

From the *Transactions* of the  
Bristol and Gloucestershire Archaeological Society

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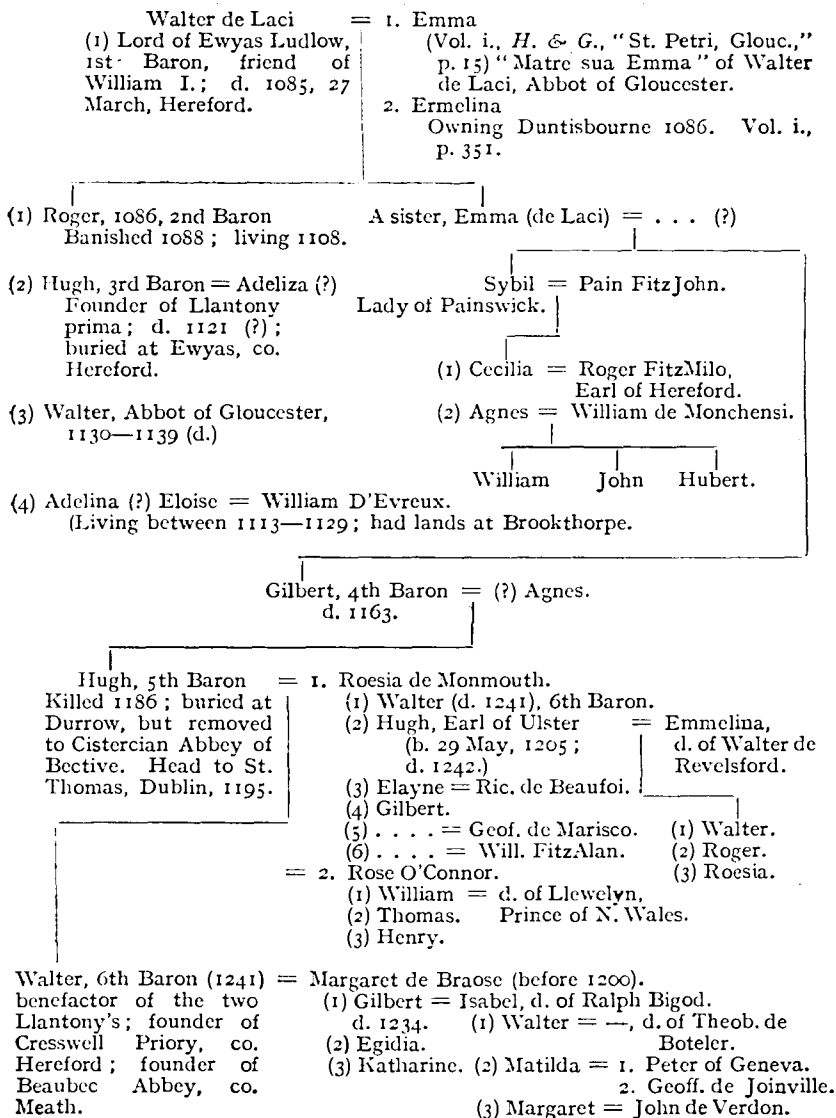
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1906, Vol. 29, 284-292

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GILBERT DE LACI (? 1108-1163) AND  
PAIN FITZJOHN (-1137).

THE DE LACI PEDIGREE.

(GLOUCESTERSHIRE AND HEREFORDSHIRE BRANCH.)



CHARTER No. 20 of the Duchy of Lancaster consists of a confirmation by King Stephen to Roger, son of Milo, Earl of Hereford, and to Cecilia, his wife, of all the land which the latter's father, Pain FitzJohn, had inherited, or acquired, together with her own marriage-portion.

“ Et omne maritagium quod predictum Paganus dedit filiæ suæ de Honore Hugonis de Laceio in terris et militibus. Et omne illud juris quod ipse Paganus habebat in toto Honore Hugonis de Laceio, sicut ipse Paganus dedit et concessit illum ipsi Rogerio cum filia sua de acatis suis hac subscripta maneria.”

From this it appears (1) that Pain FitzJohn, at the time of his death (July 10th, 1137) and for some undetermined time prior to that event, possessed certain rights over the Honour of the late Hugh de Laci, who has been proved to have been his wife's maternal uncle; and that (2) he had given to his daughter Cecilia, Countess of Hereford, on her marriage with Roger (FitzMilo), certain lands in her dower from her great-uncle's Honour, including the Manor of Wyke (Painswick), Edgworth and Alwynton; finally (3) that King Stephen confirmed all these rights to Cecilia upon her father's decease. The date of the Charter is judged by Mr. J. H. Round to lie between December, 1137, and May, 1138.

At that date Hugh de Laci had been dead several years (? 1121), and having left no son to succeed him, King Henry, after that event, had conferred upon Pain FitzJohn, who had married Hugh's niece, Sybil, the whole of the family Honour, some 115 manors, of which twenty-seven were situated in Gloucestershire. This Pain had enjoyed, in addition to his own acquired wealth of lands, for some years, until the arrow of a Welsh rebel put an end to him, and the monks of Gloucester received his body into their chapter house.

But it must not be forgotten that when Hugh de Laci's brother, Roger, had been banished and deprived, he had been permitted to retain one manor, namely Halhagun cum Bradwasse, in Worcestershire. The family fief in France, at Lasci,

in the Diocese of Bayeux, had been granted to the king's natural son, Robert, Duke of Gloucester. The former (Worcestershire) manor was still his in 1108, and at no time does it appear to have passed to Hugh de Laci, his brother, or to Pain Fitz-John. We do not know the date of Roger's decease.

The fief at Lasci is mentioned in the list of knights holding fiefs of the Bishop of Bayeux in 1133 (Cf. *Lib. Rubeus*, p. 646, Rolls Series). "Feodum De Lasci il milites." That is to say, each of the two branches possessed a fee there, one of which was at Lasci, whence their name; the other at Campeaux, and both these had been forfeited and both bestowed upon Robert, Duke of Gloucester. For the representatives of both branches, Roger de Laci and Robert de Laci, Lord of Pontefract, had been concerned in Robert, Duke of Normandy's rebellion. The claims to these, their respective possessions in the Diocese of Bayeux, were retained by the Duke of Gloucester until 1146, when by reference to the *Calendar of Documents of France* (Ed. J. H. Round) it is seen that he surrendered "tota feoda Ilberti<sup>1</sup> et Gilberti de Laccio quæ tenebant apud Laccium et Campels [*sic*]." That is to say, King Stephen restored to the two representatives of Roger and Robert de Laci, Ilbert and Gilbert, their family lands above-mentioned, and the Duke of Gloucester acknowledged the Bishop of Bayeux to be once more their over-lord.

As Ilbert de Laci (of the Yorkshire branch) appears in 1136 as a witness to Stephen's Charter of Liberties, it is clear that he had then returned to England. His name also occurs as witness to two other charters of that year. Ælred of Rivaulx records that he had been in banishment throughout the reign of Henry (d. 1135)—"tempore Regis Henrici exulans." From Richard of Hexham we learn that by the Charter of Liberties whatever Henry had taken from Robert de Laci his son Ilbert regained. Henry had indeed granted the Honour of Pontefract to William de Maltravers, and apparently one of Ilbert's own retainers, named Pain, promptly slew de Maltravers; and

<sup>1</sup> This Ilbert was the son of Robert de Laci.

a charter (Class 25, 9 Duchy of Lancaster) lets us know that Stephen *pardons* the men of Ilbert de Laci for this murder.

But with regard to Gilbert de Laci, no mention of his restoration occurs, nor does his name appear among those of the witnesses to the Charter of Liberties given at Oxford in 1136. On the other hand, at the opening of the Civil War, within two years later (1137-8), he and his kinsman, Geoffrey de Talbot, appear fighting in Herefordshire, at Bristol (May), and at Bath, under command of Robert, Duke of Gloucester, on behalf of the Empress Maud against the new king. The south-west of England, with the exception of Gloucester, in fact, had become solid against Stephen. Milo of Gloucester welcomed the king to the castle of that city in May, 1138; and at this time, or but little before it, Stephen confirmed to Milo's son and Cecilia the inheritances both of Hugh de Laci and FitzJohn.

That being so, any hope of recovery of the de Laci Honour by Gilbert de Laci from Stephen was put beyond all present possibility. Moreover, it sealed him to the side of the Empress, from whose possible successes much might some day be won. By the summer of 1139, however, Milo and Roger had so effectually cooled off from Stephen, that they were preparing to receive and welcome the Empress herself upon her arrival in September of that year. She was later invited from Bristol to Gloucester by Milo himself, and there she conferred upon him the reward of his conversion by giving him the Constablership of St. Briavels and the Forest of Dean. Stephen deprived him, on the other hand, of the Constablership of England. From this, further, by charter of July 5th, 1141 (Cf. *Fœdera*, I, 8), Maud advanced him to the Earldom of Hereford; and one of the witnesses to her charter is Gilbert de Laci. His hopes must have seemed fair.

This proves at once both his fidelity to her cause and his prominence; but we do not gather what, if any, rewards were granted him for his own services. That he would endeavour to recover his family possessions we may be sure, and indeed finally he became repossessed of these. But he was now

brought into unpleasantly close contact with Milo's son, who was actually enjoying them with Pain FitzJohn's daughter. We shall find later on that dangerous differences did indeed arise between them, and we shall see Roger conspiring to disinherit Gilbert de Laci. It is manifest that the Empress, having gained so important a champion as Milo, dared not advance de Laci's claims against those of Milo's son. Who de Laci was will be presently considered.

During the next two years the cause of the Empress suffered gravely, in spite of Milo's wealth and influence. His accidental death on Christmas Day, 1143, at Gloucester, only accentuated its downfall. She found herself besieged at Oxford by Stephen himself. There is neither evidence to prove that Gilbert de Laci forsook her cause for that of Stephen, nor that the Empress ever recompensed him for his services. The only notice of him in 1146 is contained in a document which says that her brother, Robert, Earl of Gloucester, surrendered all his claims over the fiefs of Ilbert and Gilbert de Laci (in France) to the Bishop of Bayeux. In this year the Empress withdrew to Normandy. In the following year, 1147, Robert, Earl of Gloucester, also died.

No sooner does Henry II, succeed to Stephen's throne than a strange gleam of light is thrown upon Gilbert de Laci, namely a treaty of alliance between Roger, now Earl of Hereford, and William, Earl of Gloucester (neither of them in favour with the new king), directed especially to the disinheriting of Gilbert (Duchy of Lancaster, Box A, No. 24). This is called, curiously, a "Treaty of Love." From it we cannot but conclude that Gilbert de Laci had already successfully pressed some portion at least of his claims to the forfeited inheritance of his forebears in the de Laci Honour, at the expense certainly of Earl Roger. Other sources discover the ill-favour accorded by the new king to Roger, Earl of Hereford, and the other sons of Milo. In the following year, for instance, when Earl Roger died childless,<sup>1</sup> the king refused to allow any of them to succeed, and sequestered the earldom. His ground for doing so was no doubt in

<sup>1</sup> October, 1155.

part that it had been illegally conferred upon Earl Roger's father by the Empress Maud eleven years before. But how had Gilbert de Laci recovered his family lands? Is it probable that the Empress restored them? It is at least possible.

Immediately following this we find proof of the king's full favour to Gilbert de Laci. The Pipe Roll (p. 144) of 1157 (4 Hen. II.) shows him under new pleas and agreements, in possession of fiefs in the three counties of Herefordshire, Gloucestershire and Salop.<sup>1</sup> In the same year we find him excused the "Donum" to the king; and a little later occurs the said king's "confirmatio" to him of the possession of Stanton, Ludlow and Ewyas. In fact, he has recovered the lordship of Ludlow and Ewyas, and all the family fees in the other counties, excepting, of course, Wyke or Painswick, and certain others, the marriage-portions of Cecilia, widow of Roger, Earl of Hereford, and his own kinswoman (probably sister), her mother, Sybilla (FitzJohn). It is clear, therefore, that Henry II., on coming to the throne, had at least refused to confirm these hereditaments of de Laci to Earl Roger. Hence his unsuccessful conspiracy against Gilbert de Laci.

The widow of FitzJohn still survived, and the cartulary of Ewyas Harold affords convenient proofs of Gilbert's position. In it he confirms, by a charter, Sybilla's former grant of Leghe to the Abbey of St. Peter (Gloucester), made before 1139 (under her uncle Walter de Laci's abbacy), and later he increases that grant by an addition of pasture situated in the forest of Mascoit.<sup>2</sup> The same cartulary shows Sybilla giving this to the

<sup>1</sup> (1) Herefordshire.—"Et in p̄dōñ p brevia Regis. Gilberto de Lasci. IX. li. et III. sol."

(2) Gloucestershire.—"Nova Placita et novæ Conventiones et Gilberto de Lasci. XXVI. sol. et VIII. den."

(3) Shropshire.—"Et Gilberto de Lasci. IIII. li. et iiiii. sol. et IX. den."

"Et Willelmo fratri Roberto, VI. sol. et ix. den."

<sup>2</sup> "Confirmatio Gilberti de Laceio, testibus Hugo de Eschet, Fratre Roberti, et aliis—de pastura in forestia de Maschoit"—confirming and adding to Sybilla de Laci's grant of wood and stone for building and pasture for cattle.—Cartul. Ewyas. [I owe this valuable evidence to the kindness of the Rev. A. T. Bannister, M.A., Vicar of Ewyas Harold.]

monks for support of Masses to be said for the soul of her late husband, Pain FitzJohn, and for that of her father, Hugh de Laci.

A tried warrior with important possessions in the Welsh border was a personage of peculiar value to the Crown in those violent days. There were to be combated not merely the Welsh themselves, but rebellious Norman barons, whose conduct brought about sieges of Wigmore, Cleobury and Bridgnorth, undertaken by the king himself. A second royal expedition to Wales took place in 1158. We need not question that on these occasions Gilbert de Laci greatly distinguished himself, as also did his son Hugh, afterwards the invader of Ireland and founder of Killeen Castle.<sup>1</sup> The latter, eight years later, is found to be the holder of sixty fees in Herefordshire alone. (*Liber Rubeus*, vol. i., p. 281, Rolls Series.)

We do not know as yet to whom Gilbert de Laci was married. But on the other hand, while Gilbert is found giving houses and lands to the support of a preceptory for the Templars at Quenington,<sup>2</sup> including land at Temple Guiting and Winchcombe, we discover an Agnes de Laci in 1166 (or three years after Gilbert's decease while fighting against Nouredin, Sultan of Aleppo for the release of Bertrand, the captive Grand Master of the Temple<sup>3</sup>), giving the benefice of Quenington, with all its appurtenances, to the Hospital of St. John of Jerusalem in England. This was done in conjunction with Cecilia, Countess of Hereford, who had taken to herself a second husband, William of Poitou. We may venture to take this Agnes to have been Gilbert's wife, for his son Hugh's wife at this time was Roesia de Monmouth, while later he married the daughter of Roderick, King of Connaught, Rose O'Connor (alive in 1224), by each of whom he had several sons. Neither was an Agnes.

The question naturally now arises, who was the father of Gilbert de Laci? Giraldus, who lived and wrote in the days of

<sup>1</sup> Co. Meath.

<sup>2</sup> Dugdale, *Monasticon*, pp. 548-9.

<sup>3</sup> The expedition was made under Guy de Lusignan's command.



Gilbert's grandson, says that Gilbert was son of a sister to Roger, Hugh and Walter de Laci, and he names her Emma. Further, he states that he took the name of de Laci in order to inherit the estates. This, in default of other more direct evidence, has been hitherto accepted as his origin, and Giraldus was a writer, if not impeccably accurate, likely to have known. One Emma de Laci had been the mother of Roger and his brothers<sup>1</sup>; so the name of Emma was easily to be connected with the name of de Laci. Mr. A. S. Ellis has conjectured that Emmelina de Hesding, wife of Arnulf de Hesding, was a sister of the above three brothers, but I am aware of no close evidence to support the conjecture. Emmelina is, moreover, not the same as Emma, though cases of confusion may have occurred between these. As to Gilbert's having changed his name (?) (and we are not told what that was) in order to inherit de Laci lands, he may have done so; nevertheless, he appears upon the scene as Gilbert de Laci in the year following Pain FitzJohn's death, namely in 1138, and he did not actually inherit the said lands, it has been shown, until fifteen years later. That he was closely related to the banished Roger de Laci, on the other hand, seems not a little probable, especially for two reasons. Firstly, he does not appear until after the death of Henry I. who had confirmed the banishment of Roger. Secondly, in 1146 the fief of Roger in the Diocese of Bayeux is mentioned with that of his kinsman Robert, under the names of Gilbert and Ilbert de Laci. "Tota feoda Ilberti et Gilberti de Laceio quæ jure tenebant apud Lacium et Campels (Campeaux)." To these, which had been granted to Robert, Earl of Gloucester, by Henry I. in 1101, upon their confiscation, that earl (we saw) still laid claim. The tense of *tenebant* looks as though both these barons had been allowed to hold their respective fiefs in France by Henry I. as from his natural son, and that accounts satisfactorily for Gilbert being found fighting for the Empress under the banner of Earl Robert himself at the sieges of Bristol and Bath. We cannot doubt

<sup>1</sup> Cf. *Cart. Mon. Glouc.*, vol. i., p. 15.

that the de Laci fiefs of two knights mentioned in 1133<sup>1</sup> as being held from the Church of Bayeux were entirely being held by Robert, Earl of Gloucester, and that soon after the two representatives of the two de Laci families, Ilbert and Gilbert, were respectively permitted to enjoy them by him. As we have seen, Ilbert, soon after King Henry's death, appeared as a partisan of Stephen. With him was a younger brother, Henry,<sup>2</sup> who fell in 1138 at the Battle of the Standard (August 22nd). On the whole, we shall be inclined to believe that Gilbert de Laci was not a son of the banished Roger, but was, as Giraldus said, the son of a sister (name as yet unknown); moreover, that he was brother to Sybil Fitz-John.

<sup>1</sup> *Lib. Rubens*, p. 646, R. 5.

<sup>2</sup> Their sister married to Robert de Lisours. Cf. G Roll of the Pipe, Hen. I. 31 (1130). Their mother's name was Emma. She eventually became a nun in the Abbey de St. Amand, to which she gave 22 acres of land at Mortmain. (Cf. *Cal. Doc. France* (Ed. J. H. Round), p. 24.)

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