

Chapter LXI: Partition Of The Empire By The French And Venetians.--Part IV.

In the profession of Christianity, in the cultivation of a fertile land, the northern conquerors of the Roman empire insensibly mingled with the provincials, and rekindled the embers of the arts of antiquity. Their settlements about the age of Charlemagne had acquired some degree of order and stability, when they were overwhelmed by new swarms of invaders, the Normans, Saracens, [68] and Hungarians, who replunged the western countries of Europe into their former state of anarchy and barbarism. About the eleventh century, the second tempest had subsided by the expulsion or conversion of the enemies of Christendom: the tide of civilization, which had so long ebbcd, began to flow with a steady and accelerated course; and a fairer prospect was opened to the hopes and efforts of the rising generations. Great was the increase, and rapid the progress, during the two hundred years of the crusades; and some philosophers have applauded the propitious influence of these holy wars, which appear to me to have checked rather than forwarded the maturity of Europe. [69] The lives and labors of millions, which were buried in the East, would have been more profitably employed in the improvement of their native country: the accumulated stock of industry and wealth would have overflowed in navigation and trade; and the Latins would have been enriched and enlightened by a pure and friendly correspondence with the climates of the East. In one respect I can indeed perceive the accidental operation of the crusades, not so much in producing a benefit as in removing an evil. The larger portion of the inhabitants of Europe was chained to the soil, without freedom, or property, or knowledge;

and the two orders of ecclesiastics and nobles, whose numbers were comparatively small, alone deserved the name of citizens and men. This oppressive system was supported by the arts of the clergy and the swords of the barons. The authority of the priests operated in the darker ages as a salutary antidote: they prevented the total extinction of letters, mitigated the fierceness of the times, sheltered the poor and defenceless, and preserved or revived the peace and order of civil society. But the independence, rapine, and discord of the feudal lords were unmixed with any semblance of good; and every hope of industry and improvement was crushed by the iron weight of the martial aristocracy. Among the causes that undermined that Gothic edifice, a conspicuous place must be allowed to the crusades. The estates of the barons were dissipated, and their race was often extinguished, in these costly and perilous expeditions. Their poverty extorted from their pride those charters of freedom which unlocked the fetters of the slave, secured the farm of the peasant and the shop of the artificer, and gradually restored a substance and a soul to the most numerous and useful part of the community. The conflagration which destroyed the tall and barren trees of the forest gave air and scope to the vegetation of the smaller and nutritive plants of the soil. [691]

[Footnote 68: If I rank the Saracens with the Barbarians, it is only relative to their wars, or rather inroads, in Italy and France, where their sole purpose was to plunder and destroy.]

[Footnote 69: On this interesting subject, the progress of society in

Europe, a strong ray of philosophical light has broke from Scotland in our own times; and it is with private, as well as public regard, that I repeat the names of Hume, Robertson, and Adam Smith.]

[Footnote 691: On the consequences of the crusades, compare the valuable Essay of Heeren, that of M. Choiseul d'Aillecourt, and a chapter of Mr. Forster's "Mahometanism Unveiled." I may admire this gentleman's learning and industry, without pledging myself to his wild theory of prophets interpretation.--M.]

Digression On The Family Of Courtenay.

The purple of three emperors, who have reigned at Constantinople, will authorize or excuse a digression on the origin and singular fortunes of the house of Courtenay, [70] in the three principal branches: I. Of Edessa; II. Of France; and III. Of England; of which the last only has survived the revolutions of eight hundred years.

[Footnote 70: I have applied, but not confined, myself to A genealogical History of the noble and illustrious Family of Courtenay, by Ezra Cleaveland, Tutor to Sir William Courtenay, and Rector of Honiton; Exon. 1735, in folio. The first part is extracted from William of Tyre; the second from Bouchet's French history; and the third from various memorials, public, provincial, and private, of the Courtenays of Devonshire The rector of Honiton has more gratitude than industry, and

more industry than criticism.]

I. Before the introduction of trade, which scatters riches, and of knowledge, which dispels prejudice, the prerogative of birth is most strongly felt and most humbly acknowledged. In every age, the laws and manners of the Germans have discriminated the ranks of society; the dukes and counts, who shared the empire of Charlemagne, converted their office to an inheritance; and to his children, each feudal lord bequeathed his honor and his sword. The proudest families are content to lose, in the darkness of the middle ages, the tree of their pedigree, which, however deep and lofty, must ultimately rise from a plebeian root; and their historians must descend ten centuries below the Christian æra, before they can ascertain any lineal succession by the evidence of surnames, of arms, and of authentic records. With the first rays of light, [71] we discern the nobility and opulence of Atho, a French knight; his nobility, in the rank and title of a nameless father; his opulence, in the foundation of the castle of Courtenay in the district of Gatinois, about fifty-six miles to the south of Paris. From the reign of Robert, the son of Hugh Capet, the barons of Courtenay are conspicuous among the immediate vassals of the crown; and Joscelin, the grandson of Atho and a noble dame, is enrolled among the heroes of the first crusade. A domestic alliance (their mothers were sisters) attached him to the standard of Baldwin of Bruges, the second count of Edessa; a princely fief, which he was worthy to receive, and able to maintain, announces the number of his martial followers; and after the departure of his cousin, Joscelin himself was invested with the county of Edessa

on both sides of the Euphrates. By economy in peace, his territories were replenished with Latin and Syrian subjects; his magazines with corn, wine, and oil; his castles with gold and silver, with arms and horses. In a holy warfare of thirty years, he was alternately a conqueror and a captive: but he died like a soldier, in a horse litter at the head of his troops; and his last glance beheld the flight of the Turkish invaders who had presumed on his age and infirmities. His son and successor, of the same name, was less deficient in valor than in vigilance; but he sometimes forgot that dominion is acquired and maintained by the same arms. He challenged the hostility of the Turks, without securing the friendship of the prince of Antioch; and, amidst the peaceful luxury of Turbessel, in Syria, [72] Joscelin neglected the defence of the Christian frontier beyond the Euphrates. In his absence, Zenghi, the first of the Atabeks, besieged and stormed his capital, Edessa, which was feebly defended by a timorous and disloyal crowd of Orientals: the Franks were oppressed in a bold attempt for its recovery, and Courtenay ended his days in the prison of Aleppo. He still left a fair and ample patrimony But the victorious Turks oppressed on all sides the weakness of a widow and orphan; and, for the equivalent of an annual pension, they resigned to the Greek emperor the charge of defending, and the shame of losing, the last relics of the Latin conquest. The countess-dowager of Edessa retired to Jerusalem with her two children; the daughter, Agnes, became the wife and mother of a king; the son, Joscelin the Third, accepted the office of seneschal, the first of the kingdom, and held his new estates in Palestine by the service of fifty knights. His name appears with honor in the transactions of peace and

war; but he finally vanishes in the fall of Jerusalem; and the name of Courtenay, in this branch of Edessa, was lost by the marriage of his two daughters with a French and German baron. [73]

[Footnote 71: The primitive record of the family is a passage of the continuator of Aimoin, a monk of Fleury, who wrote in the xiith century. See his Chronicle, in the Historians of France, (tom. xi. p. 276.)]

[Footnote 72: Turbessel, or, as it is now styled, Telbesher, is fixed by D'Anville four-and-twenty miles from the great passage over the Euphrates at Zeugma.]

[Footnote 73: His possessions are distinguished in the Assises of Jerusalem (c. B26) among the feudal tenures of the kingdom, which must therefore have been collected between the years 1153 and 1187. His pedigree may be found in the Lignages d'Outremer, c. 16.]

II. While Joscelin reigned beyond the Euphrates, his elder brother Milo, the son of Joscelin, the son of Atho, continued, near the Seine, to possess the castle of their fathers, which was at length inherited by Rainaud, or Reginald, the youngest of his three sons. Examples of genius or virtue must be rare in the annals of the oldest families; and, in a remote age their pride will embrace a deed of rapine and violence; such, however, as could not be perpetrated without some superiority of courage, or, at least, of power. A descendant of Reginald of Courtenay may blush for the public robber, who stripped and imprisoned several

merchants, after they had satisfied the king's duties at Sens and Orleans. He will glory in the offence, since the bold offender could not be compelled to obedience and restitution, till the regent and the count of Champagne prepared to march against him at the head of an army. [74] Reginald bestowed his estates on his eldest daughter, and his daughter on the seventh son of King Louis the Fat; and their marriage was crowned with a numerous offspring. We might expect that a private should have merged in a royal name; and that the descendants of Peter of France and Elizabeth of Courtenay would have enjoyed the titles and honors of princes of the blood. But this legitimate claim was long neglected, and finally denied; and the causes of their disgrace will represent the story of this second branch. 1. Of all the families now extant, the most ancient, doubtless, and the most illustrious, is the house of France, which has occupied the same throne above eight hundred years, and descends, in a clear and lineal series of males, from the middle of the ninth century. [75] In the age of the crusades, it was already revered both in the East and West. But from Hugh Capet to the marriage of Peter, no more than five reigns or generations had elapsed; and so precarious was their title, that the eldest sons, as a necessary precaution, were previously crowned during the lifetime of their fathers. The peers of France have long maintained their precedence before the younger branches of the royal line, nor had the princes of the blood, in the twelfth century, acquired that hereditary lustre which is now diffused over the most remote candidates for the succession. 2. The barons of Courtenay must have stood high in their own estimation, and in that of the world, since they could impose on the son of a king

the obligation of adopting for himself and all his descendants the name and arms of their daughter and his wife. In the marriage of an heiress with her inferior or her equal, such exchange often required and allowed: but as they continued to diverge from the regal stem, the sons of Louis the Fat were insensibly confounded with their maternal ancestors; and the new Courtenays might deserve to forfeit the honors of their birth, which a motive of interest had tempted them to renounce.

3. The shame was far more permanent than the reward, and a momentary blaze was followed by a long darkness. The eldest son of these nuptials, Peter of Courtenay, had married, as I have already mentioned, the sister of the counts of Flanders, the two first emperors of Constantinople: he rashly accepted the invitation of the barons of Romania; his two sons, Robert and Baldwin, successively held and lost the remains of the Latin empire in the East, and the granddaughter of Baldwin the Second again mingled her blood with the blood of France and of Valois. To support the expenses of a troubled and transitory reign, their patrimonial estates were mortgaged or sold: and the last emperors of Constantinople depended on the annual charity of Rome and Naples.

[Footnote 74: The rapine and satisfaction of Reginald de Courtenay, are preposterously arranged in the Epistles of the abbot and regent Suger, (cxiv. cxvi.) the best memorials of the age, (Duchesne, *Scriptores Hist. Franc.* tom. iv. p. 530.)]

[Footnote 75: In the beginning of the xith century, after naming the father and grandfather of Hugh Capet, the monk Glaber is obliged to add,



cujus genus valde in-ante reperitur obscurum. Yet we are assured that the great-grandfather of Hugh Capet was Robert the Strong count of Anjou, (A.D. 863--873,) a noble Frank of Neustria, Neusticus... generosæ stirpis, who was slain in the defence of his country against the Normans, dum patriæ fines tuebatur. Beyond Robert, all is conjecture or fable. It is a probable conjecture, that the third race descended from the second by Childebrand, the brother of Charles Martel. It is an absurd fable that the second was allied to the first by the marriage of Ansbert, a Roman senator and the ancestor of St. Arnoul, with Blitilde, a daughter of Clotaire I. The Saxon origin of the house of France is an ancient but incredible opinion. See a judicious memoir of M. de Foncemagne, (Mémoires de l'Académie des Inscriptions, tom. xx. p. 548--579.) He had promised to declare his own opinion in a second memoir, which has never appeared.]

While the elder brothers dissipated their wealth in romantic adventures, and the castle of Courtenay was profaned by a plebeian owner, the younger branches of that adopted name were propagated and multiplied. But their splendor was clouded by poverty and time: after the decease of Robert, great butler of France, they descended from princes to barons; the next generations were confounded with the simple gentry; the descendants of Hugh Capet could no longer be visible in the rural lords of Tanlay and of Champignelles. The more adventurous embraced without dishonor the profession of a soldier: the least active and opulent might sink, like their cousins of the branch of Dreux, into the condition of peasants. Their royal descent, in a dark period of four hundred years,

became each day more obsolete and ambiguous; and their pedigree, instead of being enrolled in the annals of the kingdom, must be painfully searched by the minute diligence of heralds and genealogists. It was not till the end of the sixteenth century, on the accession of a family almost as remote as their own, that the princely spirit of the Courtenays again revived; and the question of the nobility provoked them to ascertain the royalty of their blood. They appealed to the justice and compassion of Henry the Fourth; obtained a favorable opinion from twenty lawyers of Italy and Germany, and modestly compared themselves to the descendants of King David, whose prerogatives were not impaired by the lapse of ages or the trade of a carpenter. [76] But every ear was deaf, and every circumstance was adverse, to their lawful claims. The Bourbon kings were justified by the neglect of the Valois; the princes of the blood, more recent and lofty, disdained the alliance of his humble kindred: the parliament, without denying their proofs, eluded a dangerous precedent by an arbitrary distinction, and established St. Louis as the first father of the royal line. [77] A repetition of complaints and protests was repeatedly disregarded; and the hopeless pursuit was terminated in the present century by the death of the last male of the family. [78] Their painful and anxious situation was alleviated by the pride of conscious virtue: they sternly rejected the temptations of fortune and favor; and a dying Courtenay would have sacrificed his son, if the youth could have renounced, for any temporal interest, the right and title of a legitimate prince of the blood of France. [79]

[Footnote 76: Of the various petitions, apologies, &c., published by the princes of Courtenay, I have seen the three following, all in octavo:

1. De Stirpe et Origine Domus de Courtenay: addita sunt Responsa celeberrimorum Europæ Jurisconsultorum; Paris, 1607. 2. Representation du Procédé tenû a l'instance faicte devant le Roi, par Messieurs de Courtenay, pour la conservation de l'Honneur et Dignité de leur Maison, branche de la royalle Maison de France; à Paris, 1613. 3. Representation du subject qui a porté Messieurs de Salles et de Fraville, de la Maison de Courtenay, à se retirer hors du Royaume, 1614. It was a homicide, for which the Courtenays expected to be pardoned, or tried, as princes of the blood.]

[Footnote 77: The sense of the parliaments is thus expressed by Thuanus Principis nomen nusquam in Galliâ tributum, nisi iis qui per mares e regibus nostris originem repetunt; qui nunc tantum a Ludovico nonne beatæ memoriæ numerantur; nam Cortini et Drocenses, a Ludovico crasso genus ducentes, hodie inter eos minime recensentur. A distinction of expediency rather than justice. The sanctity of Louis IX. could not invest him with any special prerogative, and all the descendants of Hugh Capet must be included in his original compact with the French nation.]

[Footnote 78: The last male of the Courtenays was Charles Roger, who died in the year 1730, without leaving any sons. The last female was Helene de Courtenay, who married Louis de Beauforemont. Her title of Princesse du Sang Royal de France was suppressed (February 7th, 1737) by an arrêt of the parliament of Paris.]

[Footnote 79: The singular anecdote to which I allude is related in the *Recueil des Pieces interessantes et peu connues*, (Maestricht, 1786, in 4 vols. 12mo.;) and the unknown editor quotes his author, who had received it from Helene de Courtenay, marquise de Beaufremont.]

III. According to the old register of Ford Abbey, the Courtenays of Devonshire are descended from Prince Florus, the second son of Peter, and the grandson of Louis the Fat. [80] This fable of the grateful or venal monks was too respectfully entertained by our antiquaries, Cambden [81] and Dugdale: [82] but it is so clearly repugnant to truth and time, that the rational pride of the family now refuses to accept this imaginary founder. Their most faithful historians believe, that, after giving his daughter to the king's son, Reginald of Courtenay abandoned his possessions in France, and obtained from the English monarch a second wife and a new inheritance. It is certain, at least, that Henry the Second distinguished in his camps and councils a Reginald, of the name and arms, and, as it may be fairly presumed, of the genuine race, of the Courtenays of France. The right of wardship enabled a feudal lord to reward his vassal with the marriage and estate of a noble heiress; and Reginald of Courtenay acquired a fair establishment in Devonshire, where his posterity has been seated above six hundred years. [83] From a Norman baron, Baldwin de Brioniis, who had been invested by the Conqueror, Hawise, the wife of Reginald, derived the honor of Okehampton, which was held by the service of ninety-three knights; and a female might claim the manly offices of hereditary viscount or sheriff,

and of captain of the royal castle of Exeter. Their son Robert married the sister of the earl of Devon: at the end of a century, on the failure of the family of Rivers, [84] his great-grandson, Hugh the Second, succeeded to a title which was still considered as a territorial dignity; and twelve earls of Devonshire, of the name of Courtenay, have flourished in a period of two hundred and twenty years. They were ranked among the chief of the barons of the realm; nor was it till after a strenuous dispute, that they yielded to the fief of Arundel the first place in the parliament of England: their alliances were contracted with the noblest families, the Veres, Despencers, St. Johns, Talbots, Bohuns, and even the Plantagenets themselves; and in a contest with John of Lancaster, a Courtenay, bishop of London, and afterwards archbishop of Canterbury, might be accused of profane confidence in the strength and number of his kindred. In peace, the earls of Devon resided in their numerous castles and manors of the west; their ample revenue was appropriated to devotion and hospitality; and the epitaph of Edward, surnamed from his misfortune, the blind, from his virtues, the good, earl, inculcates with much ingenuity a moral sentence, which may, however, be abused by thoughtless generosity. After a grateful commemoration of the fifty-five years of union and happiness which he enjoyed with Mabe his wife, the good earl thus speaks from the tomb:--

"What we gave, we have;

What we spent, we had;

What we left, we lost." [85]

But their losses, in this sense, were far superior to their gifts and expenses; and their heirs, not less than the poor, were the objects of their paternal care. The sums which they paid for livery and seizin attest the greatness of their possessions; and several estates have remained in their family since the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. In war, the Courtenays of England fulfilled the duties, and deserved the honors, of chivalry. They were often intrusted to levy and command the militia of Devonshire and Cornwall; they often attended their supreme lord to the borders of Scotland; and in foreign service, for a stipulated price, they sometimes maintained fourscore men-at-arms and as many archers. By sea and land they fought under the standard of the Edwards and Henries: their names are conspicuous in battles, in tournaments, and in the original list of the Order of the Garter; three brothers shared the Spanish victory of the Black Prince; and in the lapse of six generations, the English Courtenays had learned to despise the nation and country from which they derived their origin. In the quarrel of the two roses, the earls of Devon adhered to the house of Lancaster; and three brothers successively died either in the field or on the scaffold. Their honors and estates were restored by Henry the Seventh; a daughter of Edward the Fourth was not disgraced by the nuptials of a Courtenay; their son, who was created Marquis of Exeter, enjoyed the favor of his cousin Henry the Eighth; and in the camp of Cloth of Gold, he broke a lance against the French monarch. But the favor of Henry was the prelude of disgrace; his disgrace was the signal of death; and of the victims of the jealous tyrant, the marquis of Exeter is one of the most noble and guiltless. His son Edward lived a

prisoner in the Tower, and died in exile at Padua; and the secret love of Queen Mary, whom he slighted, perhaps for the princess Elizabeth, has shed a romantic color on the story of this beautiful youth. The relics of his patrimony were conveyed into strange families by the marriages of his four aunts; and his personal honors, as if they had been legally extinct, were revived by the patents of succeeding princes. But there still survived a lineal descendant of Hugh, the first earl of Devon, a younger branch of the Courtenays, who have been seated at Powderham Castle above four hundred years, from the reign of Edward the Third to the present hour. Their estates have been increased by the grant and improvement of lands in Ireland, and they have been recently restored to the honors of the peerage. Yet the Courtenays still retain the plaintive motto, which asserts the innocence, and deploras the fall, of their ancient house. [86] While they sigh for past greatness, they are doubtless sensible of present blessings: in the long series of the Courtenay annals, the most splendid æra is likewise the most unfortunate; nor can an opulent peer of Britain be inclined to envy the emperors of Constantinople, who wandered over Europe to solicit alms for the support of their dignity and the defence of their capital.

[Footnote 80: Dugdale, *Monasticon Anglicanum*, vol. i. p. 786. Yet this fable must have been invented before the reign of Edward III. The profuse devotion of the three first generations to Ford Abbey was followed by oppression on one side and ingratitude on the other; and in the sixth generation, the monks ceased to register the births, actions, and deaths of their patrons.]

[Footnote 81: In his Britannia, in the list of the earls of Devonshire. His expression, e regio sanguine ortos, credunt, betrays, however, some doubt or suspicion.]

[Footnote 82: In his Baronage, P. i. p. 634, he refers to his own Monasticon. Should he not have corrected the register of Ford Abbey, and annihilated the phantom Florus, by the unquestionable evidence of the French historians?]

[Footnote 83: Besides the third and most valuable book of Cleaveland's History, I have consulted Dugdale, the father of our genealogical science, (Baronage, P. i. p. 634--643.)]

[Footnote 84: This great family, de Ripuariis, de Redvers, de Rivers, ended, in Edward the Fifth's time, in Isabella de Fortibus, a famous and potent dowager, who long survived her brother and husband, (Dugdale, Baronage, P i. p. 254--257.)]

[Footnote 85: Cleaveland p. 142. By some it is assigned to a Rivers earl of Devon; but the English denotes the xvth, rather than the xiiiith century.]

[Footnote 86: Ubi lapsus! Quid feci? a motto which was probably adopted by the Powderham branch, after the loss of the earldom of Devonshire, &c. The primitive arms of the Courtenays were, Or, three



torteaux, Gules, which seem to denote their affinity with Godfrey of Bouillon, and the ancient counts of Boulogne.]