

XLV.

RALPH LORD BASSET OF DRAYTON.

ALTHOUGH the records of the personal history of this nobleman are neither ample nor particularly memorable, he appears to have borne an active part in the wars of the royal Founder during the latter moiety of his eventful reign.

RALPH
EARL
OF
BASSET.

Ralph lord Basset was the only son of Ralph Basset by Alice, the daughter of Nicholas lord Audeley, of Helegh, and grandson and heir of Ralph lord Basset and of Joan Beauchamp, daughter of Thomas earl of Warwick. Having, soon after his birth, been deprived by death of his father, the estates of the family devolved to him at the age of eight, upon the demise of his grandfather on 25th February 1342-3¹. He had no sooner made proof of his age, in 1355, and done homage for his inheritance, than he was ordered to join the army of the Black Prince,² upon whom a contemporary document³ states him to have been in attendance at Bordeaux on 8th January 1355-6. Froissart also mentions him as one of the knights sent by the prince on an expedition from thence into the interior of France, who distinguished themselves in the celebrated encounter with the enemy near Romorantin, the successful issue of which induced Edward to march a larger force to the siege and capture of that important fortress.⁴ In 1356, Basset had the honour of sharing the glory of Poitiers:⁵ after which battle he probably accompanied the victor to England; for we find that he had summons to parliament amongst the barons on 25th December in the year following.

An incidental circumstance⁶ during his abode in Aquitaine

¹ Esc. 17 Ed. 3, No. 59.

² Rot. Vasc. 29 Ed. 3, m. 2.

³ Household book of Black Prince kept at Bordeaux, and now in duchy of Cornwall office.

⁴ Froissart (ed. Buchon) tom. iii. p. 163.

⁵ Ibid. p. 197.

⁶ Entry, in the above household

book, of a payment at Meysin, on Saturday, 28th November 1355, to Peter Arnald of thirty gold leopards (6*l.* 10*s.*), as a compensation from the prince for giving up two horses, captured by him from two servants coming with letters from lady Joan, sister to the lord of Montfort.

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affords ground for the conjecture that, under the auspices of his illustrious master, his matrimonial alliance may then have been arranged with Joan of Brittany, the only sister of prince Edward's brother-in-law, John count of Montfort, afterwards duke of Brittany, earl of Richmond, and a knight of the Order. The hand of this lady had been previously designed, by the treaty of Guerrande, for John count of Penthievre, the eldest son of Charles de Blois.¹

Lord Basset, attended, in 1359,² king Edward to France in the expedition which was productive of the peace of Bretigny. He served again, in the ensuing year, in Normandy;³ and in 1361 had licence to travel to the Holy Land.⁴ In 1365 and 1366 he was in Gascony in the retinue of the prince of Wales;⁵ as well as in 1368,⁶ in which year he was, upon the death of Lionel duke of Clarence, admitted into the Order of the Garter.⁷ In 1369 we find him in France, with the duke of Lancaster, in the army intended to create a diversion when the French king had menaced England with an invasion.⁸ The public records, as well as Froissart, attest that his services were again in requisition in France in 1372 and 1373.⁹ On the 10th November, however, in the last-mentioned year he was in England; for a messenger was despatched to him with a writ under the great seal having reference to the adjustment of a dispute which had arisen between him and his kinsman the earl of Warwick.¹⁰

Upon the accession of Richard II, he received orders to march against the French;¹¹ and had, on 4th June 1378, an allowance of 269*l.* 7*s.* 7*d.* for Reynerus Grymbald, or Grimaldi, a noble Genoese, whom he had made prisoner in the preceding reign, and placed at the disposal of the king.¹² In

¹ Hist. de Bretagne par Morice, tom. i. p. 426.

² Rot. Vasc. 33 Ed. 3, p. 2, m. 14.

³ Rot. Fran. 34 Ed. 3, m. 10.

⁴ Pat. 35 Ed. 3, p. 3, m. 14.

⁵ Rot. Vasc. 39 Ed. 3, m. 3; and 40 Ed. 3, m. 9.

⁶ Pat. 42 Ed. 3, p. 1, m. 33.

⁷ Windsor tables.

⁸ Froissart, tom. v. p. 100; and Rot. Fran. 43 Ed. 3, m. 3.

⁹ Rot. Fran. 46 Ed. 3, m. 17. Froissart, tom. vi. p. 57. Rot. Alem. 47 Ed. 3, m. 11.

¹⁰ Devon's Extracts from Issue Rolls of Exchequer, p. 195.

¹¹ Rot. Fran. 1 Ric. 2, p. 2, m. 12.

¹² Issue Roll, Easter, 1 Ric. 2, p. 206.

December 1379 he sailed in the fleet under sir John Arundel, destined to land troops in Brittany, the remnant of which was driven back upon the English coast by a violent tempest in which the admiral and several distinguished commanders had perished.¹ In 1380 he was again employed in France under Thomas of Woodstock, our knight's personal retinue consisting of two hundred men-at-arms and two hundred archers, including with himself no less than nine knights.² In 1385 he served with John of Gant in the disastrous expedition to Spain;³ but returned, in the next year, to receive a command in the army raised for the defence of the realm.⁴ Knyghton relates a bold reply to Richard, when that monarch contemplated the employment of force in the protection of his favourites. Basset assured the king that his life and estate had ever been at his true and lawful service, and should again be so devoted whenever he might be called into the field; but "that he would not adventure a broken head for the duke of Ireland."⁵

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Lord Basset was, at the age of fifty-one, a deponent in the Scrope and Grosvenor controversy on 30th October 1386.⁶ He had robes of the Garter issued to him (according to the wardrobe accounts which have been recovered) from 1371 to 1389.⁷ He died, without issue, on 10th May 1390,⁸ having made his will on 15th January preceding, which was proved on 1st August 1396.⁹ His remains were interred in the aisle on the south side of the choir of Lichfield cathedral, where a monument, which had been erected to his memory, was destroyed during the civil war of the seventeenth century.

Joan lady Basset, his relict, obtained in 1397,¹⁰ a grant of the domain forming the Honour of Richmond, which had been

¹ Froissart, tom. vii. p. 281.

² Wals. p. 247, No. 30. Rot. Franc. 3 Ric. 2, m. 5; and 4 Ric. 2, m. 23; also Froissart, tom. vii. pp. 315. 391.

³ Froissart, tom. x. p. 124.

⁴ Dugd. bar. I. 380.

⁵ Knyghton, 2698, Nos. 20 and 30.

⁶ Scrope and Grosvenor Roll, p.

206. The deposition was taken in the refectory of Westminster abbey.

⁷ Ward. acc. 45, 49, 50, 51 Ed. 3; and 7, 11, 12, and 13 Ric. 2, in Queen's Remembrancer's office.

⁸ Esc. 14 Ric. 2, No. 9.

⁹ Reg. Courtney at Lambeth palace, fo. 234.

¹⁰ Regm. Honoris de Richmond. fol. Lond. 1722, Appendix, p. 205.

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possessed by her illustrious brother; but this concession was resumed by Henry IV.¹ She died in 1402.²

By two several inquisitions taken after lord Basset's death, his heirs were found to be Thomas earl of Stafford, (descended from his great-aunt Margaret Basset, who married Edmond lord Stafford,) and Alice the wife of sir William Chaworth, who was the heir of the body of another great-aunt, Maud, the wife of sir William Heriz. The former is now represented by George-William lord Stafford; and the co-heirs general of Alice Chaworth were, in 1507, Elizabeth³ the wife of sir Anthony Babington of Dethick, and Joan the wife of sir Thomas Denham, of Eythorpe.⁴

ARMS.⁵

Or, three piles, the points meeting in base, Gules, a quarter Ermine.

CREST.

Out of a ducal coronet Or a boar's head Azure, tusked of the first.

¹ Rot. Pat. 1 Hen. 4, p. 1, m. 17, by which the Honour of Richmond was granted to Ralph Nevil earl of Westmorland.

² See her will, dated Cheshunt, Bucks, 27th Mar. 1401-2.

³ Anthony Babington, who suffered for high treason, temp. Eliz. was the great-grandson and heir of Elizabeth Babington.

⁴ It has been assumed by some genealogists, (see Nichols' Leicestershire, vol. iii. p. 716,) that Isabel, the wife of sir Thomas Shirley (who died in 1362), and, secondly, of sir Gerard Braybroke, was sister to Ralph lord Basset, upon the authority of a devise in his will of a small real estate to his nephew ("nepoti suo") sir Hugh Shirley, upon condition of his using the surname and arms of Basset. The returns to the two inquisitions have induced another conclusion, (Synopsis of the Peerage,

vol. i. p. 43,) that Isabel was *illegitimate*. The finding of the jury would, however, have been the same in either of two other cases; viz. if she had been a uterine sister, (his mother having also married Hugh de Meynell,) or if she had been the daughter of his father by a former marriage. It does not appear that Shirley complied with the condition by taking the name of Basset. His descendant and heir male, in the tenth generation, sir Robert Shirley, lord Ferrers de Chartley, was created earl Ferrers in 1711, and is now represented by the marquess Townshend.

⁵ Plate remaining in the sixth stall on the Sovereign's side. The escocheon is surmounted by the following badge or cognizance; viz. On a roundel, per pale Gules and Azure, an escarbuncle of eight rays fleuretté Or.