

CHAPTER SIX.

THE EARLES OF NORFOLK.

Since the Earles of England are our kinspeople, however remote the relationship, we shall be interested in every bit of history pertaining to them. There are three families in particular that we purpose to give some account of, although their connection with the parent stem which we have been following has not yet been made out. The first of these to attract our attention is the family of Earles whose home was in Norfolk.

Blomefield, in his history of Norfolk County, under the head of "Heydon," says: "The family of the Earles, who are now, and for several generations have been, lords of this place, is of great antiquity, and had for its origin the adjacent town of Salle, which is very remarkable for its giving rise to three of the ancient families of this county (Norfolk), viz., Fountaine, Briggs, and Erle."

"About 1350 it seems as if the family divided, for Alexander le Erle owned an estate at Willingham and Sotterly in Suffolk, and was settled there. But

A 1) WILLIAM LE ERLE,

his brother, I suppose as the eldest, continued at Salle, for I find in 1360, he owned an estate there, which hath continued in the family to this day. His son,

B 1) JOHN ERLE,

was owner of divers lands, purchased by him in Salle about 1405, and his descendants continued purchasing and adding to the estate, both in Salle and Cawston; though I do not find any lands belonging to the family in Heydon, till

C 1) JOHN ERLE,

of Salle, Gent., about 1520, purchased divers lands there. (There is an interval of about a century between this John and the preceding). This John lived to be very old, being buried at Salle, in October, 1570, leaving

D 1) JOHN EARLE,

of Salle, his son and heir. He added to the estate by purchasing in Heydon. By his first wife, Agnes Locksmith, who was buried in Salle in 1560, he had ~~no~~ issue; but by his second wife, Catherine, who was buried there in 1606, he had three sons and seven daughters. He died in February, 1611, and was buried with his ancestors at Salle. His eldest son and heir,

E 1) THOMAS ERLE (or EARLE),

of Salle, had two wives. Margery, daughter of William Oxburgh, of Aylsham, who died in 1599 without issue, was his second wife; but by Anne, daughter of John Founteyn, of Salle, Esq., (who was buried at Salle in 1598), he had one son and three daughters. He died in September, 1605, and was buried with his wives at Salle. He left his father and father-in-law as executors and guardians of his son

F 1) ERASMUS EARLE, ESQ.,

who was baptized at Salle, September 20, 1590. He was sent early to Norwich school, and after he had passed through his studies there, was admitted student of Furnevall's Inn. Removing thence he was admitted to Lincoln's Inn, April 7, 1612. In 1639 he was autumnal lecturer of that Society, and teacher of it in the years 1635-1641; and for some time treasurer there. And now, having made great proficiency in the law, he became concerned for many principal people, but especially transacted the affairs of the chief families of his own county. He behaved with so much reputation that, in 1644, he and Mr. Thurloe were secretaries for the English at the treaty of Uxbridge. On the 12th of October, 1648, he was called to the degree of serjeant-at-law. In the same year he succeeded William Denny, Esq., as steward of Norwich city, and in the latter part of it was chosen recorder there, in which post he continued till 1653. In the Long Parliament begun in 1640, he was chosen member for Norwich city. When Oliver Cromwell took upon him the protectorship, he made him his own serjeant, and after his death he enjoyed the same post under his son Richard, being likewise serjeant to the Commonwealth. Such was his reputation in business, being esteemed one of the most able lawyers of the time, that in the Norfolk circuit he had almost a monopoly. At the Restoration he took the benefit of the King's pardon, and was on the 21st of June, 1660, again called to the degree of serjeant-at-

law, and continued in great reputation and business to the end of his days.

He raised a good estate, and among many other purchases bought the manors of Salle, Cawston and Heydon, to the last of which he removed from Salle, and the manor-house, called Heydon Hall, hath been the seat of the family ever since.

He married Frances, daughter of James Fountaine, Esq., of Salle, February 25, 1616. She was buried at Heydon, September 13, 1671. She had four sons and two daughters. He died at Heydon, September 7, 1667, and is buried in the east chapel of the north aisle, under an exceeding large altar tomb, over which is a mural monument with arms and inscription. His son,

G 1) JOHN EARLE, ESQ.,

was baptized at Salle, in April, 1622. Was Sheriff of Norfolk in 1654. He married Sarah, daughter of Sir John Hare. She died in 1667 and was buried at Heydon. He died in 1697. His eldest son,

H 1) RALPH EARLE, ESQ.,

of Salle, died single in 1679.

H 2) ERASMUS EARLE, ESQ.,

of Heydon, second son of John (G 1), became heir at his father's death. He married Eleanor, daughter and sole heir of Augustine Castle. He was High Sheriff of Norfolk in 1690. He was buried at Heydon, March, 1721, and she in 1736. They had four sons:

- I 1) JOHN EARLE, died single, in 1721, before his father.
- I 2) ERASMUS EARLE, ESQ., married Hannah Mariah, daughter of William de Grey, Esq. He died without issue, Oct. 28, 1728.
- I 3) AUGUSTINE EARLE.
- I 4) EDWARD EARLE, born 1697, and died unmarried in 1731, so that the whole estate came to the third son,

I 3) AUGUSTINE EARLE, ESQ.,

of Heydon. He married Frances, daughter and sole heir of Robert Blacklock, in 1726, by whom he had three sons and three daughters:

- J 1) ERASMUS EARLE.
- J 2) ROBERT EARLE, born 1729, died 1732.

- J 3) AUGUSTINE EARLE, born 1737, died 1744.
 J 4) MARY EARLE, married William Wiggett, Esq., who took the name of Bulwer. See below, Bulwer family.
 J 5) FRANCES EARLE.
 J 6) ELIZABETH EARLE.

The Earles bear for their coat armor the ancient arms of the family: Az. a fess between two bars gemelles, or. Crest: on a torse of their colors, a lion's paw erased proper, holding a pheon or. And for motto, 'Adversis major, pars secundis.'"

An interesting item which may be introduced here is the inter-marriage between this family and that of Bulwer. We quote from Dr. Pliny Earle:

THE BULWER FAMILY.

"The family of Bulwer, of Norman origin, was founded at the time of the Conquest, by Tyrus or Tyrold de Dalling. William Bulwer, Esq., of Wood Dalling, Norfolk County, the last male representative of this family, died in 1775, bequeathing his manors and estates to his nephew, William Wiggett, Esq., who took the name of Bulwer. He married Mary (J 4 above), eldest daughter of Augustine Earle, Esq., of Heydon (a lineal descendant, in the main line, of Erasmus Earle, distinguished in Cromwell's time, and one of the Commissioners of the Treaty of Uxbridge), and had issue, William Earle Bulwer, his heir, and five others.

"This William Earle Bulwer, Esq., of Heydon Hall, was a brigadier-general officer in the army, and colonel of the 106th Foot. He espoused Elizabeth, daughter and sole heiress of Richard Warburton Lytton, Esq., of Knebworth Park, in Hertfordshire, and had three sons, viz., 1. William Earle Lytton Bulwer, who succeeded his father, in 1807, at Heydon Hall; 2. Henry Lytton Earle Bulwer, Secretary of the Embassy to Paris, and Minister to Madrid and to the United States of America; 3. Edward George Earle Lytton Bulwer, the novelist, poet, and member of Parliament. He was created Baron July 18, 1838, and in 1843 took the title of Sir Edward George Earle Bulwer Lytton, having succeeded, by his mother's will, to Knebworth Park and the estates of the Lytton family."

These interesting quotations comprise our knowledge of the Norfolk Earles. We would gladly know more about their origin. There are several points worth noting. First, the spelling of the name. In the earliest generation mentioned by Blomefield it is "le Erle." We

are inclined to think that "le" is the error of some transcriber for "de." If "de Erle" was the form used by the first-comers to Norfolk, it would seem to connect them with the Devon Erles, for the original "de Erleigh" took this form in Devon, and maintained it in Dorset to the last. We first find this form of the name used by John Erle of Ashburton. The date, too, 1350, the reign of Edward III., when Blomefield finds Alexander le Earle in Suffolk and William in Norfolk, corresponds to the time when at least one writer places John Erle at Ashburton. This is, to say the least, suggestive of some connection between these branches. About the time of the migration from Somerset to Devon, there may have been some member of the family who settled in Norfolk. As a younger son of the "White Knight" gave rise to the Devonshire and Wiltshire branches, so another son may have been the progenitor of the Norfolk branch. This is possible, and looks plausible, but it is all that we are justified in saying.

Another interesting point is the appearance of the form "Earle" in this Norfolk genealogy. From the sixteenth century it is the form employed in this family. It is interesting to watch the evolution of our patronymic. It began with Erleigh, Erlega, Erlegh, Erleia, and progressed to Erle, and then to Earle. This is the form we shall find in other branches of the family, which we are to consider. Does it suggest that they have some connection with this Norfolk family? This is not at all impossible, for in following the pedigree we have noticed families with a number of sons (seven in one case), of whom no account is given. We do not even know their names. It is highly probable that the same migratory impulse which led their ancestors to Norfolk and Suffolk, led these younger sons into other counties to establish homes for themselves. We shall find the same impulse leading a number to emigrate to the new world.