, or Nicolls, of London, and of Ampthill, co. Bedford, with Notes of their Wills.

Robert Nicholl, citizen and brewer of London, by Elizabeth or Isabell his wife, was the father of three sons: Thomas (the elder), John, and Thomas (the younger), and one daughter, Osaye. These children, and his grandson Robert, son of Thomas the elder, are all mentioned in his will, which was dated on the last day of April, and proved in the Prerogative Court of Canterbury on the 20th of June, 1548. It appears by his will that he resided in a mansion in Hamme's Alley, Coleman Street, and was possessed of property in Tottenham, Clerkenwell, Barnardsbury, and Finsbury, and land in Shoreditch called Brome Closes. The witnesses are Robert Nicholls, Richard Kettle, Richard Springham, and John Pattenson.

Robert Nicholls, who appears among the witnesses to the will of Robert Nicholl, was in all probability one of the same family, and may be conjectured to be the same person as Robert Nicholls, citizen and haberdasher, son of another Robert, whose will was proved in the Prerogative Court in 1563 by his widow Joane.

John Nicholls, the second son of Robert Nicholl, was a member of the Girdlers' Company of London. He held the office of Bridgemaster, or comptroller of the works of London Bridge, and was in 1568 "in charge for the provision of corn for the city of London."[a] He married twice: first Christian Thompson, who was buried in the church of St. Olave's, Southwark, where upon a brass plate was the following curious inscription, now destroyed:—

> A Pylgrime I was here yeares fortie and four,
> The wyfe of Jhonn Nycolls, Chrystian by name,
> Tossyd wyth waves as a shipp on the sea
> With sorrowes and cares both nyght and daye.
> And weery I was of this worlde thralle,
> That lyved in synne as men do all.
> I harde the Lordes voyce unto me saye,
> Repent and come to me away.

[a] Pedigree in Visitation of London, 1568.

Then I consideryd the woorkes of man
After dethe to be all vayne,
I dyd repent all was amyss
Praysing my God who made alls hys. [b]

The above inscription has no date, but by the pedigree, entered by John Nicholls in the Visitation of London, 1568, it appears that he had then married his second wife.

The second wife of John Nicholls was Ellen, dau. of James Holt of Stubley, co. Lancaster, gentleman. By his first wife Christian he had two children; Mary, who became the wife of Francis Garrard, and Elizabeth, who was married on the 20th July, 1562, to Edmund Cooke of Lizenes, or Lesnes Abbey, co. Kent, gentleman, and had a numerous issue. [c] The residence of this John Nicholls was at the Bridgehouse, [d] and the diary of Henry Machyn, published in 1847 by the Camden Society, contains some amusing notices of the hospitalities which took place there during his occupation of the house. On the 20th and 21st of July, 1562, Machyn describes the "goodly wedding of Master Coke and Master Nycolles' dawther, where were the lord mare and all the althermen," &c. and masks and dancing for two days "at the Bryghowse." [e] Again, on the 18th of April,

[b] Aubrey, in Manning's History of Surrey, vol. iii. p. 603.

[c] Edmund Cooke, of Lesnes Abbey and Mount Mascal, co. Kent, was the eldest son of Henry Cooke of Lesnes Abbey, second son of John Cooke of Broadwater, co. Sussex. He died in 1619, leaving two sons surviving him, Lambert and George, and four daughters, Goodiere, married to Peter Franklyn, of the isle of Ely, Elizabeth to sir Miles Sandys, knt. and bart., Christian to sir Timothy Lowe, and Theodora to Clement Bere, of Dartford. The family of Cooke bore for their arms, Gules, three crescents and a canton argent. Visit. Kent, 1619; Hasted's Hist. of Kent, vol. i. pp. 156, 201. The pedigree from the Visitation of Kent, 1619, is printed in Berry's Kent Pedigrees.

[d] The Bridge-house is described by Stowe as a store-house for stone, timber, or whatsoever pertaineth to the building or repairing of London-bridge. It occupied a large plot of ground on the bank of the river. Connected with it there were divers granaries for laying up of wheat for the service of the city, and ten ovens for baking bread for the relief of poor citizens when need should require. These were built according to the will of Sir J. Throwstone, knt. who left, in 1516, 200*l.* for the purpose. In the famine of 1594, Sir John Hawkins, Treasurer of the Navy, wanted to obtain the use of these granaries and ovens, which was resisted by Sir John Spencer, mayor. Adjoining the bridge-house was a "fair brew-house for serving the city with beer." "Over this bridge-house," says Stowe, "there is a bridge-master appointed, and he some freeman chosen by the city, whose office is to look after the reparation of the bridge. He hath a liberal salary allowed him."

[e] Machyn's Diary, p. 288.

1563, "in Sowthwarke was cristenyd the dowther of Master Necolles, the godfather Mastre Sprynghan, the godmother the lady Garrett,[f] and my lade Bowyes, and after to the Brygehowse to her fathers, and there was a grett bankett at Master Necolles plase."[g]

By the above notice in Machyn's journal, it would appear that John Nicholls had a daughter by his second marriage; but in the Visitation of London in 1568, where his wives and his two daughters by the first marriage are mentioned, there is no notice of any further issue. His arms are there given: Az. a fess between three lion's heads or: crest, a tiger sejant ermine; and his wife's arms, Arg. on a bend engrailed sa. three fleurs de luce of the first,—*Holt*. The will of John Nicholls, dated the 6th of May, 1583, was proved in the Prerogative Court. He is therein described as of the parish of St. Lawrence Jewry. Mention is made of his brother Thomas's son Richard, of his daughter Cooke, and of his lands in St. Leonard's, Shoreditch; and his wife Ellen is appointed sole executrix.

Thomas Nicholls (the younger), third son of Robert Nicholl, in his will dated 14th Nov. 1572, is described as of St. Botolph's without Bishopsgate. His son Richard Nicholls is appointed sole executor, and his cousin, John Marsh the elder, esquire, his brother John Nicholls, citizen and girdler, John Nobles, citizen and draper, and his cousin Richard Donne, of Chelmsford, are appointed overseers of his will. Mention is made of a questionable estate at Edmonton. The will was proved on the 15th of May, 1573, by David Atkinson, *durante minore ætate* of the testator's son Richard, in the Prerogative Court of Chancery.

Richard Nicholls, the son of Thomas, who was still a minor in 1573, I take to have been the same person as Richard Nicolls, esq. who was buried in St. Pancras Church in Middlesex in 1612, where the following inscription to his memory and that of his wife still remains:—

"Here lyeth the body of Richard Nicolls, of Kentishtowne, Esquier, who dyed in the faith of Christ y^e^ xxth day of Aprill, A° Dñi M.DC.xii, being of the age of lix yeares, having bene

[f] Lady Garrard, the wife of sir William Garrard, lord mayor in 1555. Francis Garrard, who married Mary, dau. of John Nicholls, was probably one of the same family.

[g] Machyn's Diary, p. 305.

xiv yeares married to Isabell, daughter of John Clarke of Elnesto, in y^e^ county of Bed^e^, gentleman, who caused this stone to be here laid for the memorial of him.

"Here also lyeth buried the body of the said Isabell Nicolls, who lived xl^ty^ yere and upwards the widow of the said Richard Nicolls, and died in the faith of Jesus Christ the fourth day of July, in the year of our Lord God M.DC.lii. aged lxxvii. and upwards."

This inscription is transcribed by Le Neve,[h] who however does not mention the coats of arms which still remain upon the stone. There are five shields bearing the arms of *Nicolls*, singly as before, with a crescent for difference, and the same impaled with Erm. on a chief engrailed a bezant (?)

The will of the last-mentioned Richard Nicolls, dated 6th March, 1611, and proved in the Prorogative Court in April, 1612, bequeaths all his property to his wife Isabell, who is appointed sole executrix, and Edmund Lyster, doctor of physic, and the testator's brother-in-law, Philip Henson, are named as overseers.

The will of Isabell Niccolls, of Kentish Town, widow, dated in June, and proved 13th August, 1652, contains many specific and pecuniary legacies. The first legacy is to Richard Nicolls, son of Mrs. Margaret Nicolls, lately deceased, my two silver "bearecuppes," and twelve apostle-spoones, and 10*l.* Among other bequests, she gives to Francis Nicolls, son of Antony Nicolls the younger, 30*s.* to buy a ring; to Samuel Birch, son of her sister Birch, 20*l.*; to Grace Nicolls, 40*s.* and the discharge of the debts due to the testatrix for her and her late husband; to Alice Nicolls, daughter of Grace, 3*l.*; to Samuel Kendrike, after the death of his mother, Jane Powell, 20*l.* and some specific legacies. Jane Powell, the testatrix's niece, is appointed executrix, with Mr. Wingate, "my loving friend," to assist her; and mention is made of the testatrix's cousin Samuel Wilcox, and others of the name. Money is disposed of resulting from the sale of leasehold land at Renhold in Bedfordshire, and gifts are made to the poor of Kentish Town, and of Elstow and Renhold in Bedfordshire.

Thomas Nicholls, the eldest son of Robert Nicholl, is de-

[h] Le Neve, Monum. Angl. p. 33.

scribed as Thomas Nicholls (the elder), of London, mercer. By his will, dated 11th Oct. 1558, and proved 31st Jan. 1561, in the Prerogative Court, he leaves real estates in various parishes of London and in Tottenhall Court, Clerkenwell Court, and Barsbury in Islington, to his sons Robert, Antony, Richard, and John, and his wife Elizabeth; legacies to his daughters Mary, Elizabeth, Christian, and Susan; 400*l.* to the Mercers' Company, to lend to poor freemen; 100*l.* to each of the four hospitals in London. Mention is made of his father and mother Popplewell, of his brother John and his two daughters, of his brother Thomas and his wife, of his "brother" Roger Kelke, of his "brother" Francis Kelk and his wife, of his "brother" Richard Springham and his wife, of Catherine Springham, of his "brother" William Meredith and his wife, &c.

Robert Nicholls, the eldest son of the last-named testator, was born before 1548, being mentioned in the will of his grandfather Robert Nicholl, dated in that year. His will, in which he is described as of London, gentleman, is dated in 1582, and was proved in the Prerogative Court in 1583. Mention is made in it of his uncle John Nicholls, of his brothers Antony and Richard, of his son Tempest, and daughter Grace, and of his brother-in-law Richard Tempest, of Tong, co. York.

His two children, Tempest and Grace, are stated in the pedigree of the family, dated in 1628,[1] to have died s. p.

Richard Nicholls, the third son of Thomas Nicholls, is described in the pedigree of 1628, above referred to, as "of the Middle Temple;" and no mention is made of his marriage or issue. I conjecture him to be identical with Richard Niccolls of Corby and Swafield, co. Lincoln, whose will, dated 30th June, 1591, and proved in the Prerogative Court 4th Oct. 1600, directs that he should be buried at Corby, mentions his wife Jane, his son Antony (whom he appoints his sole executor), his daughters Agnes and Jane, Godlye daughter of his son Robert, his son Arnold, and his son-in-law Francis Lounde; and disposes of his house at Swafield, and other real property. The near connection of this Richard Niccolls with Robert and Antony Nicholls of London, is rendered probable by the names of his sons Antony and Robert, and is also shown by his arms,

[1] Visitation of Bedfordshire, 1566, with additional pedigrees. MS. Harl. 1531.

which are blazoned in Edmondson's Heraldry (I know not on what authority), as above.[k]

Antony Nicholls "of London," the second son of Thomas Nicholls the elder, is stated, in the pedigree above referred to, to have married Mary dau. of — Waldron of Say, co. Somerset, and to have had four children, Francis, Antony, William, and Elizabeth. On the monument of his daughter Elizabeth, mentioned below, he is described as "of Paddington, esquire."

Antony, the second son of Antony Nicholls, was, I believe, the father of Major Francis Nicolls, whose death is recorded in Smyth's Obituary under the date July 23, 1669. "Majr. Fran. Nicolls, Surveyor of ye Ordinance in the Tower, died this night *hora xi. sub nocte* at the Tower; buried at St. Clement's without Temple Barr (Mr. Gifford preached), July 26." Major Francis Nicolls, late an officer in the Ordnance, is mentioned as a cousin of the testator in the will of Colonel Richard Nicolls dated in 1672, and mentioned presently, which leaves legacies to his two sons without mentioning their names. Francis "the son of Antony Nicolls the younger" is also a legatee in the will of Isabel Nicholls, widow of Richard Nicholls of Kentish Town, mentioned above.

William Nicholls, D.D. of Trinity College, Cambridge, the third son of Antony Nicholls, was presented to the rectory of Cheadle, co. Chester, in 1623 by Charles prince of Wales and earl of Chester, and in 1644 was appointed to the Deanery of Chester. He married Catherine, daughter of sir George Leicester of Toft, knt. and relict of William Tatton of Withenshaw, esq. and died 16th Dec. 1657, at the age of 66.[l] In his will, dated 12th Dec. 1657, and proved in London on the 2nd of Feb. following, he is described as of Peele, in Etchells, co. Chester, D.D. His wife Katherine is thereby appointed sole executrix and universal legatee.

Elizabeth, daughter of Antony Nicholls, was twice married;

[k] These arms were probably taken from some memorial of this family in Swayfield church. I am indebted to the Rev. W. Layng, Curate of Swayfield, for the information that there is no trace of any such memorial preserved in the present church, but that the old parish clerk thinks there was something of the kind in the old church, which was pulled down about thirty years ago. I am informed that there is no monument or inscription relating to this family in Corby church.

[l] See his Epitaph in Northendon church, Cheshire, Ormerod's Cheshire, vol. iii. p. 318.

first to Lawrence Rudyard, of Winchfield, co. Hants., esq., by whom she had issue; secondly to . . . Tilney, of Rotherwick in the same county, esq. She lies buried in Winchfield Church, where is an inscription to her memory, given in Coll. Top. et. Gen. vol. viii. p. 219.

Francis Nicholls of Ampthill, co. Bedford, the eldest son of Antony Nicholls, is described in the pedigree of 1628 as "of the Middle Temple, one of the squiers of the Bath to sir Edward Bruse,[m] and lyeth buried at Ampthill, co. Bedford." He married Margaret, daughter of sir George Bruce of Carnock, lineal ancestor of the present earl of Elgin, and brother of Edward lord Bruce of Kinloss, the Master of the Rolls, and by her had issue four sons, Edward, Francis, William, and Richard, and one daughter Bruce.

The honour of Ampthill, in Bedfordshire, was vested in the Crown; and in 1613, the custody of the great park was granted to Lord Bruce, whose family became lessees of the honour. In the 17th century the Nichollses were for many years lessees of Ampthill Great Park under the Bruces, and resided at the great lodge, or capital mansion, as it is called in the survey of 1649.[n]

Francis Nicholls died in 1624, and was buried at Ampthill. Margaret his widow survived him. By her will, dated 26th June, 1651, she desires to be buried at Ampthill, or Staveley, whichever is nearest to the place of her death, and bequeaths 10*l.* to the poor of the place where she is buried. She appoints William Nicholls, D.D. and Thomas Greene, *alias* Hodson, her ancient servant, her executors, to each of whom she gives 10*l.*; and she leaves all her effects "to the relieve of" her son Francis. After the signature and attestation of her will occur the following words: "I doe allowe my cousen Mrs. Margarett Nicolls disposal of her personal estate, this 26th day of June, 1651. Elgin." The will is proved by Thomas Greene, *alias* Hodson, on the 20th April, 1652.

Of the children of Francis and Margaret Nicholls, William died in infancy, and Edward and Francis, having held commands in the Royalist armies in the civil war, died in exile, the

[m] Edward Bruce, 2nd Lord Bruce of Kinloss, was made a Knight of the Bath at the creation of Henry Prince of Wales in 1610. Collins's Peerage, *Earl of Aylesbury*.

[n] Lysons's Bedfordshire, p. 38.

one at the Hague, the other at Paris, before the Restoration. Bruce, the daughter, was married to John Frescheville of Staveley, co. Derby, created in 1664 lord Frescheville of Staveley. She died s. p. on the 10th April, 1629, aged 18.[o]

Richard Nicolls, the third son of Francis Nicolls and Margaret Bruce, was a person of some distinction. He was born in the year 1624 or 1625; and left the university in 1643 to join the royal army, in which he commanded a troop of horse. Following the royal family in their exile, he was attached to the service of the duke of York, whom he accompanied in his French campaigns in the wars of the Fronde under Marshall Turenne.[p] When after the Restoration, Charles II. granted to his brother the country in North America occupied by the Dutch colony of New Netherlands (a part of which was, in the same year, released by the duke to sir George Carteret of Saltrum, co. Devon, and afterwards received the name of New Jersey in honour of the Carteret family), Letters patent were issued on the 25th April, 1664, appointing Colonel Richard Nichols, sir Robert Carre, knt., George Cartwright (Carteret?) esq., and Samuel Maverick, esq., commissioners, with power for them or any three or two of them, or the survivors of them, of whom Colonel Richard Nichols, during his life, should be always one, and should have a casting vote, to visit all the colonies and plantations within the tract known as New England, and "to heare and determine all complaints and appeales in all causes and matters, as well military as criminal and civil, and proceed in all things for the providing for and settleing the peace and security of the said country according to their good and sound discretion, and to such instructions as they or the survivors of them have or shall from time to time receive from us in that behalfe, and from time to time to certify us or our privy councel of their actings and proceedings touching the premisses."[q]

The instructions furnished to Colonel Nicolls respecting his proceedings with the Dutch, required him to reduce them to the same obedience with the king's subjects in those parts, without using any other violence than was necessary for those ends, and

[o] Coll. Top. et Gen. vol. iv. p. 5.

[p] I state this on the authority of George Chalmers' Political History of the United Colonies, p. 573.

[q] Hutchinson's History of Massachusets, vol. i. App. 15.

if necessary "to use such force as could not be avoided for their reduction, they having no kind of right to hold what they are in possession of in our unquestionable territories, than that they are possessed of by an invasion of us."[r]

Colonel Richard Nicolls set sail in June 1664 from Portsmouth with four frigates and about 300 soldiers, and on the 27th of August received the submission of the Dutch capital of New Amsterdam.[s] Upon the reduction of the town, Nicolls changed its name to New York, and assumed the government of the province under the style of "Deputy Governor under his royal highness the duke of York of all his territories in America." American writers are generally agreed that his rule was salutary and honest, though arbitrary. In a letter to the Duke of York, dated 12 Nov. 1665, Colonel Nicolls thus expresses himself: "My endeavors have not been wanting to put the whole government into one frame and policy, and now the most factious republicans cannot but acknowledge themselves fully satisfied with the way and method they are in."[t]

Nicolls returned to England in 1667. He was introduced into the Duke of York's household as one of his gentlemen of the bedchamber; and when in 1672, the duke, as lord high admiral, commanded one of the divisions of the united English and French navy, Colonel Nicolls was among the volunteers who joined the fleet.[u] He served on board the Royal Prince, and was killed at the battle of Solbay on the 28th of May, 1672, at the early age of forty-seven.

Colonel Nicolls left no legitimate issue, and, I believe, was never married. His will, dated the 1st of May 1672, on board the Royall Prince, at the Nore, was proved by his executors in the Prerogative Court of Canterbury in the following June. He desires to be buried at Ampthill, and alms to be given to the parishes through which his funeral would pass, and a marble monument to be erected to his memory, with an inscription mentioning his father and mother, his brother William, and his brothers Edward and Francis, the one dead at the Hague, the other at Paris during the late usurpation, and his executors

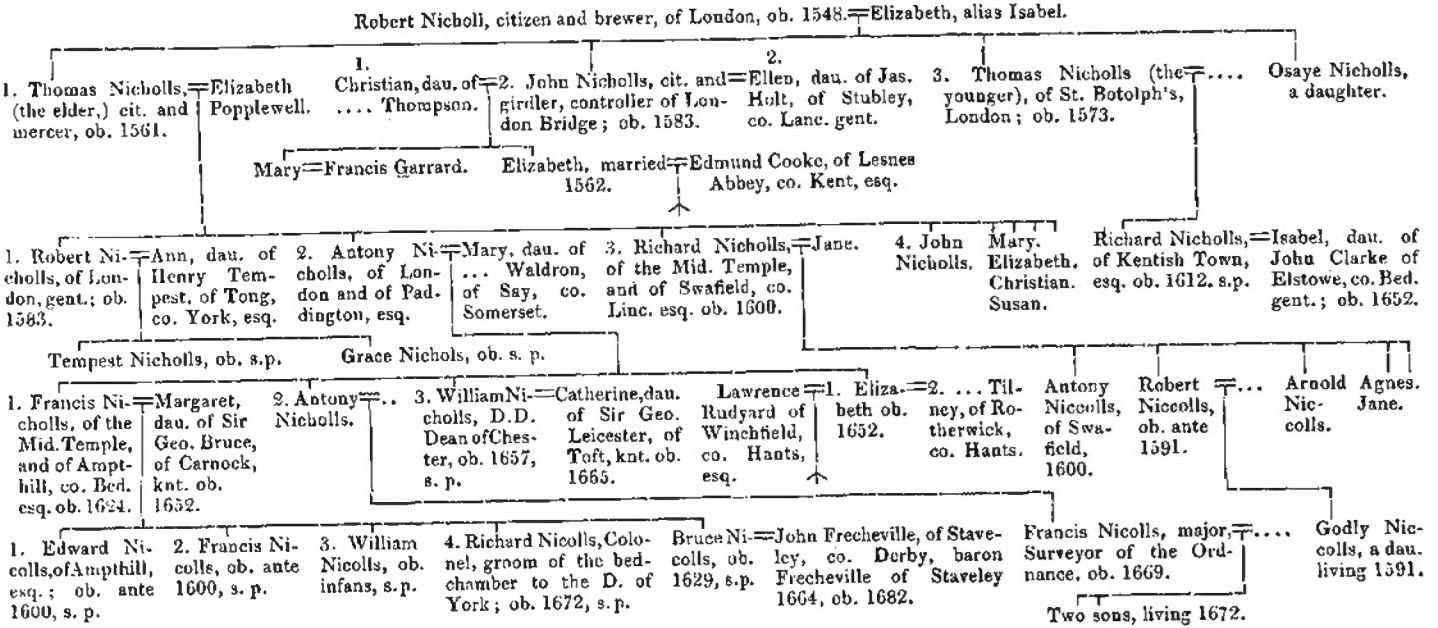
[r] Hazard's Hist. Collect. vol. ii. p. 640.

[s] Smith's History of New York, p. 26; Knickerbocker's New York, &c. &c.

[t] Cited from New York Papers, iv. 6, by Chalmers, Political Annals, p. 599.

[u] Kennett, p. 314.

NICHOLL, NICHOLLS, OR NICOLLS OF LONDON, OF AMPTHILL, CO. BEDF., AND OF SWAFIELD, CO. LINCOLN.



might add what they pleased about his own services in America and elsewhere. He leaves to the eldest son of his cousin Francis Nicolls, late an officer of the Ordnance, 100*l.* "and no more," and to his youngest son, the testator's godson, 100*l.*; to his godson Robin Wroth, Sir Harry Wroth's son of Durance, 100*l.*; to Elizabeth Bennett, daughter of the widow Bennett, 1000*l.*; to his cousin the earl of Kincardine a ring worth 100*l.*; to the lord John Freshville 300*l.*; to the "old countess" of Northampton his eight mares; numerous rings of 100*l.*, 50*l.*, and 10*l.* each, to several noblemen and gentlemen; and desires that, if through haste he has omitted any of his friends, his executors will supply the deficiency, as he wished all his friends to have a memorial of him, and he would think 200*l.* or 300*l.* more well spent in 10*l.* rings. The will contains no residuary gift. The testator appoints Andrew Newport, Esq. and Henry Coventry, Esq. his executors, and prays them to be earnest solicitors with his highness for the money due to him.

His executors fulfilled his injunctions by erecting a white marble monument to his memory in the north-east corner of the chancel of the church of Ampthill, in the upper part of which the cannon ball which caused his death is inclosed, with the words "Instrumentum mortis et immortalitatis." It bears the following inscription (as printed in Parry's Bedfordshire):—

M. S.
Optimis parentibus nunc tumulo conjunctus
Pietate semper conjunctissimus
Hic jacet
Richardus Nicolls Francisci I^stius^ ex Margar. Bruce
filius,
Ill^imo^ Jacobo Duci Ebor. a Cubiculis intimis;
Anno 1643, relictis musarum castris,
Turmam equestrem contra rebelles duxit
Juvenis strenuus atque impiger.
Anno 1664, ætate jam et scientia militari maturus,
In AMERICAM
Septentrionalem cum imperio missus
Longam I's'lam cæterasque insulas
Belgis expulsis vero Domino restituit,
Provinciam arcesque munitissimas
Heri sui titulis insignivit,

Et triennio pro preside rexit
Academia Literis
Bello Virtute
Aula Candore animi
Magistratu Prudentia
Celebris,
ubique bonis charus, sibi et negotiis par.
28 Maii 1672
nave prætoria contra cosd. Belgas
fortiter dimicans,
ictu globi majoris transfossus occubuit.
Fratres habuit,
præter Gulielmum præcoci fato defunctum,
Edvardum et Franciscum
utrumque copiarum pedestrium centurionem,
Qui fœdæ et servilis tyrannidis
quæ tunc Angliam oppresserat impatientes,
exilio prælato (si modo regem extorrem sequi exil: sit)
alter Parsiiis, alter Haga comitis,
ad cælestem patriam migrârunt.

Above are the arms of Nicolls: Azure, a fess between three lion's heads or; Crest, a tiger sejant.

F. M. Nichols.

Note.—For much of the materials from which the above account has been put together, I am indebted to the kindness of my friend, John Nicholl, Esq. F.S.A.

Documents relating to the family of Nicholl, of Essex, with their Pedigree.

The following deeds relating to property at West Wickham, in Essex, belonging to the family of Nicholl, were transcribed by the Rev. William Cole in 1755, from the archives of Lord Montfort.

[MS. Cole, Brit. Mus. 5823, fol. 100.]

Sciant, &c. q̃d nos Ric̃us Wymund ⁊ Brangwyna filia Walt̃i Curteys dedim⁹ Joh̃i fit Joh̃is Nichole de Waldene ⁊ Joh̃i fit Joh̃is Sewale de Wykeh̃ ões tras ⁊ ten̄ que h̃uimus de jure hereditario