

SIR
PETER
COURTE-
NAY.

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

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 1399² 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 1390,³ 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.⁴ by Elizabeth Burghershe, was born about 1373, and two years old at his father's death;⁵ 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.⁶ In 1394, he attended king Richard on his expedition into Ireland;⁷ 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.⁸ In the following month, lord le Despenser appeared in parliament as one of the lords appellants;⁹ and, before its close,

¹ Cleaveland, ut supra, p. 198.

² See p. 254.

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

⁴ Page 140.

⁵ Esc. 49 Ed. 3, No. 46.

⁶ Pat. 1 Ric. 2, p. 5, m. 17.

⁷ Pat. 18 Ric. 2, p. 1, m. 21.

⁸ Wals. p. 392.

⁹ Rot. Parl. vol. iii. pp. 377^b.
410.

was rewarded for his aid in that nefarious transaction with the earldom of Gloucester¹ and a large share of the forfeited lands of the earl of Warwick, which were settled upon him and Constance of York, then his wife.²

THOMAS
LORD LE
DESPENSER.

In the same parliament the earl of Gloucester obtained a revocation of the judgment of disinherison and perpetual exile which had been pronounced in the parliament of 15 Edward II. against his great-grandfather, Hugh le Despenser the younger, upon the ground that the process had been contrary to law, the said Hugh not having been cited and put upon his defence, and the earls and barons only, and not the prelates, although peers of the realm, having assented to the judgment. Such of the estates of his ancestor as remained within the control of the crown, were, in pursuance of this reversal, restored.³

The claims upon his gratitude, in consequence of so many marks of favour, were soon forgotten; and he was among the first who deserted the unfortunate Richard in the hour of distress; not hesitating even to accept and discharge the insulting office of notifying, on behalf of the peers, the sentence of deposition to his late indulgent master.⁴ This baseness was suitably rewarded; for Henry IV. had no sooner ascended the throne, than the appeal of 1397 became a subject of inquiry in parliament. The earl's defence, that he had acted under constraint,—that his name had been inserted in the bill of appeal without his knowledge,—that he had been in no respect privy to the murder of Thomas of Woodstock, or a promoter of the sentence against Arundel and Warwick, or of the repeal of the patent to the duke of Lancaster,—was unavailing; and he was adjudged to be degraded from his title of earl of Gloucester,—to forfeit all the grants which he had received of the lands of those whom he had accused,—to give thenceforth no liveries or cognizances,—to have no other retainers than his domestics,—and to hold all his possessions at the king's mercy.⁵

Within a month afterwards, Despenser, with four others of the former lords appellants, entered into a conspiracy to in-

¹ Rot. Parl. vol. iii. p. 355.

² Pat. 20 Ric. 2, p. 1, m. 6.

³ Rot. Parl. vol. iii. p. 360.

⁴ Ibid. pp. 422^b. 424.

⁵ Ibid. p. 452.