

## LXXX.

## SIR PETER COURTENAY.

SIR  
PETER  
COURTE-  
NAY.

AMONG the most ancient remains connected with the Order, in St. George's chapel, is a square plate without any inscription, bearing the arms of Courtenay, affixed to the fifth stall on the Prince's side; a memorial, probably contemporaneous, of sir Peter Courtenay, who, upon the death of John lord Nevil in 1388, was, according to the Windsor tables, the next occupant of that stall.<sup>1</sup>

The lustre of his birth, his ardent and romantic devotion to chivalrous exercises, and his martial skill and undaunted valour in the field, may claim for this knight a conspicuous station among the heroes of his time.

Sir Peter Courtenay was the fifth son of Hugh the second earl of Devon, by Margaret Bohun, and a younger brother of sir Hugh Courtenay, one of the Founders of the Garter. He received knighthood, at the same time with his brother sir Philip and his nephew sir Hugh, from the Black Prince at Vittoria, in 1367, before the battle of Najara;<sup>2</sup> and his services on that memorable occasion were acknowledged by the grant of a pension of 50*l.* out of the revenues of Devon and Cornwall; and, in 1369, by another of like amount, charged on the stannaries.<sup>3</sup> From that year until the accession of Richard II, we find no mention of him; but having then, in company with his brother sir Philip, the command of certain vessels in the naval expedition under the earls of Salisbury and Arundel, they encountered the Spanish fleet near the coast of Brittany, and, after a desperate conflict, were compelled to yield to superior force. Sir Philip, although severely wounded, was enabled to save himself; but sir Peter, who had fought strenuously, fell, covered with wounds, into the power of the enemy; but not until all the brave esquires of Devon

<sup>1</sup> See *antèa*, p. 251.

<sup>2</sup> Froissart, tom. iv. p. 376.

<sup>3</sup> Cleaveland's House of Courtenay, p. 197.

and Somerset, his companions in arms, had been drowned or slain.<sup>1</sup>

Upon his liberation, shortly afterwards, he proceeded to Bordeaux, and from thence to England; when he was honoured with a military appointment at Calais.<sup>2</sup> It was probably during the period in which he filled that station, that he visited the gay court of Charles VI. at Paris, and merited the applause of that sovereign for his feats of arms with the celebrated Guy de la Tremouille;<sup>3</sup> for he obtained, in 1383, a licence from Richard II. to send, by Northampton herald and Aulet pursuivant, eight cloths of scarlet, black, and russet, as presents to certain lords of France; as also two horses, six saddles, six small bows, one sheaf of large arrows, and a sheaf of cross-bow arrows, for the attendants of the king, and a greyhound and other dogs for his keeper; the whole in acknowledgment of the great honour which had been done to him on occasion of his combat with a French knight.<sup>4</sup> In 1388 sir Peter Courtenay was appointed principal chamberlain.<sup>5</sup> In the same year also, by the description of "the king's cousin," he was authorised to proceed to Calais with John Hobeldod, his esquire, for the purpose of inquiring of and deliberating with the enemy touching certain intended feats of arms.<sup>6</sup> This journey had doubtless reference to the jousts which were, not long afterwards, held at the abbey of St. Inghelbert. Froissart, before entering into a minute description of those jousts, takes occasion to narrate the adventures of Courtenay on his returning to Calais after his former encounter with De la Tremouille. It seems that king Charles, having extolled and rewarded our knight for his gallant bearing in that tourney, ordered the sire de Clary to escort him back to Calais. They alighted on their way at Luceu in Artois, the residence of king Richard's sister, the countess of St. Paul, who had been first married to sir Peter's nephew, Hugh lord Courtenay. The lady entertained them courteously; and, amongst other questions to sir Peter, demanded

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<sup>1</sup> Leland's Collect. ed. 1770, vol. i. p. 251.

<sup>2</sup> Rymer, vol. viii. p. 120.

<sup>3</sup> Froissart, tom. xii. p. 53.

<sup>4</sup> Rot. Franc. 7 Ric. 2, Nov 23, m. 16; Rymer, vol. vii. p. 415.

<sup>5</sup> Rot. Pat. 11 Ric. 2, p. 1, m. 1.

<sup>6</sup> Rot. Franc. 11 Ric. 2, m. 9, April 24.

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whether he had been well received by the French nobles? "Doubtless," replied the knight, "I am content with my reception: nevertheless, the object for which I crossed the sea has been but poorly accomplished. Sure I am that if the sire de Clary, here present, who is a knight of France, had been pleased to visit England for a like purpose, he would have found more readiness than I have met with, to gratify his chivalrous desires. True it is, that sir Guy de la Tremouille was allowed to joust with me; but, after we had broken a lance or two, we were ordered to desist; and, madam, I must everywhere maintain that it was not my fault that there was no second encounter." Clary's anger at this speech was suppressed by his recollection that the English knight was under his escort; and the countess comforted her kinsman by assuring him that he would quit the French territory without reproach, and with the more honour for having complied with the request of its sovereign. On the day following the knights took leave of their noble hostess, and proceeded on their journey. Upon entering within the English lines near Calais, sir Peter, having thanked his companion for his kind escort, was reminded by Clary of the disdainful language which he had used at Luceu when speaking of the chivalry of France, and informed that if he would deign to accept the challenge of the least of that gallant band, he would find him ready, on that evening or early on the morrow, to fulfil his desire. Courtenay cheerfully proposed that the combat should take place on the following morning; and the knights separated in order to arrange their equipment, the one at Calais, the other at Marquise. At the appointed hour sir Peter, accompanied by sir John Devereux, then captain of Calais, met his antagonist; both being well armed and mounted. Their first essay was without effect; but, at the second onset, Clary striking with full force beyond Courtenay's buckler, his sword penetrated deeply into the shoulder of our knight, who by the violence of the blow was thrown from his horse.

The sire de Clary left the ground, not without reproach from the English that he had transgressed the rules of the joust by aiming a blow at the shoulder of his adversary; and, on his return to the presence of his royal master, he was

reproved by him and the whole court for having challenged a knight who had been committed to his escort.<sup>1</sup>

The grand jousts at St. Inghelbert were fixed to be held on the 20th of May 1390;<sup>2</sup> but the earls of Nottingham and Huntingdon, sir Thomas Clifford, sir John Beaumont, and sir Peter Courtenay received, whilst at Calais, a message from king Richard, dated on the 13th March preceding, that they should abstain from the exercise of any feats of arms with the French without the special leave of the earl of Northumberland.<sup>3</sup> The immediate cause of the prohibition is not mentioned; but the detailed narrative of the tourney by Froissart records that, besides many others, all the knights named in the message (excepting Nottingham, who had in that year been appointed captain of Calais,) were among the combatants. Courtenay jousted, with various success, with the three challengers, Bouçicaut, Roye, and Saint-Py.<sup>4</sup>

In the same year sir Peter was appointed constable of Windsor castle for life.<sup>5</sup> In 1393 several knights appeared at the English court from Scotland with challenges to feats of arms; and Courtenay was opposed in one of these combats to a knight named Darell.<sup>6</sup> It was probably in his character of chamberlain that the confession made by the unfortunate duke of Gloucester, or extorted from him, at Calais in 1397, was committed to his safe keeping.<sup>7</sup> In 1398 he was appointed captain of Calais.<sup>8</sup>

Immediately after the accession of Henry IV, the last-mentioned post seems to have been confirmed to him;<sup>9</sup> and the favour of the new sovereign was manifested by divers grants of lands,<sup>10</sup> and by his nomination, in 1403-4, to the privy council.<sup>11</sup>

Sir Peter Courtenay died unmarried, 2nd February 1404-5, leaving his nephew, Edward third earl of Devon, his heir.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Froiss. tom. xii. pp. 53-65.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid. p. 67.

<sup>3</sup> Rot. Franc. 13 Ric. 2, m. 4, Mar. 13.

<sup>4</sup> Froiss. tom. xii. p. 131.

<sup>5</sup> Rot. Pat. 13 Ric. 2, p. 2, m. 15.

<sup>6</sup> Leland's Coll. ed. 1770, vol. i. p. 482.

<sup>7</sup> Rolls of Parl. vol. iii. p. 432b.

<sup>8</sup> Rot. Franc. 22 Ric. 2, m. 4.

<sup>9</sup> Rot. Franc. 1 Hen. 4, m. 22; Exit. Pell. Mich. eod. a<sup>o</sup>.

<sup>10</sup> Rot. Pat. 1 Hen. 4.

<sup>11</sup> Rolls of Parl. vol. iii. p. 530.

<sup>12</sup> Esc. 6 Hen. 4, No. 38.

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His remains were deposited in the cathedral church of St. Peter at Exeter, under a tomb bearing a laudatory inscription to his memory.<sup>1</sup>

## ARMS.

Gules, three torteaux; over all a label of three points Azure, each charged with three annulets.

## LXXXI.

## THOMAS, SIXTH LORD LE DESPENSER—EARL OF GLOUCESTER.

THOMAS  
LORD LE  
DESPENSER.

A WARDROBE account for 1399<sup>2</sup> is the sole authority for including this nobleman among the knights of the Order; his attainder having occasioned the omission of his name in the Windsor tables. He was probably elected after the date of the warrant which directed the issue of robes against St. George's feast in 1390,<sup>3</sup> and to the only stall then vacant since the death of sir John Sully.

Thomas le Despenser, the only son of Edward lord le Despenser, K.G.<sup>4</sup> by Elizabeth Burghershe, was born about 1373, and two years old at his father's death;<sup>5</sup> soon after which event his wardship was granted to Edmond of Langley, with the intention that the wealthy young heir should, in due time, intermarry with Constance the daughter of that prince.<sup>6</sup> In 1394, he attended king Richard on his expedition into Ireland;<sup>7</sup> and, in August 1397, was of that monarch's council at Nottingham castle, when it was decided to appeal the duke of Gloucester and his party of treason.<sup>8</sup> In the following month, lord le Despenser appeared in parliament as one of the lords appellants;<sup>9</sup> and, before its close,

<sup>1</sup> Cleaveland, ut supra, p. 198.

<sup>2</sup> See p. 254.

<sup>3</sup> Page 252. Between 1390 and 1399 no wardrobe account has been found, containing the names of *all* the knights for whom robes were prepared.

<sup>4</sup> Page 140.

<sup>5</sup> Esc. 49 Ed. 3, No. 46.

<sup>6</sup> Pat. 1 Ric. 2, p. 5, m. 17.

<sup>7</sup> Pat. 18 Ric. 2, p. 1, m. 21.

<sup>8</sup> Wals. p. 392.

<sup>9</sup> Rot. Parl. vol. iii. pp. 377<sup>b</sup>.  
410.