

NOTES ON THE MANOR OF KNIGHTON, I. OF W., AND THE EARLY MANOR LORDS.

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(Continued from Vol. VII., Part II., p. 68).

° Of Ralph (2), later Sir Ralph de Gorges, the Marshal.

He is first mentioned in connection with Isle of Wight records c. 1279-80, when a petition relating to the levying of scutage was presented by Ralph de Gorges and Peter D'Evercy, for themselves and the whole community of the island—"ad petitionem Radulfi de Gorgēs et Petri de Verçy pro se et tota communitate insula Vectoe sugerrentum." Ralph appears to have inherited this dispute with the Crown from his father. Worsley, "Hist. I. W.," p. 77, says:—"The turbulent reigns of King John, Henry the Third, and Edward the First, afford divers instances of exactions on the people; one in particular was complained of in the eighth year of the last-mentioned King, when it was alleged that in the thirty-eighth and thirty-ninth of the preceding reign James de Norton and Richard de Borhunt, collectors of the King's scutage, had unjustly distrained on Ralph de Gorges (no doubt the father of the petitioner) and Pèter D'Everey." On the present occasion—8th of Edward I.—the islanders claimed exemption from contributing to an aid for marrying the King's eldest daughter, and defended themselves by ancient custom—that they discharged all such services to the Lord of the Island; the Lord paid the King scutage for the Island, and the landholders who held under him contributed their proportions whenever that tax was imposed." The Council to whom the complaint was addressed ordered the Treasurer and Barons of the Exchequer to call the collectors before them, and, if the

allegations in the petition were found true to do the complainants full justice.

Entered on the Close Rolls, 12th Edward I., is the following : "1284, April 13. To the treasurer and barons of the Exchequer. Notification that the King has pardoned Ralph de Gorges for his good services £24 in which he is indebted to the Exchequer for the debts of Ralph de Gorges, his father, for the time when he was Sheriff of Dorset, and order to acquit Ralph for this sum."¹ The nature of the services referred to is not specified. A further mandate is issued on the 10th of September, 1285, "to cause Ralph de Gorges to be acquitted of 100s. in which he was amerced before the Justices, at Windsor, for the common summons of their eyre as the King has pardoned him."²

The Inquisitions and Assessments *re* Feudal Aids, co. Dorset, reveal the fact that Ralph had obtained the distinction of Knight-hood by 1285.³ An entry on the Patent Rolls shows that Sir Ralph, in the year 1287, was actively engaged abroad, and Hoare, "Hist. of Wilts," ii-iii, 29, says that "he equalled his father in military distinction, taking a prominent part in almost all the wars of Edward I." 1287, June 24. Protection granted to Ralph de Gorges going abroad with the King until Michaelmas.⁴ An interval of three years intervenes before any further notice of him appears and the following is entered :—"1290, Sept. 18. Commission of oyer and terminer to Nicholas de Segrave, 'the elder,' on complaint by William, Abbot of Murivale, that Ralph de Gorges and others (his servants chiefly) cut down and carried away the said Abbot's trees in his wood at Dunton and took away his sheep from his fold at Rulowe, co. Warwick."⁵

The death of Lady Elena, his mother, occurred in the early part of the 20th Edward I. The royal mandate directing the escheator to take charge of her estates bears date February 8th, and soon afterwards Sir Ralph, on doing homage, had seisin granted. "*De homagio capto*. Rex cepit homagium Radulphi

¹ Cal. Cl. R. 1279-1280, p. 260.

² Idem, p. 337.

³ Inq. & Ass. *re* Feudal Aids, 1284-1431, Vol. ii., p. 34.

⁴ Cal. Pat. R. m. 9.

⁵ Cal. Pat. R. 18 Edw. I.; m. 7d.

de Gorges filius et hæredis Elena de Gorges, defuncti, de omnibus terris et tenementis que eadem Elena, mater sua tenuit de Rege in capite, mandatum est Malculino de Harlee, esch. . . . quod accepta securitate a prefato Radulpho . . . Teste Rege, apud Farnedon, v die Marcii."¹

Sir Ralph shortly afterwards was engaged in the Scottish wars—"protection with clause volumus" being granted him—June 24th, 1291, "until Christmas, staying in Scotland on the King's service."² During the years 1293-4 he was again employed in the French wars, where he attained such favour from the King that the following grant in his favour was made:—"1294, July 15, Portsmouth. Grant to Ralph de Gorges going to Gascony on the King's service, that if anything should happen to him before his return, the exors of his will shall have free administration of his lands and goods for three years after his death, and also free administration of his mother's will, whereof he is said to be executor. Enrolled in the Gascon Roll."³

He had already started on his Gascon expedition by September 22nd, as shown by the following entry on the Close Rolls:—"1294, Sept. 5. To the Sheriff of Gloucester, Order made at the request of Ralph de Gorges, who has set out on the King's service to Gascony, to cause Matthew de Gorges, imprisoned at Gloucester for a trespass that he was said to have committed in the park of Thomas le Butiller at Bademinton, to be released upon his finding mainprice to satisfy Thomas after Ralph's return from those parts, if Thomas consents to this."⁴ Dugdale, in his "Baronage of England," Tom ii-iii, 55, refers to the grant in favour of Ralph's executors in case Ralph should die in Gascony, thus:—"His executors should receive the profits of all his lands from the time of his death until the end of three years and likewise the free administration of all his goods for the performance of his will," and says further—"But in that year Charles, brother to the King of France, invading Gascoigne with a great power, laid siege to Risune, whereof John de Britainia was Governor, who,

¹ Except e Rot. Fin. 20 Edw. I., memb. 11.

² Cal. Pat. R., m. 1.

³ Cal. Pat. R. 1192-1301, m. 14.

⁴ Cal. Cl. R. 22 Edw. I., p. 367.

forsaking his charge, exposed those in the garrison to the mercy of the enemy; amongst which this Ralph, being one, was carried prisoner to Paris."

After an interval of two years a reference to the Manor of Knighton is entered:—"1296, March 18. Commission of oyer and terminer to Adam de Gurdon (and others), on a complaint by Ralph de Gorges touching the persons who had, during his absence, in Gacony, burned his house and the goods therein at Knyghton, Isle of Wight, and wounded his men."¹

It is unlikely that the complainant attended the enquiry, since it is conjectured that he died soon afterwards during his captivity. The writ to the escheator was issued on May the 23rd, at Portsmouth, ordering him to seize into the King's hands the lands of Ralph de Gorges:—"De terris capiendis in manum Regis. Quia Radulphus de Gorges, qui de Rege tenuit in capite, diem suum clausit extremum, ut Rex accepit, mandatum est Malculino de Harlee, escaetori . . . quod omnes terras, &c., &c. Teste Rege, apud Portesmuth, xxxi. Mai. 'Vacat.'"² It may be inferred from the closing word, "Vacat," that the customary writ was issued in ignorance and was quashed later when it was discovered that in consequence of the Royal grant to the executors the King had no interest in Ralph's lands and the escheator had no right to seize them. The year given is 1296, but if the regnal year began on the 20th of November it should be 1297. It follows that Ralph had been dead some little time on the 24th of May, 1297.

The evidence of Sir Ralph having been married is supplied in the following excerpt relating to the widow's dower. The reference is given in the Close Rolls, 25 Edward I., 1297:—"1297, June 27. These lands [in Essex] are assigned to Maud, late the wife of Ralph de Gorges, as her dower for a third part of the lands that belonged to Ralph de Gorges by the assent of Robert son of Payne and the exors. of the will of Ralph of the one part, and John Lovel on the other in place of Maude: the manor of

¹ Cal. Pat. R., 1292-1301, p. 217, m. 16d.

² Excerpt e Rot. Fin., 25 Edw. I., memb. 13.

Bradepol with appurtenances and with the rent issuing from the land of Kentecumb : the manor of Ludetori, co. Dorset, with the advowson of the Church, and also for [her] action to demand her dower against all persons enfeoffed by Ralph of any tenements. Memo, this assignment was made at Westminster, June 27th, 25 Edward I."¹

The foregoing excerpt is of more than ordinary importance, since it clearly proves that in the year 1297 a Ralph de Gorges was recently dead, leaving a widow surviving, and who had dower assigned from the family estates of the De Gorges. This Ralph must be "the Marshal," lord of Knighton Manor, father of—not identical with—Ralph, "Baron Gorges," who died in the year 1325. Dugdale, and later writers following him, have confused these two different personalities. Attention may further be drawn to the fact that the demise of Ralph "the Marshal" here given is at variance with the date usually assigned, for he died after March, 1295-6, and some little time before May 24th, 1297. Collinson, "Hist. of Somerset," pp. 156-8, says:—"Ralph, s. & h. of Ralph by Elena his wife, &c., was summoned to Parliament among the Barons and died 29 Nov., 17 Edw. II., leaving issue by his wife Eleanor, &c." G. E. C.'s "Complete Peerage," iv., 54, says:—"Ralph de Gorges, s. & h. of Ralph . . . by Eleanor, dr. & h. of John Moreville of Wraxall, co. Soms., was summ. to Parl. as a Baron [Lord Gorges]. He married Eleanor, &c." The "Victoria County History," vol. v., p. 182, art. "Knighton," says:—"Ivo de Morville died in 1256, leaving a dr. & h. married to Ralph de Gorges, she died leaving a son Ralph, who married Eleanor, &c., &c."

Sir Ralph (3) de Gorges—Lord Gorges—son and heir of Sir Ralph "the Marshal" and Maud his wife, was born by 1276, and probably a good deal earlier. He succeeded to the family estates by May, 1297. Evidence will be adduced to show that he served under his father in the campaign of 1294, and was probably taken prisoner with him at Risune, for there are several references to the losses both his father and he sustained in that

¹ Cal. Cl. R., 1296-1302, p. 114.

expedition, and entered in the Patent Rolls is the following :—

"1299, April 2. Protection with clause *volumus* for Ralph de Gorges for as long as he remains a prisoner with the King of France.¹

A year later, and in the same month, a commission was issued "touching the persons who fished in the stews of Ralph de Gorges, King's yeoman, at Knighton, co. Southampton, carried away fish while he was away on the King's service and under his protection beyond the seas."² Allusion has been previously made to a like complaint made in 1296, and a query arises—Do they refer to two distinct breaches, or to only one act of trespass? Probably the latter, for, being a prisoner in France at the time when the first commission was issued, Ralph was unable to prosecute his complaint, and on his return from abroad went on with the case. No evidence is forthcoming, however, to show that he was present at the enquiry, though, according to Collinson, he was probably ransomed before the year 1300, as he then had summons, 28 Edw. I., to be at Carlisle, well fitted with horse and arms, to march with the King against the Scots, then in rebellion.³ In the year 1300 Sir Ralph was present at the siege of Caerlaverock, and Hoare says that he is celebrated by the minstrel as being one of the foremost chieftains who sat down with their chivalry before that noted fortress⁴ clad in a coat "*mascle de or e de asur*."

"There more than once the new-dubbed Knight

Sir Ralph de Gorges I saw"

It has been conjectured that the long imprisonment in France explains his late Knighthood. The fact of Sir Ralph being married is made known to us by a fine, 29 Edward I., 1301 :—
"Thomas de Gorges granted the manor of Ludyton (Litton Cheney), Combe, and Bradepol, and the advowson of the church at Ludyton, with other lands, all in the county of Dorset, to Ralph de Gorges and Alianora his wife and heirs of their body

¹ Cal. Pat. R., 1292-1301, p. 402, m. 33.

² Idem, p. 548.

³ Collinson, "*Hist. of Som's.*," dp 156-8.

⁴ "*Hist. of Wilts.*," p. 29.

issuing." The following excerpt is from an inquisition, 10 Henry VI., 1432, taken at Sherborne, co. Dorset :—"The jurors say a certain Thomas de Gorges was formerly seized in his demesne as of fee (of the above-mentioned estates) and gave same amongst other things to Ralph de Gorges and Alianora his wife and to their heirs. By virtue of which gift Ralph and Alianora were so seized and had issue Ralph, Elizabeth, Alianora and Joan."

The Thomas de Gorge mentioned in the fine died three years later, and the inquisition, 33 Ed. I., No. 50, shows that he was seized of Shipton Maureward, co. Dorset, and of Tamerton Foliot manor, co. Devon.

In the year 1303 the outstanding dispute as to "dues of homage" is again revived, a renewed order to the Treasurer and Barons of the Exchequer being issued on May 13th "to search the Rolls concerning aids granted to the King's progenitors as to whether tenants in the Isle of Wight were wont to make aid to marry the King's eldest daughter," &c., "and to respite, in the meantime, the demand made upon Ralph de Gorges for such aid."¹ The fresh enquiry was probably due to the fact that the

¹ Cal. Cl. R., 1302-1307, p. 31.

earlier conditions under which the matter arose had changed during the interregnum, the King, on the death of the Countess Isabella de Fortibus, the last direct representative of the powerful De Redvers line, having become the lord paramount of the Isle of Wight.

(To be continued).