

The Bliss Book

A Romantic History of the Bliss Family from the Time of its
Beginning, in England, to its Advent into America, and
Illustrating the Conditions of Life of the English
Ancestors of many Others of the Founders
of New England



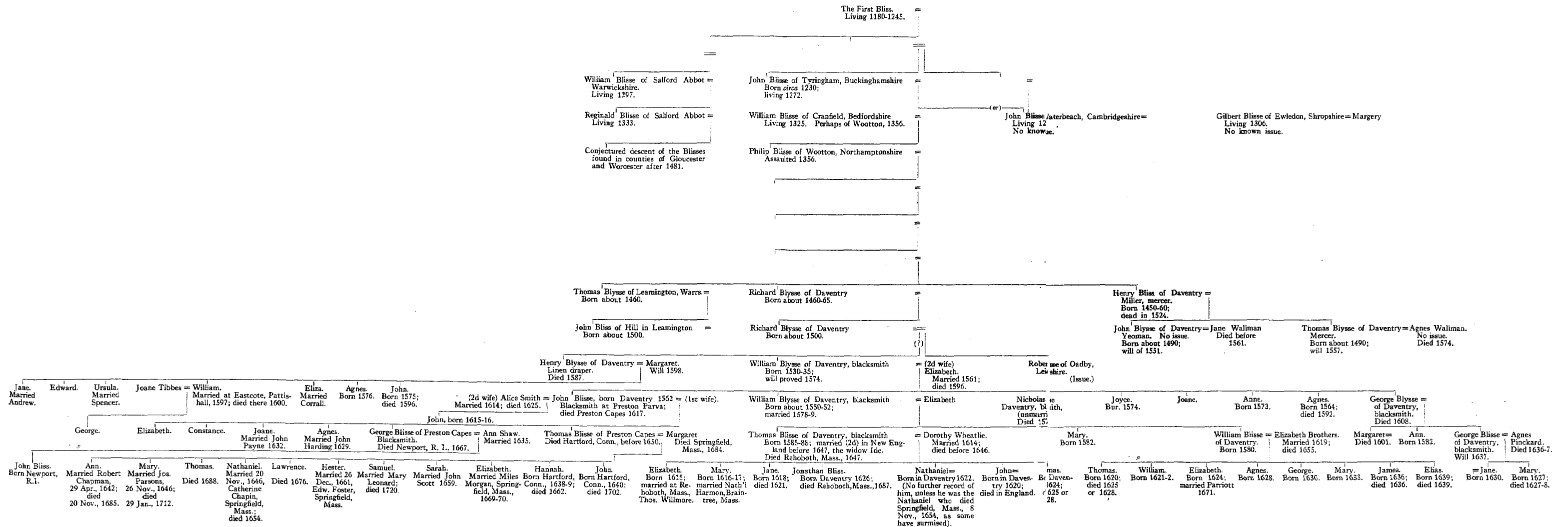
By Charles Arthur Hoppin

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A True Narrative of the Origin and Development of the Surname and Family of Bliss, and of the Ancestry and Lives in England of the Three Puritans who Founded this Family in America in 1638—Thomas Blisse of Rehoboth, Massachusetts, Thomas Blisse of Hartford, Connecticut, and George Blisse of Newport, Rhode Island; also of the Bliss emigrants to America of 1821, 1835, and 1879; and some Descendants in England, since 1500, of the Blisses of Gloucester and Oxford shires.

The Blisse Family of Daventry and Preston Capes, Northamptonre.



To Alfreda Maria (Bliss) Hoppin

“For whose dear bones we would a tomb advance,
Of gold, and silver, and Corinthian brass,
With ivory pillars mix't with jet and rance,
Rarer and richer than th' old Carian's was;
And round about it write
Their virtues shining bright.
But, sith the most of our poor means, alas!
Not the least part of that rich pride affords,
For want of wealth we build a tomb of words;
Which, though it cost less shall out-last
The proud cloud-threat'ning battlements,
The aspiring spires by Ninus plac't
And hell-deep-founded monuments.”

Preface

"My endeavors
Have ever come short of my desires,
Yet, filled with my abilities."

The sources of genealogical information, from which the facts in this book have been drawn, are the original ancient manuscripts, written in Latin and English, extant in the parish, borough, manorial, county, diocesan, and national archives or records of England. Every record therein examined, for this book, has come before the eye of the author; he alone is responsible for the interpretation herein presented of those records. Practically nothing in this book has been left to rest upon a mere tradition. Tradition has been found erroneous—a hindrance, not a help. Practically nothing available in the records of England has been left unread. This book, therefore, is the first word, the only word, and the last word of truth yet written, or likely to be written, within the limits of the subject undertaken. The national records of England are so numerous and vast as to be almost inexhaustible. Years of time are necessary to complete a search on any one family name. On the whole, all of the said sources of information are official; and they are reliable. Some records, however, are exceedingly complicated, now and then imperfect in parts, and sometimes yield data apparently irreconcilable, if not actually contradictory in certain phases. The searcher must be endowed with infinite patience, to say nothing of other requisites, lest he easily become discouraged. Though laborious even to the skillful paleographer, the pursuit of such a quest is positively romantic. It has a particular fascination for one who can bring to bear the power of a keen intuition or perception. To the many American tourists who go to England, and without having had long technical experience in the archives there, expect to find the homes of their ancestors, success is seldom possible. Moreover their failure is well-nigh inevitable. Even the ablest investigator cannot succeed therein always.

The author has often studied for weeks, and occasionally through the night, trying to determine the full significance of a single item of evidence, or to clear up a hazy point, which when accomplished would scarcely add anything noticeable to his story. Such discrepancies and difficulties are of altogether too frequent occurrence in the work of an original inquiry into the history of a family. Hence

the inquirer whose method is to be fastidious in point of accuracy, and artistic or sympathetic in the manner of the presentation of his facts and observations, must become insensible, if his means permit, to the lapse of time whilst searching in the archives, verifying a debatable item, and weighing each word with which he attires his framework of facts. Moreover, above all, he must not rest with being a mere compiler, like some of the old genealogists who were content to publish a bare skeleton of cold names and dates that sadly needed to be clothed with some semblance to life. Therefore, the zeal of an author in such efforts should be esteemed a wise reason for what, to impatient subscribers, may seem an unaccountable delay in the completion of his work. It would be an affectation to deny that books of this class can only be made, by the present author, under the expectation of some subscriptions, for he has no one to thank for any particular assistance in the cost (over \$5000) and the entire work of preparing and illustrating the manuscript of *The Bliss Book*, save for the encouragement courteously given to him by Frederick Spencer Bliss of Hartford, Connecticut, William H. Bliss of New York City, and Sir Henry W. Bliss, K.C.I.E., of England, to whom the author's thanks are hereby expressed.

The thanks of Blisses all over the world are due to Frederick Spencer Bliss who, after going to England to see the homes of our ancestors there, has joined with the author in having this book published for the pleasure and information of the present and future Bliss descendants—the number of subscriptions received, up to the hour of “going to press,” being far less in amount than the first cost of the printing alone. Therefore, the author and publisher must look to the future for due appreciation.

The author may not be thanked for revealing the plain truth that the early Bliss ancestors were not the kings, queens, lords, dukes, earls, etc., claimed in *The Bliss Genealogy* of 1881 but, instead, merely respectable citizens. Still he has not allowed himself to gratify the pride or vanity of any one by claiming, for any ancestor herein, any qualification which the ancestor did not possess; nor has any ancestor been herein neglected because he was a poor man. The study of an ancient ancestry has been considered as a broad contemplation of wide human nature, not as a matter of “Who's Who?” New England does not wholly know—it may not care to know—that one half, if not two thirds, of its early settlers were direct descendants from the Saxon, Danish, and Celtic *villeins* (peasants who owned little or no landed property) of the feudal times

in England. Nevertheless, the author is determined that this book shall be free from the fanciful fallacies about exalted birth that have been printed about the English ancestors of some of the founders of America. This course may not be the high road to popularity; the steps may be laid down too fearlessly straight in their fidelity to the pathway of fact; but that will depend upon the individual reader. The author reposes confidently, however, in the belief that the members of the American family of Bliss are sufficiently eminent, in their various capacities, and have too long enjoyed an honorable prosperity to require the addition to their caps of any feathers from their remote ancestors; nor can any insufficiency whatever in those Blisses who lived in the terribly hard days of the long-ago dim, in any way, the shining page of American Bliss history.

"A true pedigree, be it exalted or simple, long or short, is a fact. To those to whom it belongs it is a possession; and like any other possession, it is to be respected."

Connaught Club, London, W.
18 January, 1912.

Charles Arthur Steppin

125 Trumbull Street,
Hartford, Connecticut.

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Introduction

"There comes a voice that awakes my soul—
It is the voice of the years that are gone;
They roll before me with all their deeds."

"The magic of the distant days," in the perspective of the Bliss family, wrought its fascination upon the writer with the coming to his hands of a book, published in the year 1881, entitled *The Bliss Genealogy*. This book revealed his direct maternal descent from Thomas Blisse of Boston Mount 1638, later of Rehoboth, Plymouth Colony. The portal pages into this volume of lore, alleged and otherwise, bore many a paragraph of startling portent that, very likely, has been well treasured in the memory of every reader of that book. The richness upon those pages was in that glamour attaching to the feudal days of the Blisses, to the "Age of Chivalry," "when knighthood was in flower," the simple ordinary exploits of which time have been magnified and made the theme of so much that is romantic in subsequent song and story. Then came the fulfillment of a desire to visit the place in England, where that book described the Bliss ancestors as having been born, married, and then as having struggled, suffered, and died as martyrs in the cause of a freer interpretation of the Christian religion: likewise, and partly because of a previous experience in literary inquiry among the English records, there grew a desire that was particularly keen to find, and to study there, what *The Bliss Genealogy* was utterly devoid of (the most important thing of all), i. e., a copy of or an abstract from, or even the mere name of any actual record, proof, authority, or indication that would verify, confirm, or tend to confirm, or to give reason for any one to believe as true all things, or any one thing, as published in the English chapter of that book. What a roseate chapter it was, of Bliss kings, earls, knights, lords, and gentlemen! of

" the heroic and the free,
The beautiful, the brave, the lords of earth and sea."

What feelings of pride stirred the imagination of the unquestioning reader! How could one resist a desire to learn more of all this? What greater pleasure could there be to the mind, one thought, than to view in reality, "Belstone in Devonshire, the home of our forefathers"! And then to trace their fathers, and their

fathers' fathers, back through the generations—to delve in the vast archives, to revel in the antiquities touching such “forgotten men, forgotten deeds”; and then to have the honor to write “the long tale of the great dead.” What a prospect! How noble a theme! Moreover, all of it located in what Shakespeare made John of Gaunt, in *Richard II*, call:—

“This royal throne of kings, this sceptr’d isle,
This earth of majesty, this seat of Mars,
This other Eden, demi-paradise;
.
.
.
This precious stone set in the silver sea,
.
.
.
the envy of less happier lands;
This blessed plot, this earth, this realm, this England.”

Well, fellow Bliss descendants, after much of ten years passed in England, that undertaking has been accomplished. If an honor, it also has been a task—long, self-imposed, and costly; undertaken as a pleasure, a memorial, a duty, and without hope of other profit. For every record found a hundred records had to be examined. That dream-desire has met reality, and what a reality it is! The result thereof is altogether different from the conception in *The Bliss Genealogy* of 1881. And after the last three months in England, without having seen the sun in the sky, the writer is quite certain that Shakespeare penned the foregoing lines of ideality on the usual rainy morning, as a consolation to himself for not being able to venture out of doors without getting a wetting, if nothing worse. Then as to John of Gaunt, it is more certain that the England that his eyes looked upon in 1377 was largely marsh, moor, and forest—about in the condition, topographically, of the New England of 1700, save the few Roman roads; also that the great majority of the small population of England, at that time, could not have been very happy because they were serfs, and as well, that the skies were quite as cheerless then as now and the rain as unenviously constant as it was when the Roman Tacitus called the British climate repulsive because of its rains and fogs.

Alas! Belstone in Devonshire in the West of England has been visited; Belstone amid the lonely tracts of bog and moor and rock, out of which sterility man has never yet succeeded in raising the means of sustenance for any but the fewest of settlers; Belstone upon Dartmoor, high, bleak, and barren, an almost treeless tract

of 225 square miles; Belstone that Devon's splendid novelist, Eden Phillpotts, calls "a village that looks like a smudge of mud." How much more mysterious, isolated, and absolutely out of the world it was, before 1638, than now! How odd seemed this region of England for the home of such titled Bliss ancestors as we had been reading of! Here on Dartmoor, the home of superstitions most weird that linger even to this day? Here amid the old "folk-tale" people who verily believed that fairies, pixies, gnomes, goblins, witches, and devils actually lived round-about in the hills, and that they heard them at night, some still so believing? Here on Dartmoor where one meets "the strangest survivals of faiths which have perished off the earth elsewhere"? Here among a handful of people who are still among the most unique, and for that reason, perhaps, the most interesting of the human species on the Isle of Britain? What an antithesis to imagine such folk as the Bliss emigrants to America! It would surprise a genuine moorman of to-day to hear that any early denizen thereof had been farther away from home than to some near-by market-town. Even the folk resident in towns but a few miles away from the moor are called "foreigners." It is still a common thing to read of the death of an aged one of these people who had never been off the moor during a long life. One such died two weeks ago who had not ventured more than two miles away from the homestead in all the eighty years of life. Another, but three years since, prosecuted a suit in the county court against a neighbor for "bewitching his cattle," from the alleged effects of which the plaintiff really believed that one of his cows had died. Why should any Bliss descendant imagine that these folk were ever any kin of his? These simple, honest moor-dwellers, descendants of Norman kings, earls, and lords, of but a few generations before? How the lordly would laugh, and how the lowly would wonder at such an idea! Yet this is what the Blisses of America have believed for a generation. What a snug place is Belstone for a dreamer to place his inventions in! Seemingly so far off from the path of human progress, so out of the way of the traveler, or the inquirer, it was, that the Blisses of America might be long deterred from finding out the truth. *So it has been!* Yet, strange indeed, is it not, that no Bliss descendant has ever inquired, ere now, as to the records appertaining to persons and property in Belstone and vicinity? *The records of these people have been kept.* At last, and alas! these records have been read, all of them, every word, by the writer. The story printed in 1881 as to our Blisses

in Belstone was only a story, flimsy and unsupported. It is as unreal as "the baseless fabric of a vision." Amusingly we class it with the tales of the fairies, pixies, gnomes, goblins, and devils of that same moorland. To these fables we would now add it, musing, the while, that the weird-minded moor-folk are not the only humans who have believed strange things without any evidence.

No person of the name of Bliss ever lived at Belstone or adjacent thereto before 1800. No ancestor of Thomas Blisse of Rehoboth, Mass., of Thomas Blisse of Hartford, Conn., or of George Blisse of Newport, R. I.,—the three Bliss emigrants to America of *circa* 1638,—ever lived upon Dartmoor, or anywhere in the shire of Devon, or at any place whatsoever in the entire West of England.

"They are flown,
Beautiful fictions of our fathers, wove
In [imagination's] web, when [knowledge] was young
And fondly loved and cherished, they are flown
Before the wand of [investigation]."

Where did they come from, our first Bliss ancestors in America? We shall see, hereinafter, in due order. Those in America who have been fed with such fancies as that their Bliss ancestors, in England, "were men like Cromwell and Hampden," "maintaining a high station socially, politically and otherwise," "many with titles," "some being knighted, others members of Parliament and of the House of Lords"; that they were lineal descendants "of royal blood in France," descendants direct of William, Duke of Normandy, the Conqueror of Britain, of "Baldwin V, Count of Flanders," of "Stephen, King of England" [1135-1154]; that their ancestors bore the coat-of-arms, "gules, a bend vair, between two fleur-de-lis, or," with the motto "Semper sursum" and the crest of a gauntleted hand holding an arrow; that the grandfather of the emigrants died in prison under persecution for non-conformity; that one of his sons was likewise imprisoned; and who even have been informed as to the color of the hairs of the horses upon which the ancestors "rode up to London to attend Parliament" in the time of Charles I, —those so fed, and who relished the taste thereof, may not like the plain fare of facts that it has been long left for the writer, a professional investigator of family history, to serve up. Those who prefer truth, above all, opening their minds for an exploitation of it, may find in the actualities, hereinafter related, more satisfaction than in the imagery of the might-have-been. In parting

with those alleged Norman ancestors nothing is lost. Instead, we have gained the knowledge of an ancestry that was guiltless of the crimes of oppression and injustice that were indulged in by the "Nobility and Gentry" of the feudal times. What Bliss can but be pleased to learn that his name and blood do not derive from the Norman conquerors of England, of whom Ralph Waldo Emerson wrote in *English Traits!*—i. e.:—

"Twenty thousand thieves landed at Hastings. These founders of the House of Lords were greedy and ferocious dragoons, sons of greedy and ferocious pirates. They were all alike; they took everything they could carry; they burned, harried, violated, tortured, and killed until everything English was brought to the verge of ruin. Such, however, is the illusion of antiquity and wealth, that decent and dignified men now existing boast their descent from these filthy thieves who showed a far juster conviction of their own merits by assuming for their crests, the swine, goat, jackal, leopard, wolf, and snake, which they severally resembled."

The royal robes and all the paraphernalia of "pomp and circumstance" are now cast back into the abyss of Never-was, from whence they came. And what is that tale, printed in 1881, about one Honorius Bliss who on the field of battle saved the life of a feudal lord, or knight, by attacking from behind an assailant who had about vanquished the knight, whereupon the rescued knight gave Honorius, as a reward, the gauntlet that forms the crest of the afore-mentioned coat-of-arms? At first reading this pleasing bit seems to be a reminiscence of "the morning after" a day—

"When every knight went out to fight
With his helmet on his head;
When many a knight stayed out all night
When he ought to have been in bed."

Upon second thought, the incident seems to have been extracted from the "Legend of Fulco Fitz Warin" in the *Chronicum Anglicanum of Radulphi de Coggeshall*. In this legend there figures one Berard de Blee; but his name has been mistaken for Bliss. This legend is one of many such that were popular in the Middle Ages. There is some truth, more or less, in the plot of it; but upon such a skeleton is placed a gorgeous attire of fable, reflecting credit, indeed, upon the imaginative talent of the *trouveur*. The great story of the exploits of Richard Coeur-de-Lion and the ballads about Robin Hood, the outlaw of Sherwood Forest, are considered to contain

more that is true than does this "Legend of Fulco Fitz Warin" (Fulk the son of Warin, a mediaeval renegade). The legend recounts how King John [1199-1216] commissioned "Rondulf, earl of Chester" [Randolph de Brereton] to find and capture Fulk. The legend reads (translation):—

"The earl ordered his company and retinue to the assault, and they struck vigorously. The count [Rondulf] himself assailed sir Fulk, but at the last the count lost his horse, and his retinue was for the most part killed. Fulk and his brothers defended themselves resolutely, and, as sir Fulk defended himself, sir Berard de Blees came behind him and struck him with his sword on the side, and believed that he had killed him."

Sir Berard de Blees was neither a Bliss nor a Blois. He was a descendant of the Norman family of de Blaye, which took its surname from the seaport town of Blaye on the Gironde in France. His family never bore the crest of the gauntlet. (Blaye is modernly pronounced Bly-er and Blay; anciently the pronunciation became corrupted in England.)

Any Bliss descendant who has read the "famous article" of Professor Freeman (late of Oxford University) entitled "Pedigrees and Pedigree-Makers" [*Contemporary Review* xxx, 11-41], in which the author demolishes some of the fables and fictions published in that "gorgeous repertory of genealogical mythology," i. e., the well-known *Peerage* of Sir Bernard Burke, Ulster King-of-Arms," will not feel disappointed at now parting forever with the titled ancestors which *The Bliss Genealogy* of 1881 so generously and ingenuously showered upon us. Freeman states:—

"I turn over a peerage, or other book of genealogy, and find that, *when a pedigree professes to be traced back to the times of which I know most in detail* [Norman period] it is all but invariably false. As a rule it is not only false, but impossible . . . The historical circumstances, when any are introduced, are for the most part not merely fictions, but exactly that kind of fiction which is, in its beginning, deliberate and interested falsehood."

Let us thoroughly understand that, before the year 1640, the following ten points were true:—

(1). No Blisse of England ever was knighted, not even in the reign of Edward I [1272-1307], when every owner of so little as £20 worth of land was compelled to be knighted because the king wanted more of the fees then collectable of knights.

(2). No Blisse of England ever was chosen to be a member of the House of Commons.

(3). No Blisse of England ever was named by the king to be a member of the House of Lords.

(4). No Blisse could have borne the coat-of-arms above described.

(5). No Blisse of England could have presumed to a social station (as claimed in *The Bliss Genealogy* of 1881), approaching to that held by Oliver Cromwell and John Hampden, two of the greatest men in English history.

(6). No Blisse of England was a direct paternal descendant of any king, or of any queen, or of a prince, or of an earl, or from the nobility in general.

(7). No Blisse died in or out of prison as a result of imprisonment, or was imprisoned for recusancy.

(8). No Blisse of England ever bore any title conferred by the Crown.

(9). Six Blisses had graduated from an English university before 1640.

(10). No Blisse of England had been the sheriff of his county or the mayor of his borough.

The settlers of the New World issued forth from the cottage, not from the castle or the court. They arose directly from the soil, not from the money-market. Whatever of material worldly glory attaches to the surname of Bliss is American, chiefly. Considering those phantom royal ancestors, aforesaid, there is one consolation for us all, as Bliss descendants, and that is, that we may with some reason believe that we are exempt from Sir Thomas Overbury's comment on "people who are disposed to rest their claims to consideration on the merits of their ancestors," that they "should remember that they resemble potatoes, of which the only valuable portion is underground." What, then, were our Blisse ancestors? We shall portray them exactly as they were, fearlessly and faultlessly, just as the records prove them to have been. Enough material of interest concerning them has been found in England to make a readable book. So, therefore, the reader may find herein that—

"Not rude and barren are the winding ways
Of hoar Antiquity, but strewn with flowers."

And let the great truth uttered by Bishop Stubbs be remembered:—

"Mere antiquity of descent is of course less significant than antiquity of famous descent; but there is, as a matter of fact, very little real antiquity of famous descent in this or any other European country."

It is in order, at this moment, that an explanation be made exonerating the author of *The Bliss Genealogy* of 1881, J. Homer

Bliss, in connection with the unfortunate English chapter of that book. Mr. Bliss has made it plain, to the writer, that the material composing that chapter was furnished to him, for publication, by a correspondent now deceased, who claimed to have employed an English genealogist to make an inquiry in England. Appreciation of Mr. Bliss's labors, as represented in the voluminous American part of his book, will be ever fitting so long as there remains alive a Bliss descendant to read that book's most treasurable account of the Bliss family in America, from 1639 to 1881. It is regrettable only that it was not heretofore considered that—

“It is enough to know that the primitive aristocracy of New England was an aristocracy of intellect consecrated to duty, and not of blood; that her peerage and her knighthood were honors direct from the creative hand of God, and not from the touch of a monarch.”

The Etymology of the Word Bliss

Bliss is "a pure English word, one that forms one of the true bases of the English language; its true origin is altogether pre-historic."* With Murray let us trace the word back for a thousand years:—

Bliss (blis), substantive. Forms: before 1100, *blids*, *bliss*, *blis*; 13th to 17th century, *blisse*; 14th to 16th century, *blysse*, *blis*; 16th century, *bliss*; occasionally in 14th to 17th centuries, *blesse*, *bless*. [Old English, similar to Anglo-Saxon] *blids* (accusative, *blidse*), the feminine—the Old Saxon *blidsea*, *blitzea*, *blizza* regular phonetic descendants of the Original Teutonic type *blipsija*—formed on *blipi-s*, in Gothic *bleips*, in Old Saxon *blithi*, Old English *blide*, *blithe*, joyous, or the obsolete word suffix—*sja*, standing, after dentals, for the original—*tja* (compare with the Latin *lætitia*). The Gothic has, instead, the parallel form *bleip-ei*, the phonetic descendant of the Original Teutonic *blip-in*. In later Old English (Anglo-Saxon), by assimilation and vowel-shortening, *blids* became *bliss*, *blis*, and in Middle English *blisse*; comparable with the Old English *milds*, *milts* (regular phonetic descendant of the Original Teutonic *mild-sja*=*mild-tja*), mildness, clemency, in Middle English *milze*, *milce*, *milse*. The meaning of *bliss* and that of *bless* have mutually influenced each other since an early period; confusion of spelling is frequent from the time of Wyclif (1350) to the 17th century. Hence the gradual tendency to withdraw *bliss* from earthly "blitheness" to the beatitude of the blessed in heaven, or that which is likened to it:—

1. Blitheness of aspect towards others, kindness of manner, "light of one's countenance," smile; (only in Old English). Here is an example of early use:—

Before the year 1000 in *Metr. Bæth.* ii. 30: "Hi me towendon heora bacu bitere and blisse from."

2. Blitheness; gladness; joy, delight, enjoyment; adopted from the physical, social, mundane: passing at length into bliss. Examples of early use:—

Year 791, in *Blickl. Homilies* 3, "Maria cende bone Drihten on blisse"; before the year 1000 in *Cotton Psalm* 1.99 (Greek), "Sæle nu blidseme, bilewit dryhten"; about the year 1200, in *Trinity Coll. Homilies*, 115, "Hie weren swo

* Etymological Dictionary of the English Language.—SKEATS.

blide bat hie ne mighten mid worde here blisse tellen"; about 1340, in *Cursor M.*, 1013. (Trinity), "Mony obere blisses elles, floures pat ful swete smelles"; about 1380, in Wyclif's *Sermons*, ii. 234, "Two blessis ben—blesse of be [the] soule and blisse of be [the] bodi"; about 1386, in Chaucer's *Man Laws T.*, 1021, "this glade folk to dyner they hem sette; in joye and blisse at mete I lete hem dwelle"; before 1450, in *Knights de la Tour* (1868), 55, "She lost alle worshippe, richesse, ese, and blysse"; in 1535, in Stewart's *Chronicles of Scotland*, iii. 268, "Tha rouch rillingis, of blis that war full bair"; in 1593, in Shakespeare's *2 Hen. VI*, I. ii. 31, "And all that Poet's faine of Blisse and Joy"; in 1667, in Milton's *Paradise Lost*, iv. 508, "These two Imparadis't in one another's arms . . . shall enjoy their fill of bliss on bliss"; in 1806, in Wordsworth's *Ode on Immortality*, 86, "Behold the Child among his new-born blisses"; in 1841, in Leigh Hunt's *Seer* (1864), 54, "He does not sufficiently sympathise with our towns and our blisses of Society."

B. Mental, ethereal, spiritual; perfect joy or felicity, blessedness. (Early instances are difficult to separate from the preceding.) Examples of the use of the word bliss in this sense:—

About the year 1175, in *Lamb. Homilies*, 15, "blisse and lisse ic sende"; before 1300, in *Cursor M.*, 605, "A land o lijf, beld, and blis, be quilk man clepes paradis"; about 1380, in Wyclif's *Sermons*, i. 142, "To lyve evere in blis wibouten peyne"; in 1483, in Caxton *G. de la Tour*, F. iii, "The grete reame of blysse and glory"; in 1591, in Shakespeare *1 Hen. VI*, V. v. 64, "The contrarie bringeth blisse, And is a patterne of celestial peace"; in 1597, in Hooker's *Eccl. Pol.*, V. xxii. 13, "To them whose delight is in the law . . . that happiness and bliss belongeth"; before 1649, in Drummond of Hawth. *Cypr. Grove Wks.*, 31, "O only blest and Author of all bliss"; *Ibid.*, 26, "All bless returning with Lord of bliss"; in Milton's *Paradise Lost*, viii. 522, "the sum of earthly bliss which I enjoy"; in 1747, in Gray's *Ode to Eton College*, "Where ignorance is bliss, 'Tis folly to be wise"; in 1764, in Goldsmith's *Traveller*, 62, "May gather bliss, to see my fellows blest"; in 1875, Bayard Taylor's *Faust*, I. xxii. 141, "The purest bliss was surely then thy dower."

C. Especially. The perfect joy of heaven; the beatitude of departed souls. Hence the place of bliss, paradise, heaven. Early examples:—

Year 971, in *Blickl. Homilies*, 25, "We mazon . . . ece blisse zearnian"; before 1225, in *Juliana*, 21, "Ich schal blide bicumen to endelese blissen"; before 1300, in *Cursor. M.*, 17,972, "Fro helle to paradys bat blis"; before 1384, in Wyclif's *Sermons*, iii. 344, "He (the pope) is not blessid in his lif, for blis fallib [falleth] to the tobir [tother] lyf"; in 1509, in Hawes, *Examp. Virtue*, i. 12, "I wyll . . . brynge thy soule to blesse eterne"; in 1593, in Shakespeare's *3 Hen. VI*, 182, "By the hope I have of heavenly blisse"; in 1607, in Walkington's *Opt. Glass*, 65, "The soul is . . . wrapt up into an Elysium and paradise of blesse"; in 1667, in Milton's *Paradise Lost*, i. 607, "Far other once

beheld in bliss"; in 1781, in Cowper's *Truth*, 301, "The path to bliss abounds with many a snare"; in 1871, in Morley's *Voltaire* (1886), 255, "Any one who accepted them in the concrete and literal form prescribed by the church, would share infinite bliss."

D. Concretely. A cause of happiness, joy or delight. Examples:—

Before the year 1000, in *Ags. Ps.* (Spelman), xxxi. 9 (Bosw.), "Du eart blis min"; about 1386, in Chaucer's *Nonnes Pr. T.*, 346, "Womman is mannes joye and al his blis"; in 1850, Tennyson's *In Memoriam*, xcvi. 26, "A wither'd violet is her bliss."

3. Glory. (This is an obsolete use.) Translating gloria:—

About the year 1200, in *Trinity College Homilies*, 115, "Quis est iste rex glorie hwat is this blissene king"; before 1300, in *Cursor. M.*, 81,000, "the king o bliss"; in 1387, in Trevisa's *Higden*, ii. 363, "Hercules is iseide of heros that is a man, and of cleos that is blisse; as they Hercules were to menyge a blissful man but glorious."

4 A bliss of birds; blithe singing, a "choir." Example:—

About the year 1430, in Lydg. *Min. Poems*, 228, "A blysse of bryddes me bad abyde. For cause there song mo then one."

5. Combination usage. (a) Objective, as bliss-giving, bliss-making; (b) adverbial, as bliss-bright. Examples:—

In 1610 in Healey's *St. Aug. Citie of God*, 309, "This blesse-affording good"; in 1645, in Bishop Hall's *Content*, 103, "The blisse-making vision of God"; in 1839, in Bailey's *Festus*, xiv. (1848) 147, "The bliss bright stars"; in 1876, in George Eliot's *Daniel Deronda*, II. xxvii. 184, "The bliss-giving 'yes.'"

In ancient Shropshire, England, a "bliss" was a wood-cutting term, the boundary line of an allotment of timber-cutting. Woodcutters in the neighborhood of Cleobury Mortimer make a bliss and in doing so blaze the outer bark of the trees.

The Isolation of the Surname of Bliss

Bliss is not Blois, it never was. Blois is not Bliss, and anciently never was. Bliss is not Blithe, and never was; and Blythe never was Bliss. Bliss and Blaise are unrelated surnames. Blaye, Bleaze, Blees, Bleys, and Bleis are forms of a surname that had nothing to do with Bliss. Never has Bliss been Blish. Blush is the name of another family than Bliss altogether. So also are Blyster and Blissett. In 1642 a Thomas Blissett of Donnington, Berks, had a son Thomas, a cook, who changed his name to Blisse [Proceedings in Chancery, Chas. I. B. 28, 29]. No Bliss of England has ever written his name Blois, Bloys, Blith, Blythe, Blyth, or Blaise, Bleaze, Blees, Blaye, Bleys, Bleis, or Blez. Once in a long while some British record-keeper would err in writing the name. In the years 1632 and 1637 one such, who may have had an impediment in his speech, wrote the name as "Blith" and "Blies," just once; but he corrected himself in the next Bliss entries. No Bliss who lisped has been found. Has anybody ever known of a Bliss who was "tongue-tied," literally, or linguistically? As a whole the Blissesses have been characterized as "rather close" in speech.

The surname of Bliss is distinct and apart from all other surnames, however similar in spelling or in pronunciation any of them ever have been or now are. For variants the family name of Bliss practically has none. Bliss, Blis, Blisse, Bles, Blyss, Blysse, Blys—these are the only spellings found in the records of England for the last eight hundred years. The name in England was generally written "Blisse." Bliss is one of the few names that have almost no kith or kin in the etymology of family nomenclature. Blisworth, Blisland, Blisbury, and Bliston, topographical names, are the only ones that can presume to be arrayed in this connection; but these are older than the surname and have no relation to it. The word "blithe" has a meaning similar to that of the word bliss; but the Blithe family took its name after the name of a place on a river of the same name, beside which resided its earliest member whose full name and identity are given in Dugdale's *History and Antiquities of Warwickshire* (V. ii., p. 1051; V. v., p. 11).

Bliss goes straight back to its Saxon origin, alone, unattended. This fact is unusually indisputable as surnames go. The word *bliss* is pure Saxon. The surname of Bliss is pure Saxon. So straight, so simple, and so clear is its perspective that it is singular, indeed, that the surname of Bliss should have been confounded

heretofore with anything so racially inimical as the Norman Blois (pronounced Blwar, the *r* scarcely sounded, while the peasantry around the city of Blois say "Blue-a" the *a* as in ale). Words shall not be wasted here upon the Blois tribe. The pedigree of that family has been published these many years. Always as Blois or Bloys these descendants in England, out of Guyenne in France, have maintained their station among the gentry in the East Anglian county of Suffolk for nearly eight hundred years, never recognizing any Bliss of ours as kin. Every record existing in England, that is accessible and essential to an inquiry into the history of the Bliss family between the years 1086 and 1660, has been examined with precision—a work of years. No stone has been left unturned, no time thought too long, no cost too great. The writer has lived in the towns where the Blisses lived, almost as they lived; he has perceived how they lived amid the social, political, and religious changes during four hundred years. The early records of the Blaise and Blithe families also have been collected, in order to make sure that these people did not become confounded, in any way, with the Blisses. The surname of Bliss is quite as old as that of Blithe, though Bliss is not a territorial surname.

A passage in the *Chronicle of Robert of Gloucester*, a monk, written in Old English (Anglo-Saxon) between the years 1265 and 1297, will suggest, upon the student's first notice, that the names Bliss and Blois might have been the same:—

"erl stevene de bles wende ek dat gret poer adde an hond"

(Translation): Stephen, Earl of Blois, to increase great power had an axe.

It will be observed that the monk did not attempt to render the French "de Blois" into Old English, as his use of the "de" before "bles" proves, firstly, because (monks having been scholarly if nothing more) he must have known that the name Blois did not mean "bles" (bliss) in Old English. "Blisse" had already become the cognomen of a man in England before the monk's verse was written. The use of the preposition "de" before the surname of Bliss, even in an earliest form of Bles, is impossible in the etymology of family names, because this name, of itself, never has been the designation of a locality. In the patent rolls of the twenty-first year of the reign of Edward III (1347) occurs this entry (abstract):—

"Grant by the King to James Dydier of Gascony, 'vineter,' [vintner]
"and his heirs for ever of a cottage in Calais [France] late of John
"Blissekyn, on condition that he bear himself faithfully towards the
"King."

In and before the said year of 1347 England had been holding a part of France with an army on the ground. The above record implies that one of the early Blisses of England had gone to France with that English army, and became the father of a boy who was brought up in France and occupied that cottage at Calais, and had been named, after the Flemish and Brabantian custom, "Blissekyn." This name meant *a son of Bliss*. Bardsley, the authority upon the etymology of surnames, explains how the diminutive *-kin* came to mean "a young one," a child. The name of Blissekyn did not continue at Calais, or in England. This application of the name of Bliss is one bit of evidence proving that Bliss was a christian name, before it became a surname, as will be more fully established in the fourth chapter. The surnames of Blissett, Blesset, Blisworth, Blesseby, Blessewill, and Blessid were established as family names separate from Bliss. "Blissett" is a personal name like Joyce; but it also seems to be a territorial surname taken after the place of Blisset in Oxfordshire, which place is mentioned in the Hundred Rolls of the year 1273; also the same rolls for Oxfordshire record a "Hugh de Blisset." A blisset is an animal with a patch of white on the forehead. The will of William Marmyon of Keesby, Lincolnshire, dated October, 1390, was witnessed by a John "Blisset." "Blisswench" is a surname from a nickname. An Alicia Blisswench is also mentioned in the Hundred Rolls for Oxfordshire in the year 1273. Lower says: "Blissewench appears to be nearly synonymous with Maud Makejoy whose dancing afforded Edward, Prince of Wales, so much pleasure in 1297." "Blessed," says Lower, "is probably a translation of the Latin Benedictus and thus synonymous with Bennett."

In the Close Roll of the 8th of Edw. II (1315) the king on March 26, at Misindon, ordered Henry de Oldyngton, the king's yeoman, sent to the master and brethren of God's house, Dover, to receive such maintenance therein as Henry Blesde, deceased, had there at the late king's request.

Blesde is the same name as Blessed; and the name also appears in a Close Roll of the 9th of Edw. II in another document similar to the above, dated Jan. 6th, 1316, in which the same "Henry

Blesde" is mentioned as "Henry le Blessid." "Blesby" is a territorial surname after Blesby, a parish in Lincolnshire. For the year 1303 there exists a record in Latin of one Osbert Coleman entering into a tenement in Walesby formerly held by "Walterus filius Wellelmi et Willelmus de Bleseby." An ancient deed [A. 8708] is that of a release by John Swynshed of Lansthorp to "Thomas de Bleseby" of a dwelling and four "selions" [short pieces of land in arable ridges of uncertain quantity] of land in the south field of Aswardby, Lincolnshire. "Blessewill" is a territorial surname almost extinct in England; an example of it is seen in an ancient Latin deed [C. 2920] of about 1300, wherein "John de Blesseville" figures in a transaction between Henry Griffin and Gilbert de Birches, over land in "le Thenardescot," adjoining the highway from "Birmingham" to "Warewic." Blisworth is a surname assumed after the parish of Blisworth in Northamptonshire, and meaning a peaceful wood. In the patent rolls of the year 1282 it is recorded that a commission of oyer and terminer was granted to Nicholas de Stapelton and Hamo Hauteyn on complaint by Walter de Kancia that "Richard de Blisworth" [and others] entered his house by night at Neuton Harecourt, county Leicester, carried away his goods and assaulted his men." A man bearing the name of Blisworth informed the writer that his family gave its name to the town of Blisworth because his ancestors once owned that town. This idea represents a fallacy that is quite common in England; it is about as accurate as was the old woman who upon hearing that there was "good news from the seat of war," queried—"What do 'ee mean?" "Oh," said her informant, "don't you know we are at war with the Boers?" The woman's reply was, "Aw, be us? Butiful day vor't, idden it!" Examples of similar rural innocence are too numerous to mention; it was only recently that a farmer, when asked by a clerk in a telegraph office to write plainer his telegram, which the clerk had tried to read, indignantly replied, "What business is it of yours? They'll read it all right at the other end." The father of a savings bank depositor (deceased) upon being asked for a specimen of his son's handwriting, sent an old telegram that the son had sent to him, as being "the only specimen in my possession."

The Origin and Meaning of the Surname

We may consider now the origin of names of persons. Who was the first man to have a name, and what was his name? Moses called him "Adam," and a modern writer asserts that "names commenced in Eden—the name of Adam denoting his origin from the earth." So far as the purposes of "The Deathless Book" are concerned these explanations are true enough. Hence we need not now dwell upon the fact that modern scholars, engaged in scientific research in western Asia, have fairly proven, among other things, that the name of Adam was taken by Moses from the earlier Babylonian word "Adama," which meant "the race," or that the name of Eve was also obtained by the same writer from another earlier Babylonian word, i. e., "Eva," which meant "woman." And while we are told that these facts establish the pre-Biblical existence of man upon this globe, before any actual man named Adam (if Moses intended this name to be more than figurative), it need not now interest us in the present connection. However, some sort of a name for each man and woman may have been among almost the first formal vocal utterances of a human being. The rest, along this line, may be left to Darwin, what are called christian names being prehistoric. Jumping over the untold centuries we learn that the Greeks used one name, the Romans often two; also, that surnames are only about a thousand years old in Christendom. The Normans had adopted family names before their invasion of the isle of Britain. These names were taken from places, trades, personalities, etc. They introduced this custom into England. The name of every village in Normandy is said to have been brought to and perpetuated in England by 1200 as the surname of some Norman family. "Every town, village, and hamlet in England hath afforded names to families." These are the "territorial" surnames and generally found prefixed with the prepositions "de" or "del," before the 16th century. Other surnames were suggested to the mind of man from every conceivable source, serious or trivial, "from the highest things celestial to the lowest things terrestrial," from "Qualities of the Minde" and "Habitudes of the Body,"—from animals, nicknames, old christian names, vocations, nationalities, etc. An authority says: "Names were significant in their first application to individuals." We have shown how susceptible was the word *bliss* of a personal application. Bliss was a state of mind.

There once was in a certain place a certain man. He lived

between the years 1150 and 1250. This man had that blissful state of mind. It was his predominant trait, his chief characteristic, in fact, his personality. The outward evidences of that state were sufficiently marked to cause this man to be nicknamed *Bliss*. Bliss was a nickname originally. This is not a theory. It is only one of hundreds of facts as to the similar origin of hundreds of surnames that were descriptive of some peculiarity, trait, habit, weakness, ability, feature of the appearance, gait, manner, attitude, dress, speech of men. Indeed, Bliss was a happy nickname. Think of some of the other nicknames that became family names, all of the following being actual specimens, some still surviving:—

Lie-a-bed	le Beste (beast)	Starkie
Go-to-bed	le Hogg	Crumpe (crooked)
Bubblejaw	Pay-body	Doo-little
Barebones	le Wolfe	Terry (tearful one)
Half-naked	Sly	Stunt (a fool)
Toogood	Barrett (cunning)	Kennard (you dog!)
Trash	Gubbins (refuse of fish)	Sweetapple
Brimcan	Scrape-skin	Go-and-see
Metcalf	John of the Gutter	

Some of these unfortunates, doubtless, were so dubbed by their overlords, their Norman superiors, or the Saxons and Danish descendants who held land directly of the Normans. Likely enough the first man or youth nicknamed Bliss had been called by some other name, as also his brothers and their father,—each known by a different name, like so many colors on a coat. Bliss was the name that stuck to this particular son, and not to any one else of his generation. We may now, for convenience, call him John Bliss and as living *circa* 1200. Some other name had not stuck, or been inherited, because surnames in general had not become a fixed inheritance in England before the time of this John Bliss; in some cases they did not so become until later. Surnames did not crystallize and set until the Norman influence had changed the custom of the Saxons and Danes (who, taken together, are more properly called the English). Considering what we know to have been the social status of this John Bliss, his surname scarcely could have been adopted until the second or third generation of the Norman period. Prior to this Norman influence men in England were known each by one christian name only. These names were not new creations, but old Saxon, Danish, Anglian, or other christian names mostly—such as:—

Egfrith	Offa	Hasebert	Wiun
Siward	Cnut	Edwin	Ranulph
Utreð	Cuthbert	Alfred	Penda
Sweyn	Osbert	Harold	Hugh
Ralph	Ulf	Egbert	Athelstan

And the name Bliss stuck to this man not altogether because it represented his nature, but the more especially that right at the time when he was being so called the Norman vogue of fixed surnames arrived in his village. This innovation caught the fancy of the people; it became the fashion. So it was that the nickname of Bliss became fastened where it had so well fitted. The father of this man, if he adopted a surname at all, did one of four things—(1) if he was a landlord he took the name of his land for his surname; (2) if he owned no land he would have been called after his trade, viz.:—

le Carpenter	le Weaver	le Cartwright	le Cornmonger
le Cook	le Walkere	le Tucker	le Blakesmith
le Stonehewer	le Shepherd	le Clerk	le Miller
le Tinker	le Fisher	le Arrowsmith	le Fuller
le Wainwright	le Wodhyewere	le Baker	le Butcher

or (3) after the location of his home, viz.:—

at Hill	at Wick	Ridgeway	at Nash
at Water	Marsh	del Kyrke	Byendebruk (behind
atte Noke	by the Wode	atte Venne	the brook)
Underhill	in the Hurne (corner)	Waure	at Wood
at Chyrch	Uphull (uphill)	de la Ware	Bywater

or (4) assumed his father's christian name prefixing it with his own christian name. The latter was the most probable, though it need not be considered that he departed at all from the older custom of a christian name only, unless he owned land. Now the brothers of this first John Bliss (if he had any) acted upon any one, except the last of these four same principles applying to their father that best suited their respective personalities or situations in life. An eldest son and heir of a landowner would have had the father's territorial surname. A son who by purchase or marriage acquired and resided upon land elsewhere would then have taken the name of such land for his surname, prefixing it with the preposition "de" or "del"; otherwise he assumed his father's christian name as a surname, prefixing it with his own christian name. The latter is the most probable as regards a man of small means who was not a

landowner or tradesman, if he departed at all from the older custom of one baptismal name only. A brother of our first John Bliss would not have been a Bliss at all. The brother would have been governed by any one of the four alternatives stated, that applied to his father, that best suited this son's personality or situation in life. An eldest son and heir of a landowner would have the father's territorial surname, or adopted one after the land he owned, for the want of such an inheritance. A son who, by purchase or marriage, acquired and resided upon land elsewhere assumed the name of such land or locality, for actual example:—

Year 1200: "Thomas de Hopu [Hoppen] fil Thomas de Wetewede" [Wetwood].—From the Cartulary of the Priory of Nostell, a Latin MS. of the 12th century on exhibition in the British Museum.

A son who succeeded to the father's business or trade succeeded, as well, to the father's surname taken from that trade. If the father had not adopted this new fashion the son would have done so. A son who inherited neither land nor vocation, if he remained in or near his home town, would have borne a surname from any trade that he became settled in, or simply been known as John fil Henry and so become the progenitor of a Henry family. If he removed to another part of the country he was more liable to be nicknamed there or to be called John le Alien (one of the two origins of Allen) as an alien even in his own country. The writer has met with original records wherein men removing from one county into another were described as "aliens" in their new abodes; also an instance in a proceeding in chancery of a witness in Yorkshire who was named as "a foreigner from the far-off county of Somerset"; while in 1908 an aged Englishman, of the southern part, removed a little more than a hundred miles northward, but returned suddenly, and upon being asked why he did not stay there replied, "Old England is good enough for me," imagining that he had been out of England.

We now have noted how the custom of brothers assuming each a different surname destroyed all evidence of their relationship, so far as their surnames would show. Their descendants becoming confirmed, each to the different surname of his father, many families thus became lost, forever, to later identity with each other of their kin. The records of the thirteenth century contain hundreds of instances of this fact, and the Bliss family was no exception to this working. Many surnames soon became extinct altogether under this

practice. It will be shown, shortly, how very slowly the Bliss family developed in its first two hundred years. We need not now define how several complicated conditions of human existence afforded other sorts of family names. Nor need we refer to the results issuing from the condition of slavery, or bondage, in which so many of the people of England were unfortunately enmeshed in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, and out of which they did not all wholly emerge, as freemen, until about the year 1550.

Where did this John Bliss live? He lived in the southern midlands, near to the heart of the old Mercian kingdom. This section of England comprises what are now the counties of Bedford, Buckingham, Northampton, Warwick, Leicester, and their borders. To the eastward lay the kingdom of East Anglia, the home of the earlier East Angles, embracing the counties of Norfolk, Suffolk, and parts of Cambridge and Essex.

And what was John Bliss's social station in life? The very nature of the surname itself gives some light on the question. As to the position in the social scale of this first John Bliss, it was not high. No living Bliss would hardly fancy it, and, if much alive, would soon work up out of it in a way that was not possible for a man to do in the thirteenth century. This fact of such a status is proven by the evidence that Bliss is not a territorial or commercial surname. In all fairness to the first man, and to all subsequent men who have borne the honored name of Bliss, it may be truly said, (1) that the first Bliss owned no land; (2) that he owned no important business; (3) that he was not a skilled man in any important craft. What was he? He was simply a man who sold his labor. And for his labor he received no money; at the best it was merely for the use of a cottage and a bit of land around it that he labored. That fact may seem singular to the live man of to-day; but in this connection be it remembered that before the year 1300 two thirds of the population of England were serfs, in a state of serfdom. Also it should be understood, at this moment, that as did the Romans after the year 43, so did the Saxons in the sixth century conquer and place into a form of bondage such of the people as they, in the little mercy that they had, had spared the lives of; while in turn, in the year 787 and thrice afterwards (lastly in 1002) came the Danes repeating something of the same kind, and that then, finally, the descendants of these same Saxons, Angles, and Danes were conquered by the Normans after 1066, the titles to their lands taken from them, and they themselves reduced to the status of tenants, sub-tenants,

and servants,—the majority of them, with the descendants of them, so remaining in a state of subserviency throughout the period of Norman rule in England.

It was not human nature for a man to take or to receive, particularly when surnames were “coming on,” a name that represented him as being beneath his station; nor could he well have assumed a name that would have exalted him, apparently. If our first Bliss ancestor had been a man of better fortune in life than we have above indicated he could and would have had something better than a nickname to show for it, however apt the nickname might have been. And however pleasing the name may appear to-day it is certain that, when first bestowed and confirmed, it lacked its present dignity. Landlords took names that denoted their lordship and dominion over a manor, village, or town. Small landowners did the same with reference to the names of their farms, plots, closes, houses, or the sites or peculiarity thereof. Tradesmen proudly assumed the names of their calling, and craftsmen the names of their craft. No one such as these would condescend to have a surname that described a peculiarity of his personality. In the order stated, these vocations show the order of social importance of their bearers that was most arbitrarily in force in the period of which we write. Thus the meaning of the surname of Bliss explains the status of its first bearer, and we shall soon prove by actual records of the thirteenth century that the foregoing conception is correct. None-the-less, of all the thousands of so-called personal surnames that of Bliss is, perhaps, the very choicest, as we now behold it. As to the singular appropriateness and felicity of this name, we are reminded of a passage in the *Dictionary of National Biography* referring to Philip Bliss, D.C.L. (1787-1856), Registrar of Oxford University:—

“the sweetness of his disposition and the courtesy of his manners were the delight of all with whom he came in contact.”

As much may be said of the Bliss to whom this book is dedicated and of many a living Bliss doubtless. How much the more may we then believe that our first Bliss ancestor, lowly as was his earthly seat, yet was one of the happiest of men! He may have seen and felt “infinite riches in little room.” Perchance he might have asked:—

“Hath not old custom made this life more sweet
Than that of painted pomp? Are not these woods
More free from peril than the envious court?

:

And this our life, exempt from public haunts,
Finds tongues in trees, books in the running brooks,
Sermons in stones, and good in everything."

Were surnames just coming into use to-day what a motley
lot might arise, such as—

Peter the Grafter
John the Muckraker
James the Lobbyist

Henry of Podunk
Richard de la Bowery
Thomas Tight-wad

Another point: Bliss was not an early adoption among surnames. The leaders in the movement for the introduction of surnames were the people in power. The great landowners, the families of the military men, to whom William I had given, as the spoils of war and for a continuance of fealty to him, the large possessions confiscated from the English, preserved their Continental territorial names. The lesser men of Norman extraction, who came over the channel in quilted frocks with the dark wooden bow of foot-soldiers, bearing such names as "Guillaume le Charretier," "Hugues le Tailleur," "Guillaume le Tambour," etc., often willingly assumed the names of whatever real estate they were allowed to lay hands on and with pride therein. The despoiled English owners and tenants continuing as subjects, often on the very estates that they, or their fathers, formerly had held, pleased their superiors by adorning themselves with whatever of plumage they could marshal, after the Norman fashion, in the way of nomenclature.

The district in which our first Bliss ancestors lived was a region that held out against the Normans, for some years, before succumbing to superior force. This fact, together with the smallness of the villages, the isolation of the little settlements, the difficulties of travel, the lack of education in small places, and the native simplicity and position of the first man Bliss compels the placing of the date of the origin of our surname after, rather than before, the year 1200. We must thus allow sufficient time for the decease of those whose hatred of everything Norman must have been engendered by their losses; and also to give time for the birth and growth of another generation or two under the blessings that the superior intelligence and advancement of the leading Normans eventually yielded in England.

The Race from Which Sprang the First Blisse

The next great consideration is that of the race to which belonged the first Bliss who lived in the thirteenth century. His race was the Teutonic. There can be no question as to that. The blood we will consider as that of one of the nations comprised within the Teutonic race. Saxon, Angle, Jute, and Dane—these four were Teutonic; also the Norwegians were Teutonic. The Angles were closely allied to the Saxons on the Continent. We dismiss the Norman altogether. The status of the first Bliss and of his immediate descendants, his name itself, the date and the place of its origin, show that he was of the conquered, not from the conquering Normans. Laying aside as too lengthy a subject for our present consideration the modern assertion of a French author, that there is no such thing as race, that it is a modern invention, a dream of idle minds, that the very word "race" did not exist until the seventeenth century, that the differences so long existing between the various human species are the result of climate, environment, etc., that every one of the so-called racial stocks is in an intricate blend, a hopeless cross-breed, and that all are alike without a "pure blood" on the earth,—we can surely believe that the Teutonic people of northern Europe descended from the Aryan people of central Asia. As to the blood, the great majority of the population of England is understood to have been of Saxon blood up to the invasion of the Normans. The Saxons had long mastered the most of England before the Danes intervened. The Danes settled in England during two periods, around 870 and then from 980 to 1016. In 870 it was a Danish army that arrived and busied itself for many years fighting the Saxons. The Danish blood is understood to have become amalgamated with that of the Angles in that eastern part of England called East Anglia, not far from the southwestern borders of which the Bliss family first appears in English history. This locality suggests a possibility of the Blisses, prior to the origin of their name, having been of Danish or Anglian blood. Naturally we are prejudiced against the Danes because of their characteristics and their paganism. Who and what were the Danes? Briefly, they were "the Northmen" of ancient Denmark. They are described in the old chronicles as tall, well-built men, of fierceness in war and hardihood upon the sea, of bright rather than fair complexion, reddish rather than yellow hair, and of dull grayish rather than clear blue eyes. For a thousand years after Christ they held to the old religion

of northern Europe, regarding Christians as effeminate in mind and body. They had little respect for "a God that would not fight." Their noblest belief was to die by the sword or at sea. An historian calls them "heathen pirates." Grant Allen says that the Danes completely undid the work of the civilized Romans in England and "threw back the north into primitive barbarism and perhaps established the political and social supremacy of the south of England for nearly ten centuries." The south was under a Saxon government. Alfred the Great ("the purest, grandest, most heroic soul that ever sprang from our race") could not drive the Danes out; but the coming of the Normans soon ended the power of the dreaded Dane and gave England the chance to advance, which it has continued to do up to the present generation. And since that Norman victory, in the year 1066, no successful warrior has set hostile foot upon the Isle of Britain, and no nation, excepting the American and that of Joan of Arc, has wholly defeated its people in a war.

It is evidence against the Bliss blood having been Danish that the Danish language was somewhat different from the Saxon; and it is clear that *bliss* is a Saxon word; also that the Danes, while eventually accepting Christianity, had applied their language where they had the power to remain as masters. They renamed hundreds of places, etc., and these places still bear their Danish names. Between the last of the Danish invasions, 1016, and the originating of the surname of Bliss, *circa* 1200, about two hundred years elapsed. This would allow for some admixture of the blood of Saxon and Danish stocks. Thus, while we cannot prove that the blood was purely all Saxon, it has been made plain that the family name was Saxon. We can only hold fast to that.

And who and what were the Saxons? Everybody is supposed to know that. Perhaps few Blisses have stopped in their daily tasks, of late, to again look back at the Saxons. Now that it may be properly assumed, at least, that every Bliss descendant is more fully Saxon than many of his neighbors, a brief word upon the Saxon may not be amiss, particularly as this race, or blood, has dominated the world for the past century, controls one third of the earth's people and directly, or indirectly, owns one fourth of all the land on the globe, to say nothing of actually ruling the seas.

The Saxons, wrote Tacitus, "are the finest of all the German tribes, and strive more than the rest to found their greatness upon equality," . . . "a passionless, firm and quiet people, they live a solitary life, and do not stir up wars nor harass the country

by plunder and theft." Another writes modernly: "They were an agricultural people of the peasant class, independent farmers who acknowledged no chief, no king, and were governed by the Witenagemot, or the Meeting of the Wise Men. They came to England from Northwestern Germany because they wanted land. They were landowners with equal rights." In the fifth and sixth centuries the Saxon entered Britain as a conquerer and to remain. He swept everything before him. The Celtic tribes and the savage Picts and Scots, who had been preying upon the Celts since the return of the Roman army to Rome in 401, were no match for him. The Saxons wiped out everything Celtic and everything Roman—people, language, customs, and ideas perishing; only a few Roman place-names survived. A remnant of the Celts escaped to what is now Wales, and the modern Welsh are their descendants. "A more fearful blow never fell upon any nation than the landing of the Angles and Saxons was to the Celts of Britain." Of course, six hundred years after Christ, these Saxons had not embraced Christianity.

George Blisse and the two Thomas Blisses, emigrants to America *circa* 1638, could only have had possibly in their veins, besides Saxon blood, something of Danish, Norman, or a bit of Dutch or Flemish. The last two are very unlikely additions; the first two are possible as coming through marriages made by Blisses. Bliss as Bliss remained till their time, as did the surname, substantially Saxon. The marriages made since then in America will tell the story up to the here-and-now. This narration now has come to the important point of the existing legal evidence of the full names, occupations, places of residence, etc., of the actual persons surnamed Blisse who lived in the thirteenth century.

The First Blisse of Record in Human History

Six times since 1095 had Christian Europe sent its armies to wrest the "Holy Land" from the Saracens, and six times had it failed. In the year 1270 Prince Edward of England, the son of Henry III, with a small army of English knights and their attendants joined in the "Seventh Crusade," under Louis IX of France; but the English prince did nothing except to massacre the defenseless inhabitants of Nazareth.

"All the roads which lead to the Holy City are deluged with blood and present nothing but the scattered spoils and wrecks of empire."

The shrines of the birth of Christianity still remain in the custody of the Moslem. Perhaps they so remain as hostages silently proclaiming to Christendom that the so-called "heathen" have rights and religions which Christians should be bound to respect. And through all these nineteen centuries the Mussulman has preserved, almost inviolate, those same shrines of Christianity; while to-day, at his behest, the Christian tourist pays the shilling to enter the sacred inclosures and the Moslem, alone, bares his feet when he enters the same inclosures. The Christian, alone, bares his head.

It will never be known whether any Bliss was summoned, by his manorial lord, to attend him on any of the seven crusades; but the absence of Prince Edward in 1270 gave rise to a certain event, in England, which now enables us to peep right into the cottages of two John Blisses, who were certainly at home in the years 1272 and 1273. This event was an official inquiry ordered by Edward I on his return from Palestine, after the death of his father, Henry III. He had returned from his ill-starred adventure with the stains of the blood of the inoffensive Nazarene women and children upon his weapons, only to find that his own house needed putting in order. The nature of this inquiry was to ascertain the exact state of the royal demesnes and of the rights and revenues of the Crown, many of which, during the previous turbulent reign, had been usurped by the clergy and laity. A jury was summoned in each hundred of the realm to ascertain the facts and report thereon under oath. [A "hundred" is one of the several divisions of a county, the same as a ward is a division of a city.] The fundamental title to land was vested in the king; much land was held *in capite*

(of the king) by fealty only. Vast tracts were held direct of the Crown on a system of rental for allegiance, money, or both. This great sweeping inquiry all over England into the minute particulars of the tenure of land, and the specification of the very names of the baronial holders, of the lords of the manors, and of the actual tillers of the soil, reveals the names of but two Blisses. This proves what has been hereinbefore observed, i. e., that the family developed slowly, being very small in the numbers of its members in 1272. In fact, it had just about perpetuated itself and no more, in its first few generations since acquiring a surname. It is doubtful if there were, in 1272, more than about a dozen Blisses alive, men, women, and children together. Here is what the juries say in this aforesaid great inquiry for the hundred of Bunstone in the county of Buckingham and the hundred of Northstowe in Cambridgeshire:—

(Translations from the Contracted Latin.)

County of Buckingham, [Bunstone Hundred] [Parish of] Tyringham with Filgrave. John Blisse [and twenty others] each of them holds 6 acres and one rood, and the service of each of them is worth yearly in all services and aids 5 shillings, and they pay redemption of blood.

County Cambridge, [Hundred of North Stowe] [Town of Waterbeche]. John Blisse holds one messuage and pays yearly 3 shillings 3 pence [with Geoffrey the merchant and Ralph the merchant] and that messuage contains 3 roods of land.

These two brief paragraphs are a revelation; they reveal the social position of the two John Blisses. Through these few words alone the understanding mind penetrates the mists of antiquity and perceives, practically, the whole story of the lives of each of these two men. The cottage, low, thatched, and small—

"The little smiling cottage! where at eve
He met his rosy children at the door,
Prattling their welcomes, and his honest wife,"

the meagre acres of rented ground, the long day of toil in the fields, the cow or two, with some poultry, the humble, hardy villagers, the subservience in all things to the lord of the manor who (in a way) owned the land, and to whom John Blisse had sworn fealty and obedience for all of his mortal days; the narrow, simple, uneventful life of the hamlet of a score or so of cottages, clustered close together as if in pathetic sympathy over their very isolation and at the arbitrariness of a world that knew them not, a world that

cared for them only when it taxed or needed them,—this and much more is plainly read in the first item above quoted. There is no other interpretation of the record. This picture is perfect. Simple though John Blisse was, we accord him the honor of the poet's praise:—

"Whose armour is his honest thought
And simple truth his utmost skill."

And here we will show, for that same year of 1272, the record of all the tenants of the same manor of Tyringham, thus giving a perfect representation of the feudal system of land tenure. The record shows (1) that the title to all the land in Tyringham was vested in the king [Edward I] by right of the conquest of England by William I in 1066; (2) that king Edward I allowed Roger de Somery (a "noble" Norman descendant) to hold the land for practically fealty only; (3) that Roger de Tyringham was the actual resident lord of the manor by virtue of an agreement made by him with Roger de Somery, to whom he paid 6s. 8d. yearly for the same, and a further sum annually (scutage) to be relieved from military duty at the summons of "the man higher up"—the non-resident Roger de Somery; the latter, likewise, let out other manors that he held of the king, by the king's favor; (4) that there were six tenants who ranked above John Blisse in the value of their allotments; (5) that there were twenty other men whose positions were exactly the same as John Blisse's; (6) that ten tenants held inferior positions, and, paying nothing for redemption of blood, their sons were bondsmen (a species of slaves) to the lord of the manor, while beneath all these were such mere laborers (slaves), holding nothing, as these sub-tenants may have required to work for them; (7) and that John de Tyringham, lord of the manor, reaped a gross income (on the face of the record) from his tenants of 179s. 8d. annually, on land for which he paid only 6s. 8d., though he had to keep the cottages in a habitable condition, while in addition to this income he had the product of the 120 acres which he retained for his own use, to which he summoned the tenants and his bondsmen to do his work thereon. Such was the burden that was upon the actual tillers of the soil. A lesser burden was upon thousands who fled from it to America in the 17th century. Something of a burden in the way of a lack of opportunity is yet upon the small farmer in England and Ireland, and from it many men still go yearly to purchase land in central and western North

America, and almost anywhere else on the third planet. It is the burden of the system of landlordism—"the land monopoly." There in Tyingham, by present reckoning, Roger de Tyingham's rent-roll alone was over £200 annually, a large sum in 1272.

(Facsimile of the Hundred Roll of 1272 for Tyingham, naming John Blisse as the first name in the ninth line.)

[Facsimile of the Hundred Roll of 1272 for Tyingham, showing Latin text in a medieval script. The text is written in a single column and is highly stylized, typical of medieval legal documents. The ninth line contains the name "John Blisse" (John Blisse).]

Hundred Roll, 1272 (translation from the Latin): Tyrengham with Philegrave. Roger son of John de Tyrengham holds all the manor of Tyrengham entire with the advowson of the church in chief from Roger de Somery, and has there a water mill and free fishery, and renders to the said Roger yearly 6s. 8d., and gives him scutage when it runs. [Scutage was money to be freed from military service.] And the said Roger de Somery holds in chief [direct] of the lord the King, and it is of the Honour [a great baronial estate] of Newport Paynel. And the said Roger son of John has there in demesne 350 acres of land, whereof

230 acres are in villeinage [rented to villeins]. Of these [acres] Maud (who was wife of Henry the Reeve), Luke the Reeve, Alice Walraund, "Edecus" (who was wife of Henry Marmyun), William Algod, and Ralph Fresvile, each of them hold $12\frac{1}{2}$ acres, and the service of each of them is worth yearly in all services and aids 10s., and they give redemption of blood.

Hugh le Friend, Richard Kyn, John Kyn, Gyffard Reynold, John son of William le Paumer, John Ofan, Hugh le Ravenstone, William Marmium, John Blisse, William at Water, Stephen Maynard, Richard Aylwy, John Carter, William at Hill, Julian (who was wife of Reynold Ernald, "Bachelor"), Agnes at Hill, Simon de Yickel, Nigel Marmyun, William Agar, William son of Hugh, and William le Paumer, each of them holds 6 acres and one rood, and the service of each of them is worth yearly in all service and aids 5s., and they pay redemption of blood.

The church is endowed with $10\frac{1}{4}$ acres of land. Free tenants: Gyffard Bretun holds $6\frac{1}{4}$ acres freely and pays yearly to the said Roger 2s. 8d.

Barnabas son of Hugh de Kynebell,	$12\frac{1}{2}$ acres, and pays 3s.
Hugh Carter,	$6\frac{1}{4}$ acres, and pays 4s.
John de Kynbell,	$9\frac{3}{8}$ acres, and pays 6s. 8d.
Reynold de Mydelton,	$6\frac{1}{4}$ acres, and pays 4s. 4d.
Agnes Hamundeys,	1 messuage and 3 acres, and pays 15d.
Elias the sergeant,	$3\frac{1}{2}$ acres, and pays 4s.
John son of John the Clerk,	$6\frac{1}{4}$ acres, and pays 2s.
William de Eltisdun,	$12\frac{1}{2}$ acres, and 1 lb. of cummin [caraway]

[The rest of the entry relates to Filegrave, which was William Roland's, and he holds it of the Abbot of Lavendon, etc.]

Tyringham is close to the river Ouse, and some forty-five miles down the river between the Ouse and the Cam lies Waterbeach. The John Blisse of Waterbeach did not rent any land for farming purposes. His position was inferior to that of his Tyringham namesake. He was probably engaged in trade there or sold his labor. It is judged that he had gone down the river from Buckinghamshire; no Blissés are found at Waterbeach at any time afterwards. This man is in the position to be considered as a son of John Blisse of Tyringham.

John Blisse of Tyringham is in the exact time and place to have been the son, or the grandson, of the first man who was nicknamed Blisse, and who thus became, as aforesaid, the first bearer of the surname of Blisse and the founder of the Blisse family on the third planet. John Blisse of Tyringham is now a man more marked than ever he was in his own time or within his own ken. He is the known patriarch of our family. If any spirit of him has cognizance

of the course of his own blood these centuries since, that spirit, whatever was its earthly travail, now knows that it was not created in the man in vain. Whatever exists of the spirit of John Blisse of Tyringham is now on an equality with that of every other man of his time. He is more to us now than any other man in the world of his generation. This record of the Hundred Rolls of 1272-3 is the earliest record extant of the surname of Bliss. In all probability it is the first national record ever made of any Bliss. No earlier record will ever be found. The earlier pipe rolls, charters, close rolls, chronicles, fines, etc., and the Domesday Book are all without the name of Bliss. Here we are, therefore, at the very gate of entrance of our family, as a family, into the arena of the activities of this world! Here we see its cradle, the shrine of its nativity; and the mold in which the name was cast was nearly as humble as "the manger of Bethlehem." John Blisse of Tyringham, as nature goes, should have seen, spoken with, and remembered his father, or grandfather, the man to whom the nickname of Bliss first stuck. This also gives us three logical issues: (1) that the social position of the first Bliss was similar to that of John Blisse of Tyringham; (2) that the occupations of these two men were akin, both small farmers on rented land, both subject to the will and pleasure of the lord of the manor, both enjoying but a faint semblance of a political existence; (3) that the places of residence of both men were near together if not *actually in the same village or literally under the same roof*.

The time of the origin of the surname of Bliss (*circa* 1200) has already been seen. Now the region of that origin is manifest from the Hundred Rolls. Fairly and reasonably it may be said that the surname of Bliss originated almost in the heart of the old kingdom of Mercia, around the narrow northern apex of the shire of Buckingham, where the counties of Northampton (in which we shall yet tarry long o'er the Bliss records) and Bedford come close together, and between the boroughs of Bedford and Northampton, about a dozen miles from each. Here the name of Bliss was born, and here too thousands who have borne it. Here, roundabout, the name and blood of Bliss have continued for seven hundred years. Here, near-by, Blissés live to-day.

"Here they have lived for a thousand years,
And a thousand years they'll bide."

And from hereabouts "the ancient seed on younger soil let fall"
became transplanted in America.

The Status of John Blisse of Tyingham, 1272

The Saxon made Mercia (the Midlands) about the year 600; the Dane took it from him a few centuries later; then the Norman deposed the Dane in the eleventh century. The Bliss name is Saxon; the Bliss blood was Saxon, or possibly perhaps, mixed with Danish; and the Blisses of the thirteenth century were villeins, as the Hundred Rolls prove. The attention of the reader is particularly invited to an explanation of this most important word "villein," more modernly written "villain"; also three explanations: (1) of how John Blisse of Tyingham, 1272, held "6 acres and 1 rood"; (2) the meaning of the words "service," "aids"; (3) especially the significance of the words in the Hundred Rolls "redemption of blood." To assist in making these valuable points not only clear but interesting as well to the reader let us note, briefly, the organization of society in the thirteenth century—the classes of the arbitrary caste-system that the absolute monarchy had established in England, and which caste-system seems to be the inevitable accompaniment, the cherished notion, of monarchies anyway, though there is nothing in the New Testament to support such an idea, or, as well, that absurdity, "the divine right of kings."

Villein (sometimes *villain*), pronounced vil'ān, meant in feudal days in England a farm-servant, serf, peasant; the Latin *villa* meant a farm. The *Century Dictionary* describes a villein rather unpleasantly, considering that the villeins formed the great majority of the inhabitants of England before the fifteenth century:—

"Villein, a member of . . . a class of unfree persons during the prevalence of the feudal system; a feudal serf. In respect to their lords . . . the villains had no rights, except that the lord might not kill or maim them, or attack the females; they could acquire or hold no property against their lord's will; they were obliged to perform all the menial services he demanded; and the cottages and plots of land they occupied were held merely at his will. In respect, however, of other persons besides their lord they had the rights and privileges of freemen. . . . They were in view of the law annexed to the soil (*adscripti* or *adscriptitii glebæ*), belonging to a manor as fixtures, passing with it when it was conveyed or inherited, and they could not be sold or transferred as persons separate from the land.

"'Villain? by my blood,
I am as free-born as your Venice duke!'"

Maine's *Early Law and Custom*, p. 305, states:—

"The *villeins* owe to the lord all sorts of dues and services, personal labour, among others, on the lands which form his domain; they may not leave the Manor without his permission; no one of them can succeed to the land of another without his assent; and the legal theory even is that the movable property of the *villein* belongs to the lord. Yet it may confidently be laid down that, in the light of modern research, none of these disadvantages prove an absolutely servile status, and that all may be explained without reference to it."

Freeman's *Norman Conquest*, v. 320, says:—

"The *villain* was not a slave, but a freeman minus the very important rights of his lord."

Bacon asks:—

"Pour the blood of the *villain* in one basin, and the blood of the gentleman in another, what difference shall here be proved?"

Freeman again says:—

"While the churl sank to the state of *villainage*, the slave rose to it."

.....
"It frequently happened that lands held in villeinage descended in uninterrupted succession from father to son until at length the occupiers or villeins became entitled by prescription or custom to hold their lands against the lords so long as they performed the required services." [Stubbs. *Constitutional History*, 264.]

The owners of land and the tillers of it in the Norman times as well as in the late Saxon period bore a relation to each other similar to that existing to-day between the landlords and serfs or peasants of Russia. The Norman Conquest changed the ownership of the land but retained and improved the earlier system. Below the villein were what the Anglo-Saxons called the "theowes," "esnes," and "thralls"—later called "servi" by the Normans—and all of these last in absolute slavery. (The surname of Thrall was first borne by a slave.)

It is true that there existed a species of serfdom, or villeinage, upon the villein, and that his sons were claimed, for a certain number of years, as the lord's bondmen, unless their fathers paid for that aforesaid redemption of blood (that we are happy to learn was paid by John Blisse of Tyringham), in order to free them from such claims, and that some lords believed in their legal right to sell their bondmen as slaves, and that some cruel lords were "flayers of rustics."

The reason that an Englishman then so looked upon his less fortunate countrymen was because he could do so; the church did the same thing; the New Testament was a closed book to the people, untranslated, unprinted, and unwritten in English; kept chained up in the churches; opened only by a priest. It was sacrilege for any other to touch the book, and the Bible was only read from in Latin, or chanted in monotone, by a priest. His words the people did not understand, for but few of them could read or write in any language.

We do not hesitate to express the opinion, after long investigation into American foundations in England, that the majority of the early emigrants to New England were descendants of villeins who prayed that the great revolt of the peasants, in 1377-81, would be successful and so free them from lack of opportunity. One has only to turn the pages of a good history of England to read how the promises of enfranchisement and liberty, made by the king and the "nobility" to the people, were broken, and how the church joined the state in keeping the people down for a hundred and fifty years longer. It was a Bishop of Norwich who turned upon the peasants an army, and the king, who promised relief in the hour of his danger, set upon the poor a force of 40,000 armed men, which "spread terror by the ruthlessness of its executions." The young king might have kept his promises, but the landlords, says Green, "claimed the serfs as their goods and that the king could not take their goods from them, but by their own consent, 'and this consent,' they ended, 'we have never given, and never will give, were we all to die in one day.'"

Who were these oppressors of their fellow-men, these masters of the Saxon descendants who through the hard fortunes of war resulting from the Norman conquest and confiscation of England had become reduced to a condition of servitude upon the lands that their Saxon forbears had owned? They were chiefly men of Norman descent, whose titles to property in England rested upon the mere confiscation, from the Saxons, by force of arms. Some one has called them:—

"God's pampered people, whom
Debauched with ease,
No king could govern nor
No God could please."

The Saxon Blisses were robbed of their lands, privileges, and opportunities; and their descendants were deprived thereof for over

two hundred years. Are they not, therefore, entitled to our sympathy, instead of our disdain?

The author has been asked to omit explanations of records revealing the unfortunate circumstances of some of the mediaeval Blisses; but he feels that such a method of writing family history has been sufficiently indulged in heretofore. Moreover, such a suggestion is hardly commendable in view of the fact that in an age when illegitimacy was notoriously widespread, when the illegitimate descendants of crowned and coroneted heads were "too numerous to be mentioned," *no record of such a stain upon any Bliss can be found in four hundred years of English Bliss history*. What titular honor exceeds that? What worldly wealth can outweigh it? When "God sifted four kingdoms wherewith to find the seed to plant a new republic," He chose of titled and Midasian personages practically none.

Still the villein had some of the rights of a freeman. He had a right to bear arms. He had a right, though generally not the means, to acquire property. If an injury was inflicted upon him the compensation appointed by law was paid to him or to his family, and not to the lord. He was a legal witness. He could sue and be sued. He was summoned to be a juror in the lord's court and fined if he failed to appear. He was "law-worthy," a "lawful man," as the old phrase ran. While the township or manor in which he lived was a domain, or part of a domain belonging to a powerful Englishman, who held it of the king by fealty, the town or manor had its reeve, its elective chief officer and bailiff; the free inhabitants chose from among their number four good and lawful men who together with the reeve represented the township in the judicial courts of the hundred and shire. Each manor had its local court, perfected by the Normans from the old "village folk-moot," under the lord for the trial of minor causes, for the determining of all the various affairs of rentals, heriot, etc., arising between the lord and the tenantry, and for the levying of fines for infractions of the ordinances of the town or manor. Each manorial lord was simply a little constitutional monarch, and the people were his subjects. The manor was a petty state. The order and system that prevailed established a regularity, a custom, that gave quietness and force to this order of things. The lord's capital was the land and the houses; labor was represented by the occupants of these dwellings. The modern relations of capital and labor are more troublesome because labor has a chance to enforce its demands. The mediaeval villein had no such chance.

Properly enough, the lord of a manor rightfully demanded a rent, or some service, from each tenant for admitting the tenant to residency upon the manor, and for allowing him the use of some land and the occupancy of a cottage; but he demanded more. He exacted the oath of "fealty." He assumed the position of the State in his dealings with tenants. This custom was continued into the seventeenth century. The rolls of the manorial courts repeatedly, year after year, contain the words "does fealty and is admitted tenant." "In addition to the oath of fealty the free tenant was called upon to do homage to his lord; humbly kneeling and holding up his hands together between those of his lord, he professed that '*he did become his man, from that day forth, of life and limb and earthly honour.*'"* The glory of this is all in the long patience and loyalty of the peasant. We may charge him with want of spirit, but his fortitude, forbearance, and enduring virtue place him, in our present esteem, above the moral worth, or the exploits, of his then master. (Americans who dote on old manorial landlords for ancestors and prefer to reject the tenant-farmer, who, by the way, represented the majority among the founders of America, will find "the terrible fidelity" of the poem *Pierce Ploughman* by Robert Longland, a truer mirror of old times in England than the verse of the aristocratic Chaucer.)

Many a man bound to a manor was dragged off to aid his lord in the wars that princes and kings, through the treachery and vain ambitions prevailing in those times, "seeking the bubble reputation at the cannon's mouth," were almost constantly making against a rival brother, sister, father, uncle, cousin, or other rival or monarch.

Poets, playwrights, and other dreamers, who build up glowing word-structures from themes suggested by these wars, may exalt the men, whose power was then absolute, as heroes, and while we may believe that many of them possessed personal prowess and courage, their motives were usually unworthy, if not always base; the wars were mostly for conquest or personal profit pure and simple; and these rulers and leaders drained the resources of their country, impoverished the lowly, had no great moral objects, and worked no general good to merit from the modern world a deserved commendation. The Blisses were just as liable to have been summoned to these wars as any other tenant, in the campaigns that embraced the battles of Bouvines (1214), Berwick (1216), Lincoln (1217),

* The Manor and Manorial Records.—N. J. HONE.

Taillebourg and Santes (1242), Lewes (1264), Evesham (1265), Wales (1282), Dunbar (1296), against Robert Bruce (1306), Bannockburn (1314), Boroughbridge (1322), Halidon Hill (1332), in France (1339), Crecy (1346), Poitiers (1356), Radcot Bridge (1387), Homildon Hill (1402), Shrewsbury (1403), Agincourt (1415), Meaux (1422), Crevant (1423), Verneuil (1424), Orleans, against Joan of Arc (1429), and in the Wars of the Roses that ravaged England through the Houses of York and Lancaster fighting for the possession of the English throne (1452-1485). From the thinness in numbers of the Blisses up to this period, as implied by the few records of them, it may be inferred that their apparent failure to multiply might have been due to their falling in war, pestilence, or famine, perhaps with war as the chief retarding influence. There was one pestilence that destroyed a half of the population. If there were many Blisses that the existing records do not reveal, then they lived in a most unfortunate condition of servitude wherein there was little or no occasion for their names to be mentioned in the general national records. Some local records, of course, are not now extant.

John Blisse of Tyringham, 1272, held the tenure of six acres for which he rendered in payment personal service of the value of 5s. per year, as has been seen. It was not until many years after his time that money was paid, in such cases, instead of labor rendered to the lords, and with the payment of money the tenants gained more freedom and in time often purchased their freedom outright, especially when the lords were short of money. It was splendid, it was glorious, while it lasted, that John Blisse of Tyringham paid for "redemption of blood," saving his children from bondage, and thus he "the little tyrant of his fields withstood," until he died, when one of his sons assumed the father's obligations to the lord.

The manor-rolls of Tyringham are not extant for the time of John Blisse, and the lay subsidies (parliamentary taxation) for the same period are also lost for Buckinghamshire, but the services that John Blisse rendered to Roger de Tyringham for the use of the cottage and land, which we have specified in the Hundred Rolls of 1272, are illustrated by the services rendered by one of his fellow-cottagers in the adjoining shire, though John Blisse had one acre more of land and paid (in services) double that of his villein compatriot, viz.:-

Year 1272, Hundred Rolls, II, p. 461. Cambridgeshire. (Translation.)

"In a sworn return made as to Stanton in this county, the jury return that (among others) Richard Lammasse holds in villenage in Stanton 5 acres of land

and meadow from Nicholas de Cheney, paying him 3s. yearly for the same. Also Richard will plough every Friday from Michelmas to Christmas one ridge, and each work is worth 1d. Item, he will drive to the lord's hall all the sheep he has from Michelmas to Christmas, value (of this service) unknown; Item, he will thresh at Michelmas in his lord's barn 1 trave of corn, worth $\frac{1}{2}$ d. Item, he will harrow for one day with one horse at the winter sowing, worth $\frac{1}{2}$ d. Item, at Christmas will give to his said lord one hen, worth 1d. Item, he will plough one ridge every Friday from the Feast of the Purification to Easter, each work worth 1d. Item, he will harrow for one day with one horse at Lent sowing, worth $\frac{1}{2}$ d., and at Easter he will give his lord 10 eggs, worth 1d. Item, he will plough one ridge every Friday from Hokeday to the Nativity of St. John the Baptist, and each work is worth 1d. Item, he will hoe the lord's corn for one day with one man, the work being worth $\frac{3}{4}$ d. Item, he will mow, turn, cock, and carry the lord's grass. Item, he will reap his lord's corn for four days with two men all day, food supplied on two days by the lord, and not supplied on two days, and on the food days each man will receive for his food bread worth $\frac{1}{2}$ d., and for his meal worth $\frac{1}{2}$ d., to wit, on one day fish and cheese without ale, and on the other day bread and meat and cheese with ale; and these works are worth 8d. Item, he will carry his lord's corn for one day, he himself with one of his associates, with one cart, receiving sufficient food from the lord, and this is worth 1d. Item, he will work when he may be called upon, provided he is able to return to his dinner. Item, in return for these works, he with his eleven associates [fellow tenants] will receive from the lord one quarter of corn and one sheep worth 12d., and half an acre of meadow called Denhalvaker."

Thus we see what our remote ancestors performed; how they were like the vast majority of their fellow-men in mediæval times. Thus it is seen that they were not the kings, earls, or lords as alleged in *The Bliss Genealogy* of 1881. Well it was for their descendants that they were as they were. Thus they are found "occupying the places their forefathers had formed for themselves, places gradually shaped by arbitrary circumstances rather than by system." Had any Bliss been the owner of land of the value of £20, in 1278, he would have been knighted; and had he so owned we should find the record of it, probably, in *Testa de Nevill*, the complete returns of such owners which are now preserved in the Record Office at London. John Blisse's grandfather was born with the *Magna Charta*, "The English man's personal Declaration of Independence" from the tyranny of his king, John. Our Tyringham worthy, doubtless, lived to see the statute of Mortmain prevent religious houses from getting, by their peculiar methods, much of that other half of the arable land of England, which we have already referred to. Also he may have lived till 1290 to see the usurious Jews banished from this country, in which they were never to set foot again for 350 years, and to 1295

to hear of the "first complete and model parliament of the three estates, i. e., one where clergy, nobility, and commonalty met according to regularly constituted form." The New Testament reminds us that he who serves is the greatest of all. Gray's *Elegy in a Country Churchyard* (perhaps the greatest poem in the English language) was sung in honor of such men as John Blisse! We may gaze upon the nameless mounds in Tyringham churchyard, but—

"No farther seek his merits to disclose,
Or draw his frailties from their dread abode,
(There they alike in trembling hope repose,)—
The Bosom of his Father and his God."

Tyringham in Buckinghamshire

"Woods, meadows, hamlets, farms,
Spires in the vale and towers upon the hills.

.
The pleasant lanes and hedgerows, and those homes
Which seemed the very dwellings of content
And peace and sunshine."

Such was Tyringham, at its best, if one looks not too deeply into the lives of the former dwellers within the simple cottages of stone that huddled about the parish church, with the manorial seat set apart and shrouded in its grove as are the lives of its occupants set apart and shrouded from the village folk by some semblance of the old ideas of caste which still prevail here as the "unwritten law." In 1400 the statutes forbade the child of any tiller of the soil to be apprenticed in a town. The landlords petitioned that no child of a bondman or bondwoman (villein) be allowed to go to school, or to enter the clergy. The universities were closed to all sons of villeins. To nail him to the spot on which he was born, there to dig until he died—that was the upper-man's scheme for those less fortunate than himself, "an insane method of repression." The ancient practice was quite the opposite of "a square deal." All this rather delayed the production in England of the "all-around man" so numerous in America. But nature has largely triumphed over the binding force of those old ideas, in England, as is demonstrated in the democracy of to-day.

Tyringham to-day is merely the well-kept countryside that abounds all about this part of England. Every acre of land is under cultivation, or furnishes food for countless sheep and cattle. The lord's demesne in the time of John Blisse comprised 120 acres, as has been seen. To-day the manor has increased to 3000 acres and is valued, with the manor-house, at about £400,000. The population has decreased, and the dwellings of the lowly but ever-hardy majority have largely disappeared from the immediate precincts of the church and the manor-house.

"Inexorably calm with silent pace,
Here Time has pass'd—but ruin marks his way."

The History and Antiquities of the County of Buckingham, by George Lipscomb, Esq., M.D., 1847, has this about Tyringham with Filgrave:—

"Situated about three miles north of Newport Pagnell, on the north bank of the River Ouse, which is a fine ornament to the demense of the Mansion House, this Parish, with Filgrave annexed, is bounded to the North, by Weston Underwood and Olney; on the East, by Emberton, Sherrington, and Lathbury; on the South, by Newport Pagnell; and on the West by Gayhurst."

"Before the Conquest (1066), Tyringham seems to have been divided into many small portions, which were subsequently united into two principal estates, that part of the Parish which was reckoned to belong to the Hundred of Bonestou, and probably comprised the western and northern portion, must have been contiguous to, and nearly enclosed by the estates of the Bishop of Constance; but Willis seems to have entertained an opinion, that Filgrave, which is not distinguished by name in the Norman Survey [of 1086], did in fact constitute, at that period, the estate surveyed as the lands of William Fitz Ausculf, in Tyringham, which in the Domesday Book are described as situated in Sigelai Hundred. The lands of the Bishop of Constance, whether in Tyringham, properly so-called, or in Filgrave, had been previously holden by two Thanes; one of them a tenant of Waltheof, the Earl, who had two hides [a hide was about as much land as could be tilled with one plough in a year—nominally, 120 acres], and half a virgate [a varying measure of land] for his Manor; and the other, who held the third part of a virgate only, not called a Manor, but which he, as well as the greater possessor, might alienate. Anschitill, who held of the Bishop two hides and a half, and the third part of a virgate, for one Manor, had therefore evidently united the divided portions of the Saxons; and at the time of the Survey [1086] his lands here were sufficient for four ploughs; three were kept in the demesnes [the lord's private grounds], and three villeins, with six bordars, [cottagers] had one plough. There were four servants, and the whole [annual] value estimated at 50s.; when he first held it, 20s.; and in the days of King Edward, 60s."

"The estate of Fitz Ausculf seems to have been much more extensive than that of the Bishop of Constance, and had likewise previously been holden in divided portions by five Thanes; Harold [the king] had three hides for a Manor; Estan, two for another Manor; Aliva, wife of Harold, one hide and a half, for a third Manor; Godwin, a Priest, had half a hide; and Godric, a man of Harold, one virgate; all of which were consolidated, and, after the Conquest, holden under William Fitz Ausculf, by Acard, as seven hides, and one virgate and a quarter, for his Manor; the land being sufficient for eight ploughs; three were employed in the demense, and five by nine villeins, with six bordars. [There is every likelihood that John Blisse of Tyringham, 1272, was a descendant of one of these nine villeins.] There were six servants, pasture for eight teams, woods for two hundred hogs, and twenty-six pence payments, for minute customs: altogether, estimated at £6, as it had been at £8, when he first held it, and the same in the time of King Edward [1272-1300]. The lands of the Bishop having been forfeited to the Crown by his rebellion; the tenure of his subfeudatory was probably transferred, before the reign of Henry II [1154-1189] to the family of Tyringham; for Giffard de Tyringham bestowed the Church here upon Tichford Priory in that reign; and held three Knights' fees [land then of the value of £60] here about 1165. It may be inferred, that he derived his descent from Achard, who, in the time of the Conqueror [1066] held Fitz Ausculf's Manor in Tyring-



THE OUSE RIVER AT TYRINGHAM CHURCH



THE PARISH CHURCH OF TYRINGHAM

ham, being the great-grandson of the aforesaid Achard. The estates of Fitz Ausculf are said to have passed to the Paganells and the family of Somery."

We have explained hereinbefore in the Hundred Rolls of 1273 how de Somery and Roger de Tyringham were overlords of our John Blisse. The Tyringham family, beginning with Achard (the aforesaid) of 1086, held Tyringham Manor without a break for over six hundred years. About the year seventeen hundred it passed, with a daughter, by her marriage to the Backwells, and later, by marriage, to the Praeds. The Tyringhams regained it modernly, but sold the manor a few years ago. Lipscomb says "the ancient Mansion of the family of Tyringham was a noble building of very elegant construction. It was taken down in 1792." The grand old mansion, "Gayhurst," just across the river from Tyringham, where lived the papist, Edward Digby, who was hanged, drawn, and quartered in 1606 for complicity in the Gunpowder Plot with Guy Fawkes and others, still invites the tourist. The home of the poet Cowper is a feature of Olney, which adjoins Tyringham on the north.

Walking from Newport Pagnell some two miles across the flat land in the shallow valley of the Ouse, on the high road that runs from Bedford to Northampton, we enter the Tyringham manorial park through an arched, stone gateway. Just beyond is the bent bow of the bridge over the Ouse. The water of this stream moves with that same subserviency to some power, that slow time-established order and confinement, which rests either lightly or heavily upon the ordinary citizen; still further like the English countryman it is seldom agitated, seldom overflowing (with hospitality), seldom attracting attention by undertaking to do anything original, out of the ordinary, or to depart from a cut-and-dried formula of existence. From the bridge we see where John Blisse may have fished many a time, in his youth, but where no one may now do the like without permission, though the Ouse (fifty feet wide) is one of the great rivers of England. To the left a white column of the manor-house arrests the eye through the grand old oaks. To the right—

"Not far distant,
Upon a rising ground, a grey church tower,
Whose battlements are screened by tufted trees."

This is the tower built in the year 1120 by the Normans. It is the very same that John Blisse well knew, and quite the same to-day

as he beheld it. It was old even in his time. The walls and the roof of the church proper were rebuilt in 1871 at the cost of the Tyringham family. The tower and the river, inseparable, side by side, may ever abide, outlasting man and his changing ideas. The church is dedicated to St. Peter and consists of a nave, chancel, chantry, south porch, and western tower. There are several memorial brasses preserved therein to ancient Tyringhams who have slept here beneath the stone floor these many generations. In the pavement of the chancel, on an ancient marble, are the coats-of-arms of the Tyringhams and Catesbys; and in the middle of the stone, on a brass plate, is the effigy of a lady with a square head-dress, long lappets, and a great string of beads; also a brass to a knight attired in a tabard. Under the east window of the south chancel is a very old monument of gray marble bearing the effigy of a woman in brass with these words on a label proceeding from her mouth:—

"Dne accepe Spiritum meum."

It is said that there was formerly an inscription around the verge. In the windows were the arms of several ancient families. There is a list of the rectors of this parish since 1272; John de Bargo was the rector when John Blisse lived here. Nothing bearing the name of Bliss is visible within or without the walls of Tyringham Church, or probably ever was here. In John Blisse's time families in his ordinary station were not supposed to erect graven memorials to their beloved dead in parish churches or churchyards. But he is not forgotten, nor is he likely to be, yet awhile. Tyringham, or its vicinity, was the home of the first man called by the name of Bliss; and the above John Blisse was the son, or, better, the grandson, of that Bliss. These are the logical and reasonable deductions.

William and Reginald Blisse of 1297 and 1327

"To make the past the present, to bring the distant near, to call up our ancestors before us with all their peculiarities of language, manners, and garb, to show us over their houses, to seat us at their tables." This has been the effort with respect to the generations immediately following John Blisse of Tyringham. Every record in England in every region where the name of Bliss has been found, and where imagination has conceived that it might be found, has been searched. The result of this effort, between 1300 and 1450, is meagre indeed. We cannot, therefore, draw the picture as we would. The materials are too scant. Only a few items exist in the records of the family for this period. The indications are that not until 1500 did the Blissés really flourish and increase rapidly in numbers. Doubtless Blissés lived and died between these years who cannot be discovered now. They are as though they had never been, and so they ever will remain. Such local records of them as once may have been put upon parchment are now submerged by "the deluge of Time." But after 1500 there comes a deluge of records, as will be seen shortly.

There are no Bliss records in the probate courts till 1472, no parish records till 1538, and no manorial court rolls concerning them till 1500. Before 1461 the name of Bliss does not appear in the vast collection of the existing records of (1) the courts of chancery; (2) lay subsidies, with one exception; (3) close rolls; (4) patent rolls; (5) inquisitions post mortem; (6) inquisitions ad damnum; (7) minister's accounts; (8) *Testa de Nevill*; (9) Pipe Rolls, etc. The plain truth is that if the Blissés *had* attained to manorial distinction, to official positions, to possession of a considerable land, to eminence in commerce, to positions of note in the professions, they would certainly have figured in some of these national records. The family rose later. Before 1461 the investigator is forced to look back upon the family as "in the bud." Of course, the population of England and Wales was merely a million, in 1377, and only four and a half millions in 1480. "The Hundred Years' War" (1333 to 1430)—the cause of the kings and princes having military ambitions, etc.—may have caused the deaths of some Blissés. "These were the years," says Green, "of the deepest gloom . . . which drained the strength of the English people, . . . the bondsmen struggling forward to freedom fell back into serfage which still [1881] leaves its trace on the soil."

In consequence of the absence of the name of Bliss from the principal national records of this period, no consecutive line of descent, father to son, generation after generation, can be now portrayed before 1500. There is some record in each generation, but, while interesting, these records taken together are scattering and disconnected. The missing evidence may be likened to the smoke that somehow escaped from the houses of the English, through a crevice in the roof, a window, or a door, for there were no chimneys in the ordinary houses of rural England till late in the fifteenth century. Chimneys did not become general until well into the sixteenth century. The fire was made on the stone floor in the center of a room.

John Blisse's family of Tyringham slowly began to spread itself, here and there, in the southern midland. The earliest offshoot noted appears at Salford, formerly Salford Abbot, some fifty miles westward, near to Stratford-on-Avon. Here is a translation of the Latin record of a proceeding in the Court of the King's Bench, the oldest known court of record, of which the records exist, in the world. (Prior to this court the trial of a civil dispute was by the resort to a personal combat between the plaintiff and the defendant, schoolboy fashion. The best fighter won regardless of the justice of his point of disagreement.)

(Facsimile of original record of William Blisse in a roll of the Court of Common Pleas for the year 1297.)

Placita Coram Rege—Trinity Term [year] 1297. [membrane 35]

(Translation) The Quinzaine* of St. John, (continued).

County Warwick. Walter atte Nashe, Master William Pykerel, Robert Wodecok, William Skylful of Thornbury, Richard Williams, bayliff Pykerel, Geoffrey son of Mary de Brome, John de Glodeshale, John de Fakenham, John

*The fourteenth day after the feast day.

atte Croiz de Grafton, John de Shraneley, Henry le Chauer, William Scot, William Brid, Alan atte Welle and William atte Nashe were attached to, answer *William Blisse* in a plea why, with force and arms at Kynggesbrome they took and imprisoned and ill-treated the same *William Blisse*, and did other enormities etc. to the grave damage etc. And against the peace etc. And whereupon the same William complains that the aforesaid Walter and the others on Saturday next after the feast of the Purification of the Blessed Mary in the 25th year of the now king, [Edward I] took the aforesaid William Blisse at Kinggesbrome, and led him as far as Budiford, and imprisoned him, and detained him in prison for two days, upon which account he said he suffered damage to the value of twenty marks, and thereupon he brings his suit.

And the aforesaid Walter atte Nashe [and the others] come and defend the force and injury when etc. And say they are in nothing guilty of the trespass aforesaid. And concerning this they put themselves upon the county. And the aforesaid William likewise. Therefore let a jury come before the King in three weeks from St. Michael's day wheresoever etc. And who etc. [membrane 37 d.] The defendants appoint Walter atte Nashe their attorney to answer the said William Blisse. [Membrane 39.] William Blisse of Morkote appoints Walter de Roppesley his attorney against Walter atte Nashe and the others in the plea of trespass.

"Morcote" was the manorial seat in the parish of Salford Abbot; and this William Blisse evidently was in the employ of the lord of the manor, upon some mission for whom he may have been at the time of his false arrest. The Blisses continued to reside in Salford Abbot for forty-one years, at the least, as is proven by the records of taxation for the year 1380. The only glimpse of them during that period is in Lay Subsidy Roll No. 199-4, for Warwickshire:—

"1 Edw. III [1327] Taxation vicesime" [1-20th of the annual value of the land or goods]

"Hundr. de Harlyewey" [Hundred of Barlichway]

"Reginald Blissen" [Latin for Bliss] "XVIIIId"

Lay subsidy Roll 192-5:

"VI EDW. III" [1333] "Salford Abbot"

"Reginaldo Blisse. iis"

The tax of eighteen-pence reveals that Reginald Blisse's taxable income was estimated at thirty shillings a year, and for the year 1333, at forty shillings. By the present monetary standard of England this latter sum would be £26, at the least. This was a fair income in 1333 and betokens that this Reginald Blisse had improved considerably over the situation of John Blisse of Tyringham. Neither of these two subsidy rolls state whether the tax

was levied upon land or goods; so it cannot be determined whether Reginald Blisse was a farmer or a tradesman. The probabilities are that the tax was upon land, though the tax does not imply that he was the actual owner of the land taxed. Lease-holders were taxable. In the case of a tax upon goods, it may be properly held that he was the actual owner of the merchandise, or live stock.

The Blisses of Salop, Worcester, and Gloucester

Within nine years after 1297, when William Blisse was molested at Kingsbrome, one of his relatives, a Gilbert Blisse, had ventured further westward, into Shropshire, which adjoins Wales. He may have been drawn there as a soldier in the war between England and Wales, of a few years before. There is but one record of this Gilbert Blisse in that county:—

(Translation from the original Latin record in the Record Office, London.)

Coram Rege Roll. [Court of the King's Bench.] Easter term, 34 Edw.

I. [1306] rot. 16, dors.

Salop. Reynold, son of Richard Gobitheweye,* offered himself on the fourth day against Gilbert Blisse of Ewledone and Margery, who was wife of Robert de Ewledone, in a plea of trespass. And they did not come. And order was given to the sheriff to attach them. And the sheriff returned that the aforesaid Gilbert was attached by John Dun of Eweldon and Hugh reeve of the same place; therefore they are in mercy. And the aforesaid Margery was attached by John, reeve of Ewledon, and William de Aventure of the same place. Therefore they are in mercy. And order was given to the sheriff to distrain them by all their lands &c. And that of the issues &c. And that he have the bodies of the parties aforesaid before the King in the Quinzaine of Trinity, where-soever &c.

[Reynold and John and Hugh, the three reeves, seem to have assumed no surname in 1306. "Before the king"—before the court.]

The trespass claimed by the plaintiff, doubtless, was that Gilbert Blisse had been using some structure or land at the displeasure of the plaintiff, who likely was related to Margery Blisse, and the action had arisen through the death of Margery's first husband, Robert de Ewledone. For the one hundred and seventy-five years following this Ewledone incident no reference to a Bliss has been found in the West of England. But a western branch of the Blisses springs into view again in 1481, adjacent to Shropshire, in the counties of Gloucester and Worcester, having probably been saved from extinction by the arrival of other Blisses from the Midlands. In 1481 a William Blysse was of Tewkesbury, Gloucestershire, where he certainly looked upon its battle-scarred abbey, around which, but shortly before, Richard, Duke of Gloucester (afterwards Richard III, the original of Shakespeare's Richard of the humped back and crooked arm), had defeated the army of Margaret of Anjou. The Wars of the Roses left many stragglers and

* "Gobitheway" is a surname derived from the nickname Go-by-the-way.

wounded men behind. In this connection it is significant that this William Blysse of Tewkesbury was living there in 1481, holding no real estate and possessing no personal property. However, he was but twenty-five miles westward from Salford Abbot, where we found Reginald Blisse taxed an hundred years earlier. One who studies this situation carefully is very liable to think that the later Blissess of Gloucestershire sprang from Reginald Blisse of Salford Abbot, either through William Blysse of Tewkesbury, or a Thomas Blysse, presumably of Bromsgrove, Worcestershire, of whom presently.

(Translation from the original Latin record in the Record Office, London.)

Coram Rege Roll 877, Hilary [term] 20 Edw. IV [1481] membrane 8 dors.

Gloucester. Henry Comyn by his attorney offered himself on the fourth day against Robert Hauker of Teukesbury in the county aforesaid, clerk, and William Blysse of Teukesbury aforesaid, yeoman, in a plea of trespass. And they did not come. Order was given to the sheriff to attach them. The sheriff returned they had nothing by which etc. Therefore the sheriff was ordered to take them, and bring them before the King in the Quinzaine of Easter. On which day the sheriff did not send the writ. He was therefore ordered to bring the defendants on the Morrow of the Ascension.

The Thomas Blysse identified with Bromsgrove, thirty miles northward of Tewkesbury, married well, but he had to sue his stepson in the national court at London for an annuity due to his wife. The evidence is an interesting illustration of the method of procedure in vogue *circa* 1500.

(The original parchments bearing the declarations of this plaintiff and the defendant, as made by their respective attorneys, are on file at the Record Office, London.)

Early Chancery Proceedings, Bills and Answers, 288-78. [1500-1515.]

To the most revrend fadr in god William, Archebishop of Cauntrbury & Chancellor of England.

Humbly complaynyng shewyth unto yor good & gracyous lordship yor dayly oratours & pore bede folks Thomas Blysse & Margery hys Wyffe late wyffe of Harry Borne that wher a pon communycacion of mariage hadde & solempnyssed betweyn the seyde Harry & Margery hyt was agreed by Thomas Borne fadr of the seyde Harry whos son & heyr apparant he then was that the seyde Harry and Margery shulde have an annuyte of XXs yerely goyng owt of too mesys [messuages] C [100] acres of land medowe & pasture sett & beyng in Belbrouthton. And in the parysshe of Bromysgrove yn the Countie of Worcestre whereof Willim Ac [torn] Esquier Thomas Crabbe & other feffees [feoffees] to the use of the same Thomas Borne where then sesyd in theyr demene as of fee

to have & rceve the same annuall rent to the seyð Harry & Margery duryng the lyvys [lives] of the seyð Thomas and of on Agnes then hys wyffe ffydr & modr of the seyð Harry and that aftr theyr deceas estate of all the seid lands & tents [tenements] shulde be made to the seyð Harry & Margery and the heysr of the body of the seyð Harry begoten, & yor suppliants say that the seyð Harry and Margery Duryng the lyffes of the seyð Thomas & Agnes wher truly content & payed of the same XXs yerely and aftr the seyð Thomas & Agnes dyed & the seyð Harry & Margery hadd yssue between theme on Thomas Borne and the seyð Harry dyed aftr whoys dethe the seyð Margery toke to husbande the seyð Thomas Blysse so yt [it] hys [is] gracyous lord that the seyð Thomas Borne sone of the seyð Harry & Margery seth [since] the deth of hys fathyr whoys heyr he ys hath opteyned the state & possession of the seyð lands & tents frome the seyð feffeyes and yor suppliants have often tymes required the seyð Thomas the son to make estate of the seyð meses lands & tents to the seyð Margery for the time of hyr lyffe the remayner to the heysr of the body of the seyð Harry accordyng to the Wylle & intent of the seyð Thomas Borne the grand father appon the seyð maryage hadde as ys aforesayd, and the seyð Thomas the son of hys on [own] natural disposicion wille in noowyse sooffre the seyð Margery hys mother to take the pfyts of the seyð lands & tents ne [nor] of any pte thereof, ne wylle make to hyr estate as ys aforesaid in consyderacion whereof that yt Wylle please yor seyð lordshyp so graunted a wrytte subpena to be dyrected to the seyð Thomas Borne comaundying hym by the same to appere before the kyng in hys Chauncrye at a certeyn day by yor good lordshyp to be lymytted ther to aunswer to the prmysse & to be ordered accordyng to right conscyens and yor supplyants wylle pay to god for the prsvacon [preservation] of yor good lordshyp.

Pleg de po { Wills Johnson de London, Brewer.
John Walker de ead [London] Taylour.

(Membrane 79)

This is the answer of Thomas Borne to the bill of complaynt of Thomas Blysse & Margrie his wiffe.

The said Thomas Borne seith that the said bill of complaynt ys uncerteyne & insufficyaunt & the mater theryn feyned & detrmynable by the cos [course] of the comen lawe and for further answer in the prmissis seith apou coicacon of maridge had betwene the seid Henr Borne & Margrie his late wiff it was covenanted & agreed betwene the seid Thomas Borne and oon [one] Willyam Nutte ffathir to the seid margrie that Siche an Annuite of XXs & estate shulde be made to the seid Henr & Margrie apou condicon & covenants folowyng that ys to sey that yf the seid Willm Nutte contented & payd in mariage wt [with] his seid dorghtr certain sommes of money that then siche estate shuld be made by the seid Thomas Borne to dyvrse feffey, butt the seid Thomas Borne for firther answer seith that the seid Willm Nutte nevr payd the seid somes of money by reason whereof breche of covenants were made on the behalfe of the seid Willm Nutte & not apou the behalf of the seid Thms Burne the ffather And firther more the seid Thomas the son seith that all the seid lands were intayled to the seid Thomas Borne & the heysr of his body lawfully begoten & now the seid Thomas is next cosyn & heir to the seid Thoms Burne etc.

The next record of the Gloucestershire Blisses is that of the Thomas Blysse who died at Painswick in November, 1558. In those times woman was not as highly esteemed, especially in the eyes of the law, as nowadays; one cannot say that, however, of the bride's "dot" (dowry). It will occur to the reader that this man may have been a son of the aforesaid Thomas Blysse who sued Thomas Borne. We will not doubt it, but, as no proof thereof exists, no claim thereon is here made. It is plain, however, that the American Blisses of 1638 did not descend from the Gloucestershire branch of the family.

(This testament is on file in the Consistory Court of the Bishop of Gloucester)
—(Abstract).

Will dated 24 August 1558.

Thomas Blysse of Painswick, County Gloucester, Yeoman. *Buried in the Church at Painswick. I give to George Blysse my Brother 10 Wethers &c &c & all manner of Standerds that is in my house after death of my Wife Joynnyng to any wall nayled or pynned so that my bequest to said George be in value £6:10:4.*

To Jamys my boye 40s- one coete &c &c.

To Elizabeth my Syster 40s-

To Margaret my Syster 40s-

To Elizabeth Tay my Servant 20s-

To John Jakys one chylver sheep &c.

To Edwarde my boye one shyppe &c.

At day of my burial to be bestowed among the poor people £5.

Overseers Antony Watts, John Watts, Thomas Clyssolde the younger & John Hamons. All these legacys if Wife does not marry to be paid at reasonable tyme. Rest and residue of goods to Jane my Wife whom I make my full Executrix. Witnesses Sr. John Hartelond curate of Stroude, Antony Watts, John Hamons, John Watts, John Foorde with other more. Proved 21 November 1558.

The testator died without issue, apparently. His brother, George Blysse, and others perpetuated the Bliss name in County Gloucester. Therein the family flourished afterwards as nowhere else in England, save in the Northamptonshire Midlands, and from it occasional members removed to the southward. Gloucestershire, however, yielded no Bliss tribute for America until the nineteenth century. The Gloucester records have been examined in full detail to 1700, yielding much evidence. Interesting as is this evidence to 1670, but little of it is essential to these printed pages. After saving a few more items from "time's aye deepening sea," we will return to the Midlands of England, there to take an eastward view.

The ancestry of the Blissés who settled in America about 1835 has been established by the author back to Walter Blysse of 1563.

Inquisition Post Mortem on file at the Record Office, London, Series II, 113, 1565. [Inquisitions were made into the estates of persons dying as Crown tenants to determine their possessions, and who was the rightful heir, etc.]

Inquisition taken at Cirencester, Gloucester, 9 Oct., 7 Elizabeth (1565).

Willm P'ttryge armiger & escheator on the estate of "Walteris Blisse yoman" who died seized of a capital messuage and the houses and lands in Frampton Mauncell.

Thomas Blysse is the eldest son and heir; Margaret is the widow.

Walter Bliss died 8 August, 5th of Elizabeth (1563).

Cirencester, where the jury of the inquisition met, is thirteen miles from Painswick. Frampton Mansell is in the parish of Sapperton adjoining Bisley and Chalford. Painswick became the chief Bliss town in the County of Gloucester. The various Bliss residents thereabouts were all closely related, but we need not weary the reader with the details that have been accumulated of their relationship, as revealed in the various records of the several parishes, beyond what is given in the annexed summary of the descendants of the said Walter Blysse, who died in 1563.

The Bliss family continued to increase in numbers as well as in their possessions and position in the sixteenth century. No retrogression is visible. It spread to other places in Gloucestershire; to Emload, Worcestershire, where in 1648 lived a Thomas Bliss with sons, Thomas, Richard, Roger (will, 1665), William, and John [Chancery Proceeding B. 61-38. 1648]; to Stow-on-the-Wold and to Chudleigh, Devon. The eighteen probate documents on file at Gloucester in the Consistory Court of the Bishop of Gloucester have been studied, but yield nothing that is necessary to quote.

John Blisse, son of Antony of Painswick, graduated from Oxford University in 1668. Robert Blisse had the temerity to stand charged with being a Royalist in 1651, when he was ordered by the Cromwellian Government of the Commonwealth to pay a fine of £140, to renounce his loyalty to "Mr. Charles Stuart" (afterwards Charles II), and to take oath of allegiance to the Commonwealth, or prove his innocence of being a Royalist within three weeks. [Royalist Composition Papers V. G., 25, p. 20.]

From the many records in hand of the Blissés of Gloucestershire we have erected the appended table, showing the descent to Sir

Henry Bliss, K.C.I.E., ex-Governor of Madras, now residing at his seat "The Abbey," Abingdon, Berkshire, England, who has manifested a deep interest in the author's discoveries. The table also reveals the line of descent from Walter Blysse of 1563 to Robert Bliss of Chipping Norton, Oxfordshire, who emigrated to the United States about 1835, and died in New Jersey, leaving issue.

Walter Blysse of Frampton Mansell in Sapperton, Gloucestershire, married Margaret, and died in 1563 leaving a will. His estate was the subject of the inquisition post mortem held on October 9, 1565, as noted. He had issue, Thomas, Katherine, Bridget, and Richard.

(Probate Registry, Gloucester.)

Will of Walter Blysse of Saperton in the County of Gloucester dated the 2nd of August 1563:

I desire to be buried within the Churchyard of Saperton I give to Thomas my Son all my tymber & wood & underwood growing within the Lordshipp of Frampton Mansell & all my wood in parish of Byseley & also all my wood in parish of Mysordene & also a great pott &c. I give to Rychard my Son £13. 6. 8 to be payd as hereinafter is mentioned I give to Kateryn my daughter £13. 6. 8 & also my best cow I give to Brygett my daughter £10 I give to Walter Rogers Harry Rogers & Elyzabeth Rogers 3 ewes equally I geve to Rose Sherburne one ewe I geve to Thomas Borne a weynyng cow calf I geve to the reparation of the Church of Saperton 4 Bushells of Barley

To Gyles Poole, Knyght, Umfery Werkeman, Thomas Cox, Robert Hancock John Bakett & Thomas Rogers £5 by equal portions whom I make overseers The payment of £5 shall be owt of Westerley against Twysell Myll Joyning to John Hoptons closse I give to my daughter Kateryn during nonage of my heyre 20s yearly going forthe of my lande at Mercombe in parish of Mysorden. I give to Margaret my Wife during the nonage of my heyre 40s by the yere going forth of my Manyson House of Frampton Mansell. I give to Rychard my Son during nonage of my heyre 20s by the yere going forthe of my land at Avenasse within the parish of Bisley My Will is that Thomas my Son shall make a sure estate of one mease [messuage] with all lands &c now in tenure of Thomas Wynston to Richard Blisse my Son for term of his life immediately after the term of Thomas Wynston is expired reserving the ould rent unto sd Thomas Blisse & to his heirs for ever Provided always that Margaret my Wife shall have the custody of all goods &c bequeathed to my children during their nonage upon condition that she do not marry but if she do marry then goods to be given into the hands & custody of Gyles Poole, Knyght, Umfrey Werkeman, Thomas Cox, Robert Hancocke, John Bakett for sole use of my children. The sums of £13. 6. 8 to Son Rychard & daughter Kateryn & £10 to daughter Brydgett shall be paid to them when they shall come to full age & if either die before they come to full age then their part to go to the survivor & said yearly legacies to be paid to them at the Feast of Saint Michael the Archangel & the Annunciation of our Lady.

Residue of my goods I give unto Margaret my Wife & Thomas my son whom I make Sole Executrixes.

Witnesses: John Bakett, Thomas Rogers & others

Proved 12th December 1563

We have traced the descendants of the testator's eldest son, Thomas, for five generations but they show no emigrant to America. Attention is therefore directed particularly to the testator's son Richard and the latter's descendants:—

Richard Blysse² (Walter¹ died 1563) was under age in 1562; his wife was buried at Bisley 25 April, 1616; they had Marie, baptized at Bisley 28 Feb., 1597; Anne, baptized 16 March, 1581, and married there 28 April, 1608, Richard Taylor; and a son William Blisse baptized at Bisley 3 March, 1594, married Marie, and was buried there 10 Aug., 1644. This William Blisse left a will now filed at Gloucester:—

Will of William Blisse of Bisley, Glos, Broadweaver,

I give unto Marie my Wife my messuage at Frampton Mansell, Glos. & 2 acres of land lying in the Beacon field which I hold by Lease from Gyles Blisse of Frampton. I give the leases of my messuage at Frampton &c unto Thomas my Son at decease of my Wife, my Son Thomas to pay unto Elizabeth and Sarah my two youngest daughters when they attain 21 £5 each. I give unto each of my seven youngest children namely Robert, John, Gyles, Joseph, Katherine, Elizabeth & Sarah £7 to each of them as they shall come to 26 years. My Will is that £50 of my money which is in John Bickes hand to be put to interest towards the bringing up of my children

Residue of my goods &c I give unto Marie my Wife whom I make Executrix & I nominate and appoint my friends Walter Blisse Walter Restell & John Webb of Avenesse to be my Overseers Will dated 8 August 1644

Witnesses: Ferdinando Snowe, Walter Blisse

Proved at Painswick
5 August 1645

The testator had five sons and three daughters: Thomas Blisse (William³, Richard², Walter¹), the eldest son, was baptized at Bisley 16 Oct., 1623, had a lease of property at Frampton Mansell, married Hannah Steevens at Avening 20 Oct., 1664, and had two sons, Thomas and Edward. Thomas, the elder son, had Samuel, baptized at Bisley 23 Sept., 1718; Edward, baptized there 14 Nov., 1720, who married Sarah Brandeis at Moreton-in-the-Marsh, 1759, he dying there in 1797, leaving a will naming his children.

Edward Bliss (Thomas⁴, William³, Richard², Walter¹) (baptism unrecorded) married Mary Smart at Avening, Gloucestershire, 4 Dec., 1726, and had Thomas, baptized at Bisley 18 Aug., 1729, and

buried there 29 Sept., 1729; John, baptized there 26 Dec., 1730, and settled at Chipping Norton, Oxfordshire; Anne, baptized at Bisley 15 Feb., 1732, and buried there 26 Aug., 1734; and Thomas, as follows:—

Thomas Bliss (Edward⁵, Thomas⁴, William³, Richard², Walter¹) was baptized at Bisley 30 May, 1736. He resided in that part of Bisley which has since been set off as the parish of Chalford. He removed to Chipping Norton and married there in 1758 Ann Insall of that place, born in 1739 or 1740. He seems to have become interested in the manufacture of woollen cloth, which, with farming, had been the vocation, in various ways, of his ancestors. He died there in 1798. He had five sons and five daughters at Chipping Norton. Of these the second son, Thomas, was born in 1761, died in 1841, leaving sons, Rev. Thomas and Rev. Frederick Bliss; the third son, Edward, was born 12 Sept. and died 25 Oct., 1763; the fifth son, Edwin, was born 1 Jan., 1776; of the five daughters, Hannah Insall Bliss, born 5 March, 1765, died in 1840, married Mr. Hands of Coventry; Mary, born 19 Dec., 1775, married Mr. Gurson of Coventry; Ann, born 7 April, 1778, died young; Elizabeth, born 26 July, 1780, died in 1813; Jane, born 19 July, 1782, married Mr. Haines of Bath and died in 1856. Of the two remaining sons, John, the eldest, and William, the fourth son, we mention their descendants to date, beginning with John:—

John Bliss (Thomas⁶, Edward⁵, Thomas⁴, William³, Richard², Walter¹), born at Chipping Norton, Oxfordshire, 22 July, 1760, married (1), in 1786, Mary E. Jefferies; (2) Anne Donne, 12 March, 1807, at St. John's Church, Hampstead, London, N. W. He practiced medicine in London and died at Bath, 15 Feb., 1832. His sons were Rev. William Bliss, born in 1792, by the first wife, and Rev. James Bliss. The former was of Oriel College, Oxford University. He married Jane M. Bridges and died 5 Feb., 1850, leaving an only son, William Henry Bliss, born 26 April, 1835, at Newton St. Loo, Cornwall, who married Jane Wray at Liverpool 4 May, 1859, and became the special representative of the Master of the Rolls in the great work of examining and translating, for the English Government, from the Papal Registers in the Vatican Library at Rome, various ancient records for the elucidation of English history. Some volumes of his work have been published by the English Government. He died at Rome 8 March, 1909, having been the father of thirteen children, of whom a daughter, Mrs. L. F. Digby Koe, of Blessington Road, Lewisham, London, S. E., is the fortunate possessor of the book of original manuscript entitled

Alphabet of Armes, which was written by one of the heralds of the College of Arms, London, apparently early in the reign of Queen Elizabeth. This manuscript contains a description of the Bliss coat-of-arms showing that the device considerably antedates the manuscript.

Rev. James Bliss (John⁷, Thomas⁶, Edward⁵, Thomas⁴, William³, Richard², Walter¹) was born 9 Aug., 1808, married Mary Fellowes at Bradford-on-Avon, Wilts, 4 Dec., 1838, and died 8 Nov., 1894. He held several *cures*; his last was the rectory of Manningford Bruce, Wilts. His sons were Henry William, Charles John Marriott (Lieut. R. N., died 1870), William; the daughters were Emily Mary, Lucy Ann Frances, Mary Eliza, Julia (all now deceased), and Catherine Arabella, Margaret, Gertrude, Georgina, Helen Jane, and Louisa. The eldest son, Sir Henry William Bliss, K.C.I.E., of Abingdon, aforesaid, was born 23 Feb., 1840, at Bradford-on-Avon; C.I.E. 1889; B.A. Oxford; entered Indian Civil Service (Madras), 1863; Commissioner of Salt Revenue, 1878; Fellow of Madras University, 1882; Member of Finance Committee, 1886; Member of Board of Revenue and Commissioner of Salt and Abkari Revenue, 1887; Member of Viceroy's Legislative Council, 1890-92; Member of Council, Madras, 1893-8; acted as Governor of Madras, 1896; retired from I.C.S., 1898; Member London County Council, Holborn Division, 1901-7; married (1), 1863, Mary (died 1876), daughter of Edmund Rendle; (2), 1879, Edith (died 30 May, 1898), daughter of James Wheeler, of Great Cumberland Place, London; (3), 6 Nov., 1900, Florence, second surviving daughter of Sir Frederick Joseph Bramwell, Bart. The children of Sir Henry Bliss, by the first marriage, were Beatrice Mary (married Robert Macdonald, 1886), Charles Ernest (deceased), Francis Henry (deceased), James Arthur (major in the Indian army, M.V.O.), Charles (major in the Indian army); by the second marriage, Henry James Wheeler, Godfrey John Wheeler, Philip Wheeler (Lieut. Royal Engineers).

The only line of Bliss out of Gloucestershire to America comes through William Bliss (Thomas⁶, Edward⁵, Thomas⁴, William³, Richard², Walter¹), born at Chipping Norton, Oxfordshire, 3 Oct., 1764, married 20 Dec., 1792, at Taynton, Oxon., Hannah Lay, born at Burford, Oxon., 14 Feb., 1771 and died in 1815. He was apprenticed in the woolen industry at Chalford, Gloucestershire about 1778 and became a manufacturer of woolens, especially kerseys, at Chipping Norton, where "Blisses' Tweeds" are still produced. His children were Mary, born 23 Oct., 1793; Thomas, born 3 Nov., 1794, died 1837; Ann, born 29 July, 1796, married Thomas Parsons of

Stroud, Gloucestershire; Jane, born 21 Jan., 1799, married M. Richardson, and died in 1835; Robert, who emigrated to America; Maria, born 26 May, 1806, married Francis Parker (who died in 1898), and died 16 Dec., 1893, leaving five children; Elizabeth, born 24 March, 1808, married David Wilkinson, and emigrated to Australia, in 1852, dying there 2 Dec., 1889, leaving issue; Sarah, born 5 Dec., 1812, died in 1813; and William Bliss of Chipping Norton, born 18 Sept., 1810, married 18 Sept., 1838, Elizabeth Cleaver, and died 26 Feb., 1883. His children were Anna Maria, born 26 July, 1842, married Samuel Flint and died 1 Nov., 1883, leaving four daughters; William Bliss, born 2 March, 1844, married, 1869, Fanny Elizabeth Cordeux and had six sons; Esther Elizabeth, born 19 Oct., 1847, married in 1870 Henry Parker Burrows, who died in 1871—she became Principal of St. Hilda's Hall, Oxford, of which her daughter, C. M. E. Burrows, is now (1913) the Principal. The last child of William and Elizabeth (Cleaver) Bliss was Mary, born 21 April, 1850, married John Scott and had a daughter Muriel Elsie, who married Humphrey Bland and has one son and one daughter.

The last named Robert Bliss (William⁷, Thomas⁶, Edward⁵, Thomas⁴, William³, Richard², Walter¹), born at Chipping Norton 16 May, 1802, married, 1830, at St. Mark's, Kensington, London, W., Mary Ann Dallett, and emigrated to the United States about 1835. He resided at Westchester and Elizabeth, New Jersey, where he and his wife died. The two eldest of their nine children were Dallett, born 4 May, 1831, at Chipping Norton, England, died in 1876, married in U. S. A., Virginia, daughter of John and Virginia (Bushey) Dallett, and had two daughters who died young; William, born 4 July, 1832, at Chipping Norton, died in U. S. A., in 1890, married (1) Athenaide (born, 1836; died, 1876), daughter of John Dallett, (2) Anna Dallett (born, 1843), another daughter of the said John—issue, John Bliss, born in 1862, William, died in 1895, Robert Parker, died in 1900, and Anita, born in 1875. The other seven children of Robert Bliss⁸ were Thomas, born in 1834, died young; George Henry, born in 1835, died in 1857; Louisa, born in 1838, died in 1900; Marion, born in 1842, died young; Augustus Frederick, born in 1844, died young; Albert, born in 1846, died young; and Ernest Clarence Bliss, born in 1848, now living in New York City, unmarried.

The descendants in England of Robert, John, Giles, and Joseph Bliss, brothers of Thomas Bliss⁴, have been traced by the author, but as none of these lines lead to America the data are reserved for later special publication in England.

The Blisses of Waterbeach and East Anglia

The John Blisse to whom we have referred as being at Waterbeach, Cambridgeshire, in the year 1272, and closely portrayed in connection with John Blisse of Tyringham (in the same year and in the same records), left no descendants of record in that county. He does not appear again himself in its records; nor does the name of Bliss occur in Cambridgeshire at any time thereafter. Waterbeach in 1272 was upon the southern part of a great marsh, or fen, low and unhealthy. Modernly that land has been drained and improved, yet it is still mapped as a fenland. If John Blisse, or more probably his son, left Waterbeach for a better location, that son may be the William Blysse who with his son John appears some years later at Little Sampford in the county of Essex. This village is about twenty-five miles southward from Waterbeach, and upon the ancient road that led direct from Waterbeach to Maldon, the port of Essex for trade with the Continent, and also on the way to London. There is but one record of this William Blysse and his son of Little Sampford. It is the record of a man who had thought of occupying there some land, but changed his mind about it. The representatives of the other party to the negotiations brought an action in the Court of Common Pleas, viz.:—

Placita de Banco. (Court of Common Pleas) Trinity (term) 35 Edward I [1307] rot. 228. dors. (Translation.)

Essex. The essoins of Roger le Cok of Samford offer themselves on the fourth day against John, son of William Blysse, in a plea that he should keep an agreement with him made between them as to 2½ acres of land and half a rood of meadow with the appurtenances in Little Sampford etc. And he did not come. And he was summoned. Judgment: let him be attached to be here in the Quinzaine of St Michael etc., by H. de Stanton.

(The original of this document is in the Record Office, London.)

The matter was settled without further court record. This item marks the first advent of the Bliss name into the county of Essex. The development of the family in that shire, however, was slight and ephemeral. With two more glimpses this line of the Bliss family becomes extinct in Essex for a long time, after having barely perpetuated itself there for three or four generations:—

De Banco Roll (No. 270) Trinity Term, 1 Edward III. (1336) mem. 91 d. (Translation from the Latin Original in the Record Office, London.)

Essex. Margaret, who was wife of John Blisse, offers herself by John Parker,

her attorney, demanding against William Leverych and Ellen, his Wife, one third part of six acres of land with the appurtenances in Little Sampford, as her dower etc. And William and Ellen by John de Fynchynghfeld their attorney come and demand view thereof; a day is given them till a month after Michaelmas; and meanwhile, etc.

The same Margery by her same attorney offers herself on the fourth day against Margery, who was wife of John Stubbere, in a plea of the third part of seven acres of land and one acre of wood, with the appurtenances, in Little Sampford, and against Peter atte More in a plea of one third part of $1\frac{1}{2}$ acre of land and one acre of pasture, with the appurtenances, in Great Berdefeld, which she claims in dower etc. And they do not come. And they had a day by their essoins to be here this day after they were summoned etc. Judgment: let the aforesaid third parts be taken into the King's hand, and a day appointed etc. And let them be summoned to be here in one month of Michaelmas.

On the succeeding roll (rot. 25 d.) being Michaelmas term 1 Edward III, there are entries as above, recording further adjournments.

The second glimpse is five years later in one of the villages that adjoin Little Sampford on the south, at Little Bardfield in the town of Great Bardfield. The Thomas Blisse mentioned was certainly a very close relative of John Blyse of Sampford:—

Inquisitio Nonarum in curia scaccarii, 14 Edward III. (year 1341) Com. Essex. Parva Berdefeld. (Translation.)

By the tax Richard Wynterflod, Thomas Blisse and Simon Pounds are charged 8li which are the tax. And afterwards it was found by the 12 jurors that it is not worth more than 64s. and so it is not worth the tax by 4li. 16s. as appears in the present return by the same jurors on account of the causes in the same.

(The original of this record is preserved in the Record Office, London.)

The explanation of this record is interesting indeed. It illuminates the state of the kingdom, the subserviency of the king to Parliament, the method and significance of taxation, and of the status of Thomas Blisse. In 1341 Parliament granted to the Crown a subsidy (tax assessment) of one ninth upon some and of one fifteenth upon others of the annual value (income) from their harvests, sheep, wool, and merchandise. The record shows how very heavily the people were called upon to pay (on the average 1-12th of their income) for the wars and extravagances of their king, over whose will they had but little control, and whose invasion of France in 1338 had been so unsuccessful.

The very small parish of Little Bardfield was taxed for £8. This taxable amount was determined by the old valuation made for Pope

Nicholas forty-nine years earlier. The wars, the disturbed trade, death of sheep, mildew in corn, land left uncultivated, and the general effects of bad times had reduced the taxable value of the parish, so that in 1341 it had fallen to less than half of the 1292 figure. The final amount with which the three men were charged would be, by the present monetary standard, some thirteen times larger (if not more) than in 1341. Thomas Blisse therefore paid his ninth or fifteenth of the valuation of his third of the total, which third would have been, at the least, £15, by present reckoning. This indicates his standing in Little Bardfield as better than that of the majority of its residents, an advance for the Blissés over their earlier status. No descendants of this Thomas Blisse went to America, and his immediate descendants, if he left any, cannot be traced with certainty. He was the nearest to London of any known Bliss of his time; but it was over a hundred years later ere the Bliss name became of record in London, and also at Bradwell, in Suffolk, a few miles northeastward from Little Bardfield. How close the relationship was between the aforesaid Thomas Blisse and the following John Blysse cannot be ascertained. Geographically both men are arrayed together. A complete search of the ancient petitions in the Courts of Chancery, and of all other records for Suffolk, revealed only this bill of complaint, wherein one John Blysse claims a house and ten acres of land, then in his occupancy, and for the title deeds of which he sues. There is no further record of this suit. We fear that John Blysse lost his case, as petitions of this kind were numerous, generally unsuccessful, and often without merit.

Ancient Petitions in Chancery, 120-19. 1486-1515.

(The original petition, as written by John Blysse's attorney, is now on file in the Record Office, London.)

[Addressed.] To the moste Revent fader in gode my lord archebyshop of Caunterbury ande Chaunceler of England.

Humbly sheweth unto your grcious lordship your daily oratour John Blysse that where your seid oratour is seased in his demene as of fee and in a mese [messuage] and X acr of lande with thapp[ur]tennces in Bradwell in the countie of Suffolk. And so seased dyrs [divers] evidence chartrs ande muniments touchyng the seid mese and lande have comen to the possession of on John Water. And so it is graous [gracious] lorde that your said oratour hath often and many tymes required of the seid John Water delyvre of the seid evidences charters ande muniments the whech to delyvr he hath at all tymes uttrly refused and yet refuseth contrare to all reason and constiense and forasmusth as your Oratour knoweth not the crteyn noumber of seid evidences, chartrs and muniments nor wherein thei ben conteigned he is wtout remedie by the cours of the coen [common]

lawe. Pleas it therfor yor seid lordship the prmisses considered to grunte a writ of subpena to be dyrected to the seid John Water comaundyng hym by the same to appere befor the Kyng in his chauncerie at a crteyn daie and under crteyn payn by your seid lordship to be lymitted to answeere to the prmisses accordyng to right and conscience and your seid oratour shall daily pry for the prsvacion of yor gacious lordship.

There appears to be no other record of a Bliss in the county of Suffolk. Fifty years later another John Blysse claimed Lammas in Essex as his place of residence, but he had gone there from the extreme northwest of England, where his father, Hugh Blysse, had some time previously become far isolated from the other Blisses of that time. The plea that this John Blysse laid before the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, in London, in 1550, is not sufficiently important in its subject to require quoting.

The Blisses of London

The Blisses of London may not have issued from the near-by Essex or Suffolk, but we may group them therewith. The first Bliss in London is the most notable Bliss of record in England up to this time. His father either had risen to the position of an independent landowner, or had become a successful man of business, able to send his son to a university, and so cause him to become the first Bliss to graduate from Oxford. In the Register of Oxford University (V. I., p. 52) the son is mentioned:—

John Blisse sup. for B.A. 22 April 1507, adm. 19 June, lic. for M.A. 12 Feb. 1511-2, inc., 15 Feb., sup. for B. Med. 5 and 18 Nov. 1513, Adm. 4 Dec., guardian of Danverse Chest in summer 1513, had to replace his share of £3, deficient in it July 1515, fellow of Merton, Fasti 20.

Also in the same register appears another Bliss unidentified further:—

Richard Blysse sup for degree of B.A., 23 Nov. 1527

Richard Blysse sup for degree of M.A., Oct. 1531

In *Alumni Oxoniensis* occurs:—

Blisse John B.A., 15 June 1507, M.A. 1511-12, D.Med., 1527-8, Fellow of College of Physicians [London] 1529, a learned physician and astronomer, guardian of Danver's chest in 1513, practised in London and died at Blackfriars 1530.

This John Blisse died a good Catholic and apparently without issue. His will is interesting on account of its provisions for his soul.

(This will is registered in the Prerogative Court of the Archbishop of Canterbury, London. Register Jankyn folio 19.)

Will of John Blysse of London Doctor of Physic, dated 10 April, 1530.

In Dei Noie Amen. I John Blysse, Doctor of Phesike, being of hole mynd (lawdid and praysid be allmyghty god) remembryng my mortalite make and ordeyne this my last will and testament the 10th day of Aprell in the yere of our Lords blissid incarnation 1530, and in the 21 year of the reynge of King Henry the eight First, I bequethe my sowle to Allmyghty god my maker and Redeemer and to the glorious Virgin Mary his mother and to all the holy company of Hevin and my body to be buryed within the church of the blakefriers wher I dwell at the discrecion of myne executours withe as lyttel pompe and cost as shal be thowght convenient by my said executours. Allso I bequethe to the hye aulter of the said church 3s4d. Itm, I will thāt a hole Trentall of Masses be said for me at my burying and another hole trentall at the monthes day

bothe the trentalls to be said by the blake friers. Itm, I will that 20d shall be gyven to pore people to pray for my sowle. Itm, I will that 20d shall be gyven in allmes to the pore prisoners of Ludgate. Itm, I bequeth to maister Westcott prest 40d to pray for my sowle. The remnant of all my goods & cattayles, my funeralls done, and this my will pfourmyd I bequethe to my welbelovyd wife Alice whome I make & ordeyngne my sole executour of this my last will and testament, and overseer of the said Mr. priour of this place. In witness wherof I have subscribyd my hand and sette my seale. In the prsence of Thomas Hamond, William Pursen, Robert Kaase and Thomas Cokland. And Wyllia Horsley.

Proved 12 May, 1530, by the relict & executrix named.

Such a good beginning in London by a Bliss was worthy of continuance. Before 1600 several other Blisses had "come up to London" from "down carntry." They can only be referred to briefly:—

Registers of Baptism, St. James Church, Clerkenwell, London—Christened, 1607, July 8, Thomas son James Blisse.

"Blisses Court" in Creechurch parish, London, is quoted in 1646 in Lay Subsidy No. 147-595.

Close Roll, 12 Charles I. No. 26-20, Record Office, London (abstract):—

25 May 1636, John Blisse of Colmorth, Beds, Clerke, son & heir of Thos Blisse late citizen & Brewer of London deceased and Edw. Lively of St. Saviours, Southwark, Surrey gente, for £250, conveys all those two mesuages tents or houss in Seething Lane psh of St. Olaves, London, nigh the Tower of London in the occupacons of Peter Sweet and Anthony Uphill, late in the occupacons of John Ellis and Morrice Griffin, which premisses the said Thomas Bliss did purchase of William Hawkins citizen and fishmonger of London and Jane his wife, late one of the daughters of Edward Bailey late of London cooper, deceased and Anne Bailey widowe late wife and executrix of the last will of said Edward, by Indenture dated the first of Aprill in the thirteenth yere [1616] of the raigne of our late souveraigne lord king James etc.

The brewer sent his son John to both Cambridge and Oxford Universities. In *Alumni Oxoniensis* occurs:—

Blisse, John B.A. from Pembroke College, Cambridge, 1622, M.A. 1626, probably rector of Colmworth, Bedfordshire, 1628.

In Composition Bonds for First Fruits [Record Office, London] this John Bliss is referred to on 21 June, 1628, as being the rector of Colmworth. He died there twenty-two years later leaving a will, viz.:—

(This will is registered in the Prerogative Court of the Archbishop of Canterbury, London, Register Grey, folio 203.) (Abstract).

John Blisse of Colmworth, Bedfordshire, Clarke [rector], To be buried in the chancell of Parish Church of Colmworth To welbelovd kinsman John

ffarley, citizen & Grocer Woodstrete, London, trusty & welbeloved son-in-law John Smith citizen & haberdasher of parish of Christ Church, London—houses, messuages, tenements in psh of Allhallows the lesse, in Thames St. London; that, after the decease of my mother-in-law Ann Blisse, widow, they enter upon the same to sell—the proceeds to be used to pay my debts. Remainder to be paid to Ann Blisse my welbeloved wife for herself & benefit of children. Other houses etc. called the Saracen's Head [an ale house] in Catherine Creechurch [parish] ward of Algate, London, and all else in the Realm of England to wife Ann, after decease of my said mother, for benefit of my children, wife Ann not to claim one-third as dower. To son Thomas Blisse, my heir, £20 yearly, and one gold sealing ring which was my father's. Diamond ring to my mother-in-law, Ann Blisse [step-mother]. To poore of Colmworth 40 shillings. Pro-bated 5 Nov. 1651. [The seal upon the ring may have been the Bliss coat-of-arms.]

Rector Blisse's ownership of the old Saracen's Head was an inheritance, which, it should be observed, he ordered sold. The ownership of such premises by churches and clergymen was not infrequent. Many churches owned small breweries and "with the profits of ale," says Philip Stubbes, in *Anatomie of Abuses*, "they repair their churches and chappels, they buy bookes for service, cuppes for the celebration of the sacrament, surplusses for Sir John the Priest and such other necessaries." Pressing as is the need of the Established Church of England of to-day for funds to save the ancient buildings from decay, and to increase the attractiveness of the interiors, the sentiment of the communicants is against a resumption of such discarded customs.

The Bliss family continued in Bedfordshire for several generations. About 1750 one of the descendants, born at Biggleswade, Bedford (died in Kent about 1830,) married, 1788-9, Sarah Pluckwell of Rochester, Kent, who died in Kent in 1843, leaving issue, Thomas, Sarah, Mary, Moses, Henry, Ann, Frances, James, William, George, all of whom died in England,—and also had an eldest son John Bliss, born 25th April, 1790, married, 1813, Mary Eleanor Ashton, emigrated to the United States soon after 1821, and died 12th Oct., 1870, at Brooklyn, N. Y., leaving issue.

Twenty days after the proving of the will of the aforesaid Rev. John Blisse of Colmworth, Bedford, the will of Richard Blisse of Barking (now in the county of London) was proved in the same Archbishop's Court, and registered in the same folio (203) of the same register (Gray). Abstract:—

Richard Blisse of Barking clothier, will dated 11 Aug. 1651. To son Ambrose Blisse £15. To daughter Judith Blisse £40 at marriage if she mary with consent

of my executor otherwise £20. To wife Judith the residue, provided if she marry she to pay Ambrose £100. Witness Tho. Cowley, Will Stephens. Proved 25 Nov. 1651.

The son, Ambrose Blisse, became a "merchant taylor" in London, dying there in 1670, apparently without issue, leaving by will [P.C.C. Duke 1] £55 to the poor of Barking, £50 to the poor of the parish of St. Mildreds in the Poultry, London, £500 to neece Blise Whitehall, £5 to cosen Margaret Blyse als. Cole, £20 to Cousen Ambrose Coney, and £3 to cousen Judith Coney.

The Bliss family did not flourish numerically in London; nearly all of its members were country bred. "Back to the land," to the Midlands, this narration now proceeds. The branching of the family from the Midlands to the west, to the east, and to the south we have already outlined. The north only is left to us. There, but a little northward from the region of Tyringham, blossomed the Blisses in fullest profusion. There it is that this account ripens in the richest flower. The reader who has followed thus far, through dull or entertaining records (whichever they may seem), will gain a rich store of facts by further patience—if he or she would learn ought of

"The dead
Who rule our spirits from their urns."

"Aye, by wandering tempest sown
'Neath every alien star,
Forget not whence the breath was blown
That wafted you afar."

William Blisse of Cranfield, 1325, etc.

In the time of Dante and Chaucer, Bruce and Wyclif, and of another war with Scotland, when the moon and the stars were the only known mariners' guides, long before gunpowder was invented, before Joan of Arc stirred an inhumane humanity, one William Blisse was residing ten miles southeastward from Tyringham and its now famous John Blisse. The period was 1325 to 1350. John Blisse of Tyringham should have been dead by this time. We cannot prove by an ancient manuscript that the said William was either his son, or at least a very near relative, but how can we doubt it? They trusted—

"The lingering gleam of their departed lives
To oral records and the silent heart."

Hence there are no vital statistics. However, eight miles eastward from Tyringham is the boundary between the counties of Buckingham and Bedford, and two miles further, on the Bedford side, is Cranfield. The ancient Benedictine Monastery of Ramsey in Huntingdonshire owned land and houses in Cranfield. A cartulary of this monastery is extant in the MS. Department of the British Museum, dated 1325-1350. It is a book of 271 vellum leaves, size $8\frac{1}{2} \times 12\frac{1}{2}$ inches, bound in oak boards, written chiefly in Latin and in the fourteenth-century style of handwriting. This entry occurs in it:—

(Translation.) Inquisition taken at Cranfield by Robert de Heye, Alan de Wodeende, Walter the reeve, Robert son of Katherine & Virianus Hetihng. In the first boonday let him come with all his family who are able to work; & he is not accounted for his work because on the morrow of the boonday he rendered the work of that day. William Blisse holds one messuage & one pightell* which contain by estimation half an acre, and he has to work for it each Monday in the year as a man who holds a virgate does.

He gives tallage† & merchet.‡

John Freke holds one messuage & one pightell & has to do in all things just as William Blisse.

Here again is an early Blisse eking out a mere existence upon a half-acre of ground and sheltering himself and family in a hovel, for which he paid to the monks (who had perhaps wheedled the land

*Pightell, a small measure of land.

†Tallage, a local tax.

‡Merchet, a fine payable to the lord of a manor by a villein, for the consent of the lord, or for a license from the lord permitting the villein to give his daughter in marriage.

out of some penitent) the heavy rent of fifty-two days of his labor in every year. This William Blisse, a practically landless man, a villein, had no civic as he had no national existence, not being a landowner; and here in Cranfield he was as a Saxon who, under the domination of Norman despotism, had not had the chance to regain the independency that had been the possession of his ancestors before the Norman conquest. The poetical apologist may sing:—

"This man is freed from servile bands,
Of hope to rise or fear to fall;
Lord of himself, though not of lands,
And having nothing, yet hath all."

But the truth is as Gray wrote of men like William Blisse: "Chill penury repressed their noble rage." It is as good as a moral certainty that this William Blisse is our ancestor of the second (known) generation of the Blisses of England. Mere man though he was, we must hold him high. Were it not for some force and virtue in their blood, an inheritance from their independent, more fortunate Saxon ancestors, our Blisses might have sunk here in long last rest, as other families sank, like lions in captivity, never to rise again. But they did not cease. They did not flourish, but they endured under adversity. It was an adversity such as few white men in the world to-day endure, save some of the peasantry of Russia. And in another three hundred years from then, William Blisse of Cranfield, if alive, could have looked upon the family at large and truly have said:—

"She stands a thousand wintered tree,
By countless morns impearled,
Her broad roots coil beneath the sea,
Her branches sweep the world."

Blisses reside in Cranfield to-day. After an absence of the family therefrom of over five hundred years, a Matthew F. Bliss, a descendant out of Floore, Northamptonshire, returned to the home of his probable ancestor of 1350, not knowing it to be the same. On that land he is now supreme, and pays no tallage; neither does he pay merchet. Some will deem this singular fact merely an accidental coincidence in "the whirligig of Time"; others may fancy it to be an "inscrutable mystery of God."

The Blisses of Floore first appear in 1524, when one William "Blys" was taxed in a lay subsidy [Number 155-122] fourpence upon his "wags" [wages] of "XXs." In 1631 a William Blisse of

Floore was a juror at the county sessions held at Northampton. In the Commonwealth Exchequer Papers [217 Inventories] are quoted rents due to the Earl of Northampton on 24th May, 1645, from these Blisses at Glasthorp in Floore:—

	s	d
"Wm Blisse.....	£1	10-0
John Bliss.....	14	-
Wm Bliss.....	2	0-0
John Bliss.....	14	0"

On June 5, 1675, another William Bliss of Floore married Anne — in Fawsley Church. Matthew F. Bliss of Cranfield, 1913, traces his ancestry to a John Bliss, of Floore, born about 1700, whose name occurs, in 1738-40, in an old book concerning some parish business. The William Bliss buried at Floore in 1799 was the father of another William, who, in turn, had a son William who was born at Floore, in 1773, and married Abigail Folwell of the same parish. The latter William removed in 1798 to Hinton-in-the-Hedges, Leicestershire, and in 1800 to Broughton, Bucks [part of the Tyringham estate until 1905-6,—the same as John Blisse lived on in 1272], where he died in 1838, leaving six sons and six daughters. The eleventh child, the late Matthew Folwell Bliss of Cranfield, was the father of the present William Bliss of Wavendon, Woburn Sands, of Matthew F. Bliss of Cranfield, and of Valentine Bliss of Scranton, Pa., U. S. A., who emigrated to America in 1879, having married at Macclesfield, in 1878, Mary Ann Rushton.

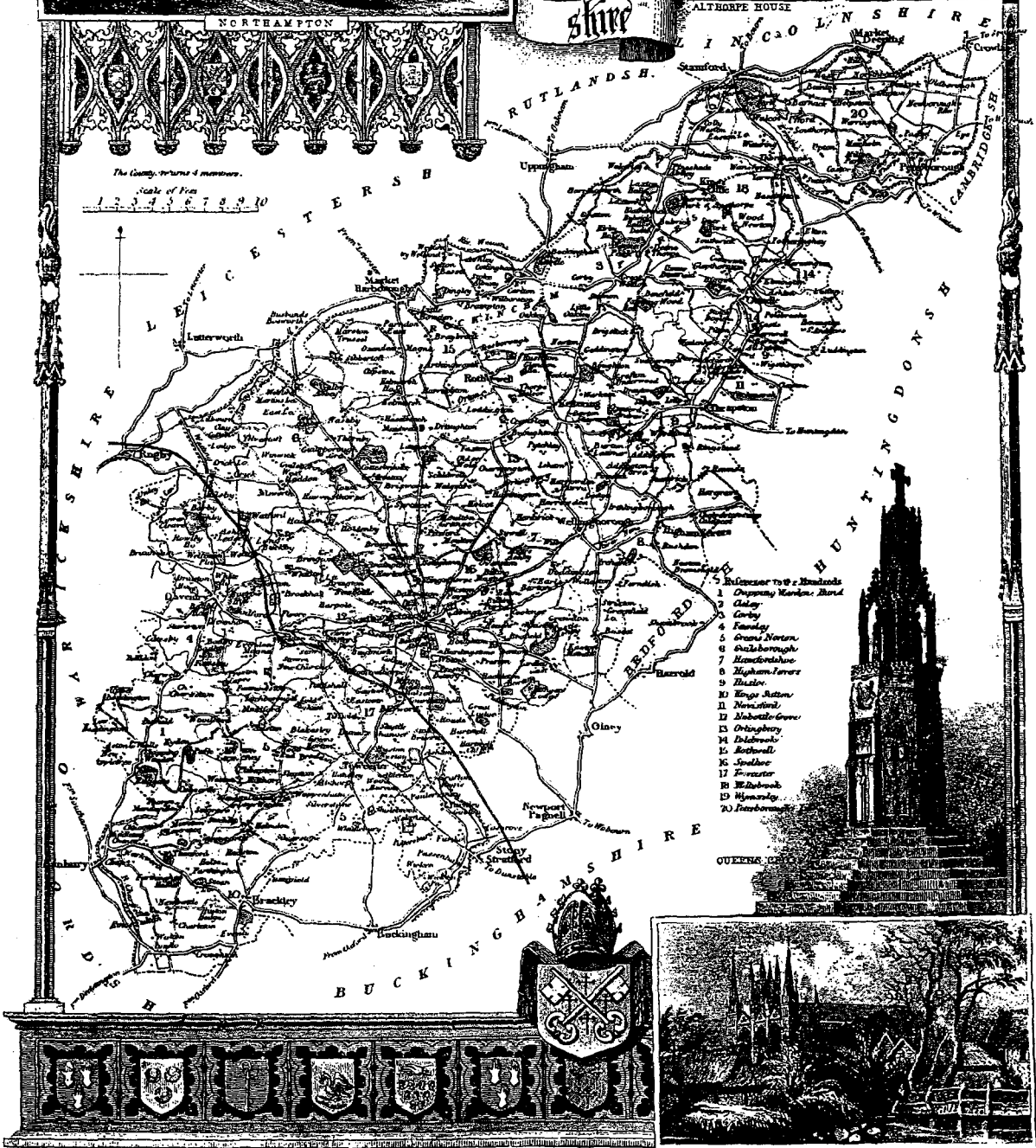
All records of Bedfordshire, from the earliest extant subsidy of 1310 to 1500, have been examined without yielding another Bliss item. The William Blisse of 1325 may have returned a few miles into Bucks County as the father of the Henry Blisse of Bierton who was pardoned for the accidental killing of Walter Malph, by King Richard II in 1380 at the solicitation of the Earl of Warwick [Patent Rolls, 4 Richard II., Pt. I., m. 43] but more likely as father of Philip Blisse, attacked by marauders in 1356, at Wootton, twenty miles northwestward from Cranfield.



NORTHAMPTON



ALTHORPE HOUSE



1. Oakington to St. Neots
2. Oakington to St. Neots
3. Oakington to St. Neots
4. Oakington to St. Neots
5. Oakington to St. Neots
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16. Oakington to St. Neots
17. Oakington to St. Neots
18. Oakington to St. Neots
19. Oakington to St. Neots
20. Oakington to St. Neots



QUEEN'S CHURCH



BURTON CATHEDRAL

Blisse Beginnings in Northamptonshire

Thomas Blisse of Hartford, Conn., his brother George Blisse of Newport, R. I., and their cousin Thomas Blisse of Rehoboth, Mass., were born in and emigrated from the County of Northampton in the Midlands of England, otherwise called Northamptonshire and Northants. Their ancestors had resided within the said county for two hundred and seventy-nine years prior to the departure of the three kinsmen for the New World. Back of 1356, those early ancestors came from Buckinghamshire and Bedfordshire, close to the southern border of Northants. These ancestors descended, beyond all reasonable doubt, directly from the vicinity of Tyringham. They entered Northants in or shortly before 1356 directly from Tyringham or *via* Cranfield, preferably the latter. We shall show the Bliss entree into Northants; and we shall show the Bliss exit therefrom to America. Between those two events we shall portray many Blisses and many affairs. For the latter half of that period of two hundred and seventy-nine years we shall reveal the pedigree of our direct ancestors by some of the finest legal evidences, appertaining to such matters, that exist in the most noble and unmatched archives of England—the most splendid collection of ancient records that was ever preserved by any nation in the world. For the first half of that same period of two hundred and seventy-nine years the family lies submerged in a “record-chasm.” The Bliss family of England matured to its fullest numerical perfection on English soil within twenty-five miles of where it originated. From the year 1272 our ancestors lived and died and lived and died, one after the other, within two-score miles of where the surname of Bliss is first found officially recorded in human history. The three early Bliss emigrants to America had their English homes within twenty-five miles of the famous Tyringham; and they, brave men, were no less than twelve generations removed from John Blisse of Tyringham in 1272, that superb specimen of a villein of the Middle Ages. Up from the adversity of mediæval conditions the members of the family rose to political and personal independence before 1550 by virtue of their meritorious efforts. The date of the high-water mark of the family achievements in Northamptonshire is 1600. Northants still has its Blisses after more than five and one-half centuries. Thinning greatly in numbers since 1635, gradually weakening in cohesion and seemingly now dying out as a Northamptonshire family, to-day its few survivors within those historic

boundaries, forgetful of the past glory of their gone-and-forgotten forbears and not knowing of the Blisses in the Western Hemisphere, look in imagination, when told of America, far westward across the Atlantic Ocean, upon their newly-revealed and distant kin with feelings of wonder and admiration.

The Bliss blood enters the County of Northampton at Wootton, thirteen miles northwestward from Tyringham, twenty-three miles in the same direction from Cranfield, twelve miles eastward from the home of the emigrants to America, and two miles southerly from the city of Northampton, the county seat. The record of 1356 is that of an assault upon "Philip, son of William Blisse," whom we can scarcely cease, if we would, from believing to be the same William Blisse whom we have seen at Cranfield but a very few years earlier. We are prone to so believe, even though knowing irrevocably the while, after every possible effort among the records, that we now can never hope to verify that belief by any further extant record. There was every good reason why the Cranfield man, or his son, should work free from the domination of the landlordism with which he was burdened. We must believe that one or both of them did so. The family certainly did emerge therefrom and attain to both political and commercial independence. The dubious may smile at the temerity with which we state this pedigree probability, but let us bear in mind the historian Livy: "When length of time diminishes firm confidence, we must take our stand on the tradition, or logic of events"—a conclusion that was as just as it was obvious. If this position be admitted, we trust to receive some indulgence when compelled to resort to conjecture or circumstantial evidence. Hence, whatever may be the opinion of any who would sit in the soft seat of the critic, knowing naught from personal experience of these English family hunting-grounds, and dreaming not of the hard stubble of these fields, or still less realizing the sense of intuition, amounting to almost an inspiration, that at times comes to the patient gleaner as he bends over that ground—to such a would-be critic we shall say, in the language of Buchanan: "*Ego vero tantum abest ut haec refell molest feram, ut si quis certiora doseat ac de errore me deducet ei maximam gratiam sim habiturus.*"

(The Latin original of this record is preserved in the Record Office, London.)

Coram Rege Roll [Court of the King's Bench], No. 381 Michaelmas term, 29 Edward III [1355] 2nd part, m. 26. [Translated Abstract.]

The King's writ, dated 12 Nov., 29 Edw. III, to William de Shareshull and other Justices of the King's Bench, directing them to do what the law required upon an inquisition taken at Great Houghton before the Sheriff of Northampton as to certain felonies and trespasses committed.

The inquisition follows, taken at Great Houghton on Tuesday next before the Feast of St. Martin [November 11], 29 Edw III by the oath of Richard de Caysho, Philip de Quenton, Giles Blundel, Richard de Stone, William de Sutton, William Warde, John Beseville, John Abbey, John Turnageyn, William Smyth, William Barkere, and William de Helmyndene, who say that Adam Cose, chaplain, and Henry de Bukingham came armed by night to Wotton on Sunday after the Feast of the Decollation of St. John the Baptist [August 29] in the said 29th year, and broke into the house of William le Mileward, together with Adam le Garlekmongere of Northampton the younger, John de Brikelsworth, William Sherman, Thomas Longe, John de Cauntebrigg, Wautersservant of Rode, William Jolyf, John atte Wode, John Elkyn, Nicholas Jonesservant of Brampton, John Sprot, Moldisseraunt le Deystre, Roger le Webistere of Northampton, Thomas Elys, William Pye, Peter le Smyth, William de Brampton, tailor, Richard de Tiffeld, garlekmongere, living in Thorpe, and Henry fairware and other persons unknown, and there whipped, wounded and ill-treated Richard Murich, tailor, Thomas de la Chaumbre, tailor, Robert Beste, *Philip, son of William Blisse*, Simon Woderoue, and Robert Hayward. Also that John, servant of Henry de Bukingham, wounded Margaret, wife of the aforesaid William le Mileward, on the left side of the breast, with an arrow, so that her life was utterly despaired of, and that John de Brikelsworth on the same Sunday stole two bows and twenty arrows, worth 40d., and that John de Cauntebrigg despoiled the aforesaid Richard Muryel of a sword and a buckler, worth 6s., in the presence of the other persons breaking in as aforesaid; and after they had done these things they withdrew.

Therefore Adam Cose and the others are summoned to answer in the King's Bench.

John de Brikelsworth comes and pleads not guilty. [The case is adjourned, and the result not entered on the roll.]

Philip and William were favorite christian names in the family long after the Philip and William of Wootton had ceased to hear themselves so called; but the space of three or four generations following embraces the record-chasm, in which the Blisses of Northants lie submerged. The line of descent therein, slender though it must have been, still spun itself onward. That fact is all that can be said of the family during that interval in this shire. Several scattering Blisses appeared further to the north of whom presently. Every known record has been searched, hundreds of documents, local, county, and national. War, "the Black Death," and famine had succeeded each other almost throughout this entire period. In these years, in due order, occurred the great defeats of the English

in France, a war in Spain, the imposition of a graduated poll tax, the great revolt of the peasants under Wat Tyler and Jack Straw, the death of Wyclif, the suppressing of his great work, a war with Scotland, a war in England, the height of ecclesiastical power and abuses, a war with Wales, the execution and banishment of the Lollards and the destruction of their books (putting out the light of progressive thought for a century), the invasion of England by the Scots, church property confiscated for military purposes, war with the Duke of Orleans, a losing war with France against Joan of Arc, the war renewed, the rebellion under Jack Cade, and the sixty years Wars of the Roses. Ere the latter had ended, the Bliss family had firmly established itself at Daventry, Northants, twelve miles from Wootton. There, in and around Daventry, during less warlike times, it continued in unprecedented prosperity for over four hundred years, till 1900. Around Daventry our story will soon center itself, and thereabouts it will end, with but two diversions therefrom.

The first diversion: Four miles west from Wootton, where the Bliss family first appeared in Northants, is Gayton; two miles from Gayton is Pattishall; three miles further towards Daventry is Stowe-Nine-Churches. In these adjoining towns there developed a fruitful branch of the family, first revealed in the records in the person of Richard Blisse of Pattishall, who died in 1551, leaving a will which names a daughter Margaret, and a son John. Two descendants of this Stowe branch having emigrated to America, in the nineteenth century, we should not omit the early records of the Blisses of this branch, which are also here presented for the information of the living descendants in England. The registers of the Church of Pattishall begin in 1557 and contain eighteen Bliss entries between 1562 and 1623.

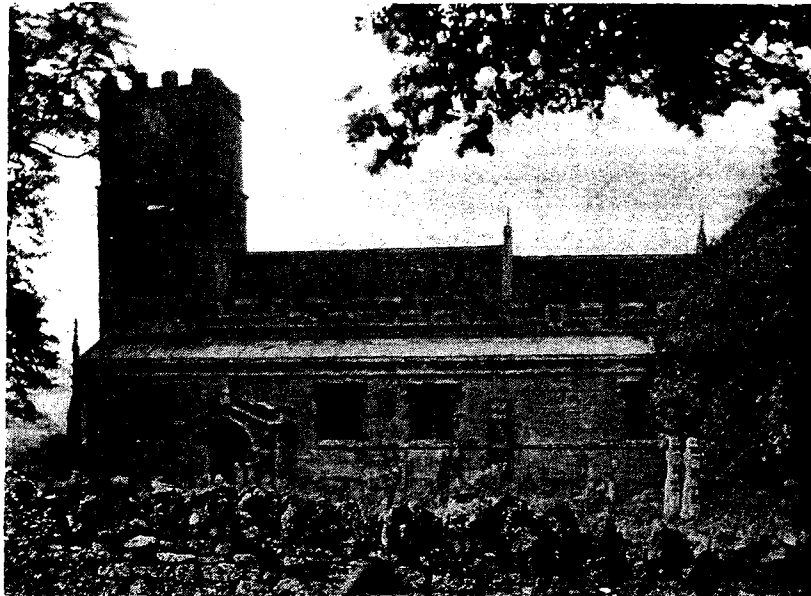
A Thomas Bliss was residing at Eastcote, Pattishall, in 1550. George and Alice (Neale) Blysse married, at Pattishall 10 Aug., 1563, settled at Gayton where their descendants are recorded in nineteen items in the register of the parish church.

John Blisse, named as son in the will of Richard Blisse of Pattishall, in 1551, settled at Stowe-Nine-Churches, where his descendants are recorded in the register of the parish church. The "Nine Churches" refers to the former fact that the lord of the manor of Stowe once owned the right of the presentation of the livings of nine churches. It was something of a self-advertising device that now might be dropped for the sake of brevity if for no better reason.

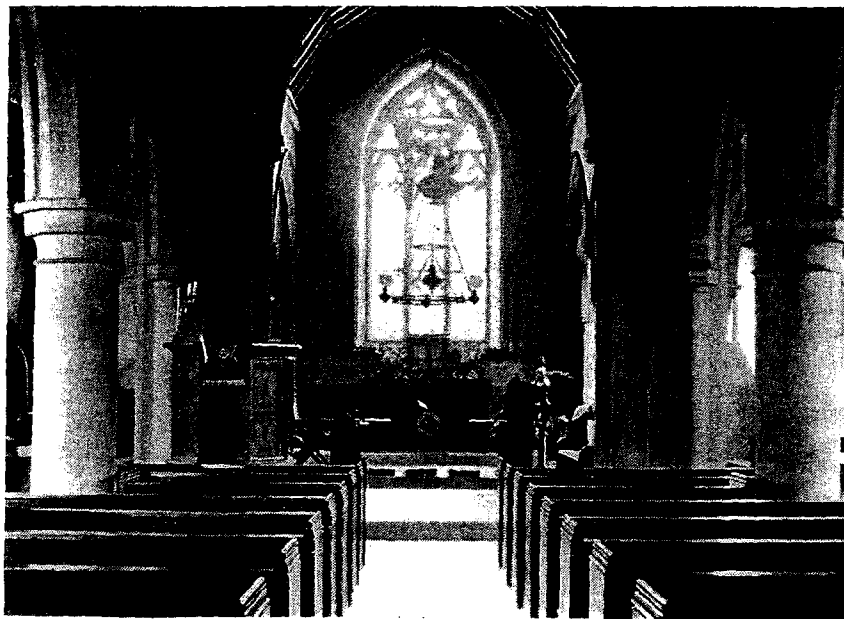
The Register Book of Stowe cum Novem Ecclesijs—In the covntie of Northton &c.

- 1560-1 George Blisse the sonne of John Blisse & Joane was christened the vj daie of februarie Ao 1560 et Reginae Elizæ 3
John Blisse the second sonne of the said John was christened the same daie.
- 1564 Willia Blisse the sonne of John & Joan was christened vj June ano prdict.
- 1575 John Fretter & Jone Blisse were married the last of Aprill.
- 1579 Wm. Hoiden & Elizabeth Blisse were married xxiiijth of October
- 1581 John Blisse was buried xvijth of August 1581 [wife Joan]
- 1582 Richard Blisse & Alice Old were married the xxvjth of Januarie.
- 1582 Wm. Robins & Alice Blisse were married xxvjth of Januarie. [She was buried at Heyford 1597-8]
- 1583 Elizabeth Blisse daughter of Richard Blisse & Alice was baptized 3d of November.
- 1587 John Blisse & Agnes Old were married xxvijth of Jan.
- 1588 Tho. Blisse son of Ricd Blisse was baptized the first of maie.
Thomas Blisse was buried the xvjth of maie ao 1588.
- 1589 Thomas Blisse son of John Blisse & Agnes was baptized xxvth of Aprill [This Thomas named in will of his uncle William 1610 and buried, viz, "1612 Thomas Blysse servant to John Andrew, bury'd 25 Aug."—Register of Holy Cross, Daventry.]
- 1589 Alice Blisse daughter of Ricd Blisse & Alice his wife was baptized xth of Julie.
- 1591 John Blisse son of John Blisse & Agnes was baptized xxjth of novem.
- 1591 Agnes Blisse daughter of Ricd Blisse & Alice was baptized xxvth of februarie
- 1593 Wm. Blisse son of John Blisse & Agnes was baptized xth of Julie & buried the xijth of the same.
- 1593 Jone Blisse daughter of Ric Blisse & Alice baptized the fourth of November [Alice buried at Heyford 1597-8]
- 1594 Ric Blisse son of John Blisse & Agnes was baptized xixth of Januarie.
1595. Jane Blisse daughter to Ricd & Alice baptized 2d of novem.
- 1595 Jane Blisse daughter of Ricd Blisse & Alice his wife was buried the same daie [i. e. the third of Dec. 1595.]
- 1596 Jane Blisse daughter Ric Blisse & Alice baptized 28 novem.
Jane Blisse aforesaid was buried vjth of December [Alice her mother buried in Heyford.]
- 1597 Margerie Blisse was buried xxvth May.
- 1597 Jone Blisse daughter of Ric Blisse & Alc buried the xvth of februarie.
- 1598 George Blisse the sonne of John Blisse and Anne his wife was baptized the 30th Aprill 1598 [George married in Stowe 1622]
- 1600 William Blisse the sonne of John Blisse and Agnes his wife was christened the 11th of Januarie 1600.
- 1600 William Blisse the sonne of Richard Blisse was buried the 13th of Januarie 1600.
- 1603 Lawrence Blisse the sonne of john Blisse & Anne his wife was baptized

- the 21 of August. [Lawrence died at East Haddon, 1652, leaving a will which named son Thos. wife and dau Anne]
- 1605 Nicholas Blisse the son of John Blisse and Anne his wife was christened the 15th of December.
- 1606 Jane Blisse was buried xiiijth day of Aprill.
- 1608 Joseph Blisse the sonne of John Blisse and Agnes his wife was christened the 4th of September.
- 1610 William Blisse was buried the xvijth of September [His will probated 4 Oct. 1610]
- 1612 Agnes Blisse the daughter of John Blisse and Agnes his wife was christened the 4 of June.
- 1613 George Blisse the sonne of John Blisse and Joan his wife was christened the xiiijth of June [John bap. 1591]
- 1614 Agnes Blisse the daughter of John Blisse and Joane his wife was christened the 4 of Februarie.
- 1615 Agnes Blisse the daughter of John Blisse and Anne his wife was buried the 25 of May.
- 1618 John Blisse the sonne of John Blisse and Joane his wife was christened the 25 of maie.
- 1620 Marie Blisse the daughter of John Blisse and Jone his wife was christened the 8th of Octob.
- 1620 Grissel Blisse the wife of Richard Blisse was buried the first of februarie [He married her in Heyford 1603]
- 1622 Agnes Blisse the daughter of Richard Blisse and Anne his wife was christened the 7 of Julie. [Richard left a will 1655. He was married as per this entry in the register of the church at Great Everdon: "1621 Richard Blisse of Stow ch 9 eccles & Anne Barnes were maried the thirtieth day of Aprill "]
- 1622 George Blisse ye sonne of John Blisse & Anne his wife was married unto Ursula Bwinley ye daughter of Nicholas Bwinley & Jone the 29 of November.
- 1623 John Blysse and Ursula Judkin were married the sixth of June.
- 1623 John Blisse the sonne of George Blysse of Heiford and Ursula his wife was christened the twelfth of October.
- 1623 William Blysse the sonne of John Blysse and Joan his wife was christened the xxij of November.
- 1624 Richard Blisse the sonne of John Blisse of Heyford and Ursula his wife was christened the ixth [or xixth] December
- 1625 John Blysse the sonne of John Blisse and Ursula his wife of Heyford was buried the xiiijth of Julie.
- 1625 Elizabeth Blisse the daughter of Richard Blisse and Anne his wife was christened the last day of Julie.
- 1625 Agnes Blisse the daughter of George Blisse and Ursula his wife was christened the xxixth of Januarie.
- 1626 John Blisse the sonne of John Blisse and Ursula his wife was christened the xxij of Aprill.
- 1626 Robert Blisse the sonne of John Blisse and Jone his wife was christened the xvjth of marche.



THE PARISH CHURCH OF STOWE



NAVE AND CHANCEL OF STOWE CHURCH

- 1628 Thomas Blisse the sonne of Rychard Blisse & Anne his wife was christened the xxx of March anno.
- 1629 Jane Blisse a daughter of George Blisse and Ursula his wife was christened the x of november.
- 1629 Thomas Blisse the sonne of John Blisse and Ursula his wife was christened the second of Aprill.
- 1629 John Blisse the sonne of William Blisse and Margaret his wife was christened the xiiijth of June.
- 1629 Joan Blisse the daughter of John Blisse and Joane his wife was baptized the xvijth of October.
- 1630 Christian Blisse the daughter of Rychard Blisse and Anne his wife was christened the xxv of december.
- 1630 Anne Blisse the daughter of William Blisse and Margaret his wife was christened the xxxth of Januarie.
[The Churchwardens are Robt. Capell and Rychard Blisse. John Blysse signs as churchwarden on page 32, and page 42 is also signed John Blysse, and also page 43 (1614) and p. 46; Richard Blysse signs page 50.]
- 1631 Richard Blisse a widdower was buried the xxvijth day of September.
- 1631 John Blisse the elder the husband of Agnes Blisse was buried the xijth day of februarie [will 1631]
- 1632 Ursula the daughter of George Bliss and Ursula his wife was baptized the xvth day of April.
- 1633 Nicholas the sonne of Richard Blisse was baptized 19 of August.
- 1633 Jane ye daughter of John Blisse & Ursula his wife was baptized ye 15th of Dec.
- 1634 Jane ye daughter of William Blisse & Margaret his wife was bapt ye 23rd of August.
- 1634 Jane ye daughter of William Blisse & Margaret his wife was buried ye 22 day of October.
- 1635 Richard ye son of Richard Blisse and Anne his wife was baptized Nov. ye 29th.
- 1635 George ye son of George Blisse and Ursula his wife was baptized Dec. 13.
- 1637 Margaret Blisse daughter of Will Blisse & Margaret his wife cristened Jan. 21
- 1638 Joane Blisse the daughter of Richard Blisse and of Agnes his wife baptized Aprill 17th.
- 1638 William the Sonne of John Blisse and Ursula his wife baptized June ye 10th.
- 1638 John Blisse ye son of John Blisse and Joane his wife was buried January 9
- 1639 Jane ye daughter of George Bliss and Ursula his wife was buried february 11th.

The parish records of Heyford, adjoining Stowe, give seven additional items of the Stowe Blisses, between 1597 and 1653, and the register at Dodford adds eight items, 1602 to 1655. The day schools at Heyford are called "Bliss's Endowed Schools."

The rector of Stowe possesses a curious antique chair presented to him years ago by the last of the Blisses of his parish, who told

him that the chair had been an heirloom in the Bliss family. The emigrant to America from Stowe, John Bliss, born there January 24, 1811, married Rhoads Billing (July, 1833), lived in Bugbrook, Northants, where he had children, Mark, Edward, Francis, and Maria, and then emigrated with his family to Philadelphia, Pa., U. S. A. Later, he resided at Rochester, N. Y., King and Queensville, Ontario, Can. Another John Bliss, a descendant out of Stowe, born at Weedon Bec (adjoining Stowe) *circa* 1745, married there Elizabeth Judkins, of the same place, and had a son, Richard, who married Elizabeth Chambers of Farthingstone. This Richard Bliss had a son, Joseph, born May 18, 1805, who married in 1826 Lucy Warwick (born at Farthingstone, June 19, 1805), and emigrated to the United States in 1836-7, and left issue.

The Northern Blissés

At Dore, Derbyshire, upon the border of Yorkshire, one William Blys is mentioned in a Derbyshire charter of 1325 [No. 1018] as having held a lease of a house and some land, which appears to have been renewed to his heirs, by the landlord. From this record it may be imagined that this William Blys had only a son-in-law to succeed him in Dore, or that his son had assumed the surname of Fullo instead of Bliss. Such assumptions were frequent and are common occurrences nowadays. The Blissés did not develop after 1325 in Derbyshire.

Three Blissés had become clergymen (priests) in the north of England, at York and Uttoxeter, before 1471. Although dying without issue, not necessarily graduated from a university, and appointed to their livings from some other part of England to us now unknown, the discoveries concerning them are most interesting. Thomas Blys, vicar of Uttoxeter, Staffordshire, was sued for land in his possession, 1461-1483. [Early Chancery Proceedings 11-440. 1461-1483.]

The Thomas Blisse of York was appointed rector of the Church of St. Gregory in that city, March 16, 1440, by the Prior and Convent of Holy Trinity of York, and he held the position until his death in April, 1471.

The translation of the Latin testament of Sir Thomas Blisse of York:—

[On file at the Probate Registry, City of York, Vol. 4. p. 157.]

In the name of God Amen. On the 13th day of the month of April in the year of our Lord 1471 I, Sir Thomas Blysse, rector of the parish church of St. Gregory the Pope in the city of York, of whole mind and perfect memory, establish, make and ordain my testament in this manner. First I bequeath and commend my soul to God Almighty and the Blessed Virgin Mary, and all the angels and saints of God, and my body to be buried in the chancel of the parish church aforesaid. Item, I bequeath to the keepers or warders of the said church to the use and behoof of the same church 26s. 8d. which are due to me on the day of the drawing up of the presents by John Radcliff late of York, gentleman, upon a missal pledged to me for the same sum of 26s. 8d. And I bequeath 2 lbs. of wax to be bought and burned about my body on the day of my burial. And I bequeath my red "Tysshew" adorned with silver to the Guild of Corpus Christi founded in the city aforesaid. And I bequeath to John Atkynson of Grisyngham my best gown of pale blue, and my tunic reaching to the ankles of the best silk. And I bequeath to Richard Atkynson of the same place 1 coverlet, 1 blanket, and 1 sheet. Item I bequeath to John Pereson of Kellyngton 1 coverlet, 1 blanket and 1 sheet. And the residue of all my goods not above

bequeathed, my debts being deducted and my funeral expenses honestly had and made, I give and bequeath to the disposition of Sir William Lofthowse, rector of the church of Lethelay, and of Richard Bell of York, mylner, whom I ordain and make my executors to well and faithfully do and perform all things above written, In witness whereof to this present testament I have affixed my seal. Given on the day, month and year of our Lord abovesaid.

Proved 22 April in the said year of our Lord, and administration granted to the executors named in the same will.

The prefix "Sir" before the name of Thomas Blisse, the said rector, did not mean that he had been knighted. The prefix "Sir" or "Schir" was anciently used to denote an ungraduated cleric, a curate, and the very numerous chantry priests, or morrow-mass priests whose "wages" were paid by the churchwardens out of the funded property of the chantries. In Scotland the prefix had even other uses. Thomas Blisse was the rector of St. Gregory's Church, and his use of the prefix seems a little uncommon, as "Mr. parson" and his deputy, the parish priest, did not generally employ it. Although knights used the prefix it only properly indicated knight-hood for a clergyman when the affix "Knt.," "Knight," or "Knycht" was used with the "Sir."

The Will of William Blis of York, chaplain

[From Registrum Testamentum Eboriensis, Vol. IV, folio 182, Probate Registry, York.] (Translation):—

In the name of God Amen, the 9th of October A.D. 1472 I William Blis of York chaplain* being of sound mind and memory make and ordain my testament in this manner. First I bequeath & commend my soul to God Almighty, blessed Mary ever virgin his mother, & all Saints, and my body to be buried within the choir of the Friars Carmelites in York. And I bequeath to the afd order of Friars for having the devotion of my burial there $\frac{3}{4}$ [3 shillings 4 pence] with my surplice. Also I bequeath 2 lbs of wax to be made into 4 candles & burnt around my body at the exequies & mass on the day of my burial of which 2 shall be sent after mass to my parish church and the other 2 placed with my body at the place of the Carmelite Friars afd Also I bequeath to every chaplain coming to my exequies & mass on the day of my burial 4d Also for my funeral expenses to be made by the discretion of my executors below named 20s- Also I bequeath the house of St Robert of Knaresbrough 8d Also to the house of the Assumption of Blessed Mary of Mount Grace 2s- Also to the Confraternity or gild of Corpus Christi in York 12d Also to Alice Blis my sister a mattress a pair of best sheets & 2 ewers with the best coverlet belonging to my bed, a gown, viz the next after my mortuary. Also to the same Alice Blis in money 13s4d that she may pray for my soul Also to Margt Scully my kinswoman 3s4d with a gown viz after that gown bequeathed to my sister Also I

* Chaplain, the curate of a chapel, or a domestic chaplain; any one serving a chapel with or without "cure of souls."

bequeath Agnes Barbour, widow 3s4d Also to John Dalby, chapln 3s4d Also to Sir [Dom] Will Mirfyn, chapln, my short sword called a Baslard with silver sheath & the press in my room Also I will that the afsd Willm Mirfyn shall have my little mazer cup for his money before others as valued by faithful men & under 20d. Also that he keep me in memory & pray for me Also I bequeath to Richard Kirketon Chapln a little silver cup pounced that he may pray for me. Also to John Dent, pore little man (paupericulo) a russet gown a coverlet 1 blanket & 1 worn sheet belonging to my bed. Also to Juliana Lolby, poor little woman (paupericule) 1 old coverlet, a blanket & a sheet. Also to every pauper in the hospital of St. Trinity in Fossgate, York, 1½d. Also to the sd hospital 13s4d. Also I will that my feather bed be sold for the best price & spent & not to remain in the hands or possession of my executors. The Residue of all my goods &c I give & bequeath to Thomas Withcall, chapln John Fox in the hospital afsd & Sir William Cabare, Rector of the Church of St. Helen on the Walls, which same Thomas John & Willm I appoint & ordain my executors to dispose the sd Residue to a worthy & honest chapln within the sd hospital to celebrate daily for my soul, the souls of my parents & benefactors, & all the faithful departed until the last penny of the sd Residue be fully spent as they will answer before the Supreme Judge. And I bequeath to each one of them for his trouble 5s- to be taken from my goods. In witness whereof I have hereto set my seal. Dated the day & year abovesaid. Moreover I give to every one of my exors undertaking the burden a silver spoon. Also I bequeath one penny weekly for a year to be spent in bread & distributed to the poor of the sd hospital, viz, on Friday in one week to 4 of them, and on Friday in another week to 4 others, so that it may be equally divided between them & that they may everyone of them pray for me. These being witnesses Willm Myrfyn & Richd Kirketon, chaplains.

Probate granted 15 Decr A. D. 1472 to sd Thomas Withcall & John Fox, chaplains, power being reserved of making like grant to Sir Willm Cabar, chapln, coexecutor, when he shod come forward.

The "Probate Act" of the Will of Robert Blis, late of Newerk, Nottingham; the will itself is not extant; hence there is no evidence that the testator left issue:—

(From Regr. Test, Ebor., Vol. V, fol. 193—Probate Registry, York)

The Will of Robert Blis, late of Newerk, deceased, was proved at Suthwell [Southwell] the First day of the month of May A.D. 1477 and administration granted to Marjory the Relict & Executrix named in the same will, she having been sworn in form of law.

Just here, as the narrative is about to proceed into the greatest Bliss town of all, Daventry Northants, some thoughts intervene for a moment touching the religious conditions up to the time of the three Bliss clergymen afore-mentioned. Each of these unmarried men lived and died as priests loyal to the Church of Rome. Each

acknowledged the authority of the pope as a superior jurisdiction over the kings of England. Their two wills sound a sincere note. Whatever were their practices, fair or selfish, in behalf of their church, Thomas Blisse, and William Blis of York, believed in them. They died in the belief that they had bequeathed their souls "to God Almighty and the Blessed Virgin Mary and all the angels and saints of God." Whatever they did in life, or whatever they believed, who shall say that "the holye companye of Heaven" did not receive their souls? It is clear that they *esteemed* the figurative Virgin and Saints and the *body* of her Son more than they *understood* the actual words of the unmentioned Jesus Christ. Their intellectual inability to assimilate the great truths of the New Testament is also evident. They were clergymen; how much less did the communicants understand? It does not matter now, whether they knelt to pray before an image of the Saviour or a Saint, or, on the very threshold of the Unseen, they bent their heads and their hearts were humbled. The picture of the religious practices of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries is a painful one to study. It is with feelings of trembling indignation and of pity for the ecclesiastical blindness that the modern Christian reads the facts in any good history of England. When Green tells us that "the clergy connived for money at every kind of debauchery," we marvel how that could be really true. All historians concur, however, save those of Rome, and on much the Roman writers are silent. One prefers to leave the facts alone as being "old unhappy far-off things and battles long ago," and to feel with the philosopher that "happy is the country that has no history." Intolerable as the conditions do seem to have been such was the spirit of those times; and by that spirit, rather than by that of to-day, should those conditions be judged. Nevertheless the wealth of the early church brought Christian architecture to its highest beauty (around 1300). It bequeathed to us the noble, grand cathedrals—"the pious work of names once famed, now dubious or forgot." Our ancestors were called upon to make sacrifices for such works, as well as for their more voluntary gifts. If they were oppressed, we are joyous. These old cathedrals, abbeyes, and parish churches of England, they are ours—York, Lincoln, Peterborough, Tynningham, Cranfield, Wootton, Stowe, Pattishall, Dodford, Northampton, Daventry, Preston, Fawsley, and the rest. They are ours! Our Bliss ancestors have made them so. "We never tread within them but we set our foot upon some reverend history." What would the landscape be without them?

"See yonder hallowed fane!
That seems to lift the soul up silently
To heaven with all its dreams."

They will come home to us with a deeper meaning, arousing a sense of personal possession, if, when we journey to England to gaze upon them, we but stop a moment to think who built them, and why, and what for. Moreover, to whatever church or creed we now subscribe, these ancient palaces of heaven should appeal to us all equally and alike, arousing more than a mere admiration for their architectural excellencies.

The aim of Wyclif, "to take man out of the hands of the priest, and to place his religion in his personal responsibility, intelligence, and right feeling," quickly obtained great honor amid the people of the Midlands of England. "There was not a man or woman in that county" [Leicester], says Thompson [*History of Leicestershire*, p. 78], "save priests and nuns who did not at that time openly profess their disbelief in the doctrine of the church and their approval of the new views of the Lollards" (followers of Wyclif). Twenty years after Philip Blisse and his father, William, became of record at Wootton (as noted), the Lollards were ordered out of England by royal edict (1384); their books were destroyed wherever found; and religious liberty was suppressed for another century. It was even one hundred and fifty years later before public opinion forced the printing of the Bible in the English language, for general distribution. Not until the reign of Elizabeth [1558-1603] came "the general intellectual quickening." So till nearly up to that time our ancestors may be properly considered to have accepted, in the abstract at least, the propositions that were laid down to them in the parish churches of the little towns and villages in which they passed their uneventful workaday lives. Few if any of them made the expensive journey to the shrine at Canterbury, or even went on a pilgrimage among the thousands to the nearer Walsingham,—the ancient Lourdes,—as did Margaret Paston, who, when her husband was ill in London, wrote:—

"My moder he bestyd a noder ymmage of wax of the waytte of yow to oyer Lady of Walsingham . . . to pray for yow; and I have hastyd to gon on pylgraymmays to Walsyngham for yow."

The monks there exhibited a phial, as a most sacred object, said to be filled with the milk of the Virgin. Surely, from the middle of the fourteenth to nearly the sixteenth century our ancestors were

told that there could be no forgiveness of sin until a gift had been made to the church, if demanded; and that there could be no repose of a soul, after death, until they had paid for masses. The common doctrine was as much as to say (as has been pithily said) that "a man could with perfect confidence commit as much of whatever sin liked him, as he chose, all the time he lived in this world, provided he could procure the necessary number of masses to be said for his soul after he was dead." Although the standard histories recount how, as late as 1509, "the church trembled at the progress of [what it called] 'heresy,'" was "rendered weak by its want of spiritual life, by its antagonism to the deeper religious convictions of the people, and its blind hostility to the intellectual movement which was beginning to stir the world," and that "churchmen were jealous only for the preservation of their vast estates," Dr. John Blysse of London, as late as 1530, bequeathed money to the blackfriars, for a "whole Trentall of Masses for my sowle." He was the last Bliss of England to so bequeath. Masses for the repose of the dead *in the minds of the living* need not be criticised by any Christian. Science has not yet discovered what effect, if any, such a service may have for the spirit of the departed, in the Hereafter to which that spirit is believed to have gone. As for the Blisses reposing in the quiet Midland villages, "exempt from public haunts," believe it, dear reader, their daily tasks fortunately occupied their minds. Much of the political and religious strife passed over their heads. They wrote little and read less. They took things as they came; and like many a tired, modern man of business, in a Sunday-morning pew, they, in their stolid, rugged composure, slept through it all, or a good part of it. Upon their furrowed brows sat the equanimity of Nature. Kings might come and kings might go, taxation was what they feared the most. Whether they confessed their sins to a priest, or direct to Heaven in their own chambers, their daily toil was none the less. The world might be round, or it might be flat; it did not matter to them. We may well doubt, however, if they would have joined the Zetetic Society of England the members of which believe that the earth is flat, and whose president, Lady Blount, declared at her lecture at Bournemouth in 1910 that she had made many practical experiments which prove that the earth is not a globe, that there are no such places as the North and South Poles, and that the reason why the topmasts of a ship at sea were seen before the hull was only because of the mists on the surface of the waters and not the curvature of the earth.

The Home of Thomas Blisse, the Emigrant

Daventry, a market town in the Hundred of Fawsley, Deanery of Daventry, Archdeaconry of Northampton, and Diocese of Peterborough, was the home of our ancestors for one hundred and fifty years prior to the emigration to New England—the scene of the Blisses' achievements as freemen, yeomen, merchants. Daventry is seventy-two miles from London on "the great road" from London to Chester, twelve miles north of Sulgrave, where lived the ancestors of George Washington, fifteen miles west from Ecton, where Benjamin Franklin's ancestors forged and hammered, twenty-five miles to the eastward of Shakespeare's Stratford-on-Avon, and twelve miles westward from the city of Northampton. Daventry is a parish and an incorporated borough, situate upon the top and westward slope of a long, low hill. The altitude of the village is over 400 feet above sea level, rising to 600 feet in the surrounding hills. The district forms the highest land in the County of Northampton and the highest generally between the eastern seaboard and the West of England. The town comprises 4000 acres, had 2582 people in 1801, 4565 in 1841, and over 5000 in 1900. The assessable value of the land and houses is about £13,000. There are three principal streets, named High, Sheaf, and Lichfield, and a market place in the form of an irregular triangle. The land and houses are chiefly owned by three landlords, one of whom is the lord of the manor.

Daventry is commercial and altogether modern in aspect. It is picturesque in nothing. The outlying hills alone hold one's æsthetic vision. Grown too large to have suffered the dreamy continuance of its earlier rustic beauties, it is too small for any notable "marks of earthly state." For pretty gardens, green hedges, soft lawns, and charming old mansions and cottages, for which England is famous, Daventry is without distinction. Its streets and houses breathe the spirit of a rigid, civic, and domestic economy—an indifference, if not an insensibility, to the joy and the pride of pleasing, cheerful outward appearances. It is compact and practical, plain and substantial, and clean, both place and people. Both are enduring rather than interesting, virtuous if not also attractive, complacent rather than conscious of the advance of the great world without, "save in a few exceptions." Before 1635 Daventry presented quite a different aspect. The remains of prehistoric man of the neolithic stone age have been found at Daventry. Among Nature's barriers eastward from the village, on Borough-hill, is

the site of the most extensive Roman encampment in Great Britain. Thereon was a village called by the Britons, before the time of Christ, *Benaventa*, and by the Romans, after the first century, *Isannavaria*.

Baker [*History and Antiquities of the County of Northampton*], who devoted a great deal of time and attention to this encampment, and who discovered the *Roman Prætorium*, tells us that "the outer circumference of the ramparts is rather more than two miles and a quarter; the diameter from north to south one mile; from east to west, at the widest point, 3 furlongs; and the contents of the whole area about one hundred and fifty acres." "Below this encampment or rampire," writes Mr. Morton, "about 250 yards on the southeast side of the same hill, is a lesser camp, if I may so call it, surrounded by a single trench and a bank of earth on the inside of it. The area is supposed to be about an acre, the figure an oblong square. The entrances into it appear to have been on the east, and another on the opposite or western side. The use of it perhaps was for lodging carriages. On the south side of the Borough-hill, at the foot of it, almost a quarter of a mile below the rampire, is that place, by the country people called *Burnt Walls*, where many loads of stone, of ruined walls and foundations, have been dugged up. It takes up about six acres of ground, seems to have been moated round, and perhaps had water conveyed to it from the old pools at no great distance in that part called Daintry Park." That Borough-hill had been a primitive settlement of our aboriginal ancestors, previous to the invasion of the Romans, there can scarcely be a doubt; and Baker is of opinion that when Ostorius, the Roman General, succeeded in routing and dispersing the *Iceni Corotani*, he adopted *Benaventa* for one of his stations; converting the northern point of the hill towards the Watling-street into a *Castra Æstiva*, or summer camp, and changing the name of the town to *Isannavaria*, and its site to the Burnt Walls in the valley between the southern extremity of this hill and the hill on which, till some years since, Daventry-wood stood. And that after the final evacuation of this island by the Romans, in the fifth century, the importance of Borough-hill as a military post could not be overlooked, and it must have been occupied by the Saxons and probably by the Danes, and consequently undergone many changes and modifications. At the northern point of the hill was a mount called Bunker's-hill, which in all probability was a speculum or beacon tumulus. In November, 1823, Mr. Baker had the western side of the hill excavated, when he discovered the site of the *Prætorium*, or residence of the Roman general, consisting of several rooms and a bath, with curiously wrought tessellated pavements, a large portion of which was in the possession of a Mr. Blundell (builder, etc.) of Daventry, who assisted in the research. Several fragments of Roman pottery, burnt earth, and charred wood, a part of an instrument resembling a sacrificing knife, teeth, jawbones, and other bones of horses and other animals were discovered at the same time. A range of tumuli was also opened, and fragments of sepulchral urns discovered. "Just within the entrenchments," says Morton, "the whole circuit of the area, excepting only about a quarter of a mile in the northern part of it, hath for several years been a celebrated course for horse races; which, as it hath been measured and is now usually computed, wants about 28 yards of two miles." These races were



DAVENTRY FROM NEWNHAM HILL



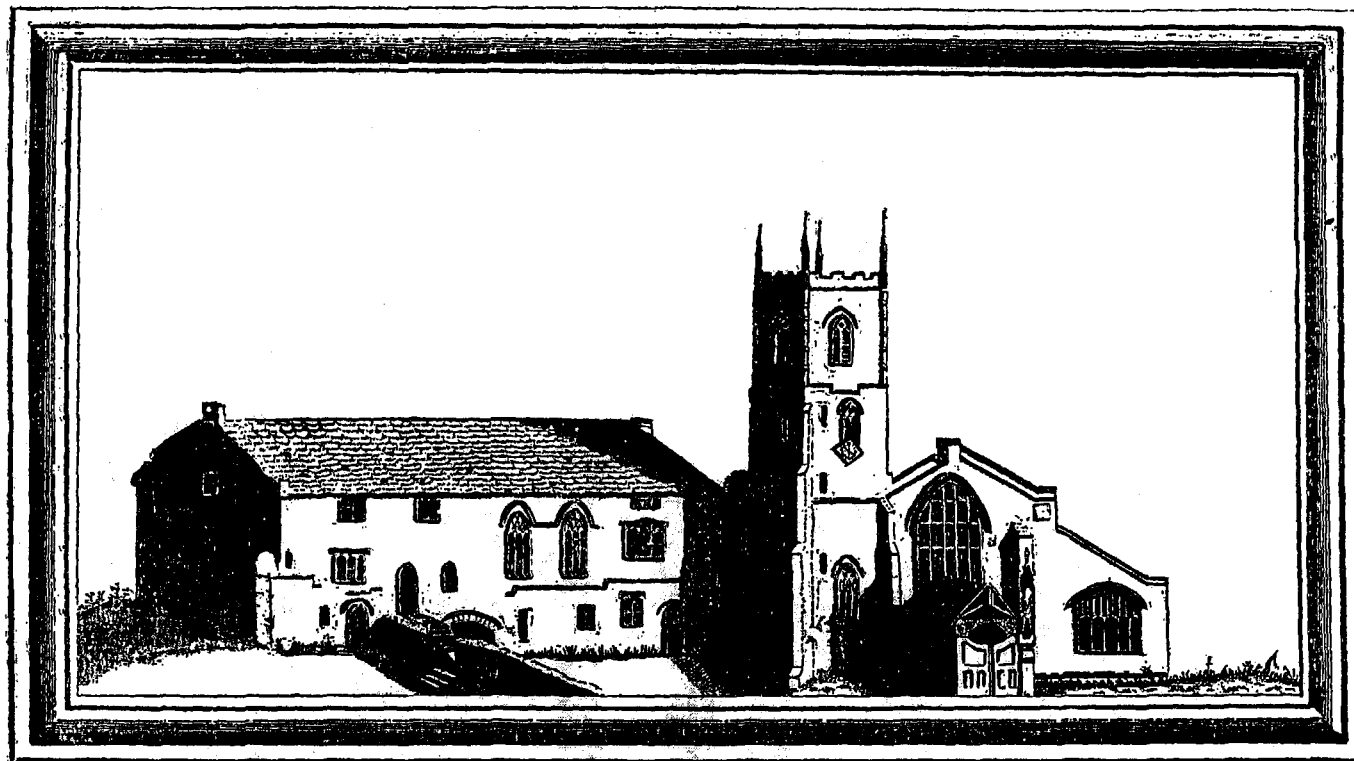
DAVENTRY FROM THE WEST

held annually until 1741, when they were partially discontinued, though occasionally resumed till the hill was inclosed in 1801. Vestiges of a fortification have been discovered at the opposite side of the road, which probably was connected with this great Roman station, though the inhabitants assign it to John of Gaunt, and it is still called John of Gaunt's Castle. Several Roman coins have been frequently found here, also a *denarius* of Constantine.

Baker supposes that the later town of Daventry may date its origin from the British or Roman station, or both, on Borough-hill, and that as civilization advanced the people deserted their residences upon the hill, or reserved them for retreat in danger, and descended to the lower, less-exposed position of the present village. The final syllable "tre" is the British word for town; and the prefix of the first and the termination of the second syllable of the name would designate the upper and the lower town. It was a popular notion of some of the inhabitants that Daventry was founded and named by the Danes, and the usual pronunciation of the name is still as it was spelled, Danetree. "But this notion," comments Baker, "is without any foundation The name is very probably a compound of the British *Dwy Avon Tre*, the town of the two Avons. . . . The device of the town-crier [and on the town seal dated 1615] bears the effigie of a Dane cutting down a tree," a design that came from the erroneous supposition or tradition of the citizens in 1595.

Had our ancestors remained in Daventry a short period longer they would have seen Charles I and his army in this town, and a few days later, the Battle of Naseby, and the fall of the Crown. Charles I slept six nights at the Wheatsheaf Inn (still an inn to-day), while his army of 10,000 men encamped upon Borough-hill under arms all night. On the morning of June 13, 1645, the force marched to Naseby, where a few hours later both king and followers were crushed by Cromwell and his army of Puritan farmers and tradesmen. From Borough-hill may be seen the battle field of Naseby, also Holmby House where Charles I was confined, and Barden-hill in Charnwood-forest, distant forty miles, as well as Northampton city, Hanslope church in Bucks, and the spires of Coventry. Ten miles eastward is the battle field of the Nen, where ended the Wars of the Roses in the final victory of the Yorkists over the Lancastrians for the Crown of England.

As *The Priory*, for monks of the Cluniac order, a scion of the Benedictines, and dedicated to St. Mary de Caritate, and St. Augustine, apostle of England,



MEDIAEVAL CLUNIAN PRIORY AND CHURCH OF THE HOLY CROSS, DAVENTRY. (Both destroyed about 1750.)

entered into the religious life of the people here until the Reformation (1536), we may quote this mention of it, noting particularly how wealthy this priory became, through the gifts made to it, for reasons that we have hereinbefore described. "It was founded about 1090, by Hugh de Leycester, or as he is frequently called, *Hugh Vicecomes*. It originated in an anterior foundation at Preston-Capes, where the number of the monks did not exceed four, and the situation proving inconvenient through the want of water, and its proximity to his castle, he translated them here, and erected a monastery near the parish church, with the consent of Simon de St. Liz, Earl of Northampton, and lord of Daventry." [Through many benefactions the priory had an income, in 1526, of £236 7s. 4d. per annum.] "This was one of the monasteries which was dissolved by the permission of Pope Clement VII by King Henry VIII in the seventeenth year of his reign (1526) and granted to Cardinal Wolsey towards the erection of his new colleges in Oxford and Ipswich." Stowe remarks on the fatal success of the principal actors in this affair of the dissolution, that of the five persons who were the Cardinal's chief instruments, "two fell at discorde between themselves, and the one slewe the other, for the which the survivor was hanged; the thirde drowned himself in a well; the fourth being well knowne, and valued worth £200, became in three years so poore that he begged till his dying day; and the fifth called Doctor Allane being chief executor in these doings, was cruelly maimed in Ireland even at such time as hee was a bishop; the Cardinal, falling after into the King's grievous displeasure, was deposed and died miserably; the colleges which hee meant to have made so glorious a building came never to good effect, the one at Ipswich cleane pulled down, and the other in Oxford unfinished." Upon the death of Cardinal Wolsey, in 1530, the revenues of the intended colleges fell to the Crown, and in two years after when the unfinished undertaking was refounded under a new designation—King Henry VIII's College, in Oxford,—this monastery with all its possessions was included in the endowment and continued annexed to it till the dean and canons surrendered their charter to the King in 1545, preparatory to the college being converted into the seat of a bishopric. The priory stood contiguous to the west end of the church, extending northwards. There are no visible remains of it, at present, the last vestiges, supposed to have been the refectory, and which had been used for some time as the National School, being considered in a dangerous state and incapable of repair, were taken down in 1824, and the present gaol and schools erected partly on its site.

The accompanying engraving of the Cluniac Priory was made before the destruction of the building. The adjoining church was the one attended by the Bliss family of Daventry for three hundred years.



TYPICAL ANCIENT COTTAGE, NEWNHAM, DAVENTRY



FAWSLEY CHURCH, FAWSLEY MANOR

The Blisse Mercers and Drapers of Daventry

Henry Blyse, named on the foregoing chart as the brother of Richard and Thomas Blyse, was born *circa* 1450, and evidently was dead in 1524. Probably he was not the first Bliss in Daventry; but he is the first of record. The record of him is that of his appearance before the manorial court. The lord of the manor then was King Henry VII. Daventry was then a parcel of the Duchy of Lancaster, which duchy was and still is the property of the occupant of the throne. This manor first became a part of the duchy in 1358 when it came, by marriage, to the well-known John of Gaunt, Duke of Lancaster, the fourth son of Edward III. Daventry remained the possession of the sovereign until some years after 1600; hence our Daventry ancestors were tenants of seven kings and two queens, viz.: Edward IV, Edward V, Richard III, Henry VII, Henry VIII, Edward VI, Mary, Elizabeth, and James I. Into the private purses of these monarchs went much of the money that the Blissés paid for rentals in leases of lands and buildings. During the latter part of the time there was an intermediary lord who held a "blanket" lease from the throne, and who then, in turn, leased or rented to the actual occupants. This scheme raised the rents to the tenants and made the intermediary lord more of a "gentleman" than ever. Later the intermediaries acquired actual ownership, and then followed the manorial magnificence of the great private parks of Fawsley (700 acres) and Welton Place, with their noble mansions, which are still owned by two families. This system contrasts so unfavorably with that in vogue in America, where the man who actually carries on the business of farming usually also owns the title to the land and buildings, thus giving him the fullest opportunities which have resulted in making him about the most independent of American citizens, that one recalls the words of Disraeli: "The land cannot be made to support three people—the owner, the farmer, and the labourer." In other words, as Begbie puts it: "The soil will keep the man who tills it, and by God's law it will support no other." The landlordism that still prevails in England now results in the comparative poverty of the small farmer on rented land, for which he must pay from £2 to £5 a year rent per acre for good arable soil. Despite the comparative ignorance of the peasant and his unhappy situation, under this system of "land monopoly" wherein he makes so pathetic a figure in Millet's paintings and so grotesque a feature of the comic journals, when one comes to consider

what he has endured; when one sees him toiling from daybreak to dusk for a few shillings a week; when it is remembered how he has reared large families in some idea of religion and with regard for sobriety and general decency, on his meager wages and in his antique hovel of a house; when one speaks with him in the village street, or upon the fields, and notes his ever-respectful bearing,—one who is unprejudiced and unfettered by caste cannot help but think what a remarkably honest, self-restrained, and worthy specimen of a man he is. He merits, indeed, the ownership and full profits of the land that he cultivates. Such as he were thousands of the early emigrants to America, and emigrant thousands more had but little greater wealth other than virile manhood and determined womanhood. From conditions akin to his these thousands raised their families to independence on American soil. Just that opportunity to so do was the chief reason why the majority of emigrants forsook England for New England's brighter skies and challenging prospects. Henry Blysse was presented at the manorial court, viz.:—

Manor Court Rolls. Duchy of Lancaster. [This roll, No. 105-1500, is in the Record Office, London.] (Translation.)

A.D. 1502. Daventry Northamptonshire.

View of Frankpledge* and Court of the Most Illustrious Prince King Henry the 7th. held there the 8th. of October the 18th year of his reign.

The tithing men present that . . . Henry Blysse holds and occupies one mill there called a "Malte Mylle" and takes excessive gain—in mercy 6d.

Thomas Benam has made a rescue on the constable in the execution of his office—surety Henry Blysse.

Henry Blysse has made an assault upon John Bocher with a poniard—in mercy 4d.

John Bocher has made an assault on Simon Marshall with his fist—surety Henry Blysse.

John Johnson has made an assault upon John Pegyn with his fist—surety Henry Blysse. And John Pegyn has made an assault on said John Johnson with his fist—surety aforesaid Henry Blysse.

The tasters of fish and flesh present that Henry Blysse is a butcher and has sold and bartered meat [or carcasses] and taken excessive gain—in mercy 4d.

View of frankpledge held there the 27th of April the 18th year of Henry the 7th:—

Henry Blysse holds and occupies a malt mill there and takes excessive gain—in mercy 6d.

The tasters of fish and flesh present that Henry Blys is a butcher and sells and barter meat and takes excessive gain.

*Frankpledge, a pledge or surety for the good behavior of freemen made to the lord of the manor, whereby ten freemen were to be held responsible for an offense committed by one of their number.

The old mill in Daventry wherein malt, maize, and other cereals were ground "time out of mind" stood about one hundred feet back from the east side of High Street, at the rear of the present business premises of Mr. Gardner, a draper and milliner. The old stone walls of the mill were pulled down nearly to the ground for the later erection upon them of higher walls of brick. The estimable Samuel George Leigh of Daventry remembered (1909) seeing, when a boy, the great round millstones grinding and turned by a horse which trod in a circle around the stones. These two millstones now form a part of the pavement of the narrow passageway leading from the former mill to High Street. The interior of the mill is now a draper's workroom. The millstones are very old and there is a record of a younger Henry Blisse holding land close by in 1571. There is no further record extant of this first Henry Blyse save in the following proceeding in chancery. He was first a merchant and miller, and later a successful mercer, finishing and dealing in woolen cloth, which he purchased from the weavers who wove on hand looms in their cottage homes. These fabrics he sold at home and abroad, both wholesale and retail. Probably he was dead by 1524, as by this year his son Thomas had succeeded to the father's business of a mercer. Apparently he owned no land, but did succeed in acquiring or building three houses. He was lawfully "seased in hys demeane as of ffee of & in three messuages or tentes with thapptnances in Daventree," which were sued for by Robert Blisse of Oadby, a grandson of his brother Richard Blyse. Henry also had a brother, Thomas Blyse (named in the suit), who, or the brother Richard¹ (probably the latter), was the great-great-grandfather of the three Bliss emigrants to America. The original bill of complaint, filed by the said Robert Blisse, together with the defendant's rejoinder are extant. These splendid antiques illustrate the legal procedure *temp.* Elizabeth and, as well, prove valuable points of pedigree. The year in which the suit was brought is not given; it must have been soon after the death of Thomas Blyse in 1556, and of the sale to Symes in 1558.

(The original documents of this suit are in the Record Office, London.)

Proceeding in Chancery. Elizabeth B-16-14.

To the right honorable sir Nicholas Bacon, Knighte Lord keper of the greате seale of Englande.

Humblye complaynynge shewethe unto your honorable Lordshippe yor poore & daylye orator Robert Blisse of Odebye in the countye of Leic[ester] Laborer that whereas one Henrye Blyse some tyme of Daventrye in the countye

of Northmton mercer deceased amongst other thinges was Lawfully seased in hys demeane as of fee of & in three messuages or tentes wth thappurtnances in Daventree aforesaid nowe beinge in the sevrall holdynges or occupacons of Robert Bull Richard Smythe and Pyerse Androwes And so being thereof seased had yssue John Blysse and Thomas Blysse, and the same Henry Blysse at Daventree aforesaid in the said countye of Northmton of suche an estate thereof dyed seased. After whose decease the said three mesuage or tentes with thappurtnances descended & came as of right they ought to descend & come unto the said John Blysse as sonne & heyre unto the sayd Henrye Blysse whiche said John Blysse after the decease of the said Henry Blysse hys father entred into the sayd three mesuags or tentes with thappurtenances and was thereof seased accordyngly, and so being thereof seased at Daventrye aforesaid likewyse thereof without yssue of hys bodye dyed seased after whose decease the same prmysses descended & came as of right they ought to descend & come by the order of the comon lawe unto the said Thomas Blysse as brother & heyre to the sayd John Blysse, by reason whereof the sayd Thomas Blysse, after the decease of the sayd John Blysse entred into the sayd thre mesuages or tenements with thappurtnances and was thereof Lawfully seased in hys demeane as of fee & so beyng thereof seased at Daventree aforesayd likewyse without yssue of hys bodye thereof dyed seased. After whose decease the said mesuags or tentes with thappurtenances by the order of the comon lawe of thys realme dyd descend & of Righte ought to discend unto yor sayd poore oratore as cosen & nexte heyre unto the sayd Thomas Blysse that ys to say sonne & heyre to Rychard Blysse the younger, eldest sonne to Rychard Blysse the elder brother to the sayd Henry Blysse father of the sayd John Blysse & Thomas Blysse So yt ys ysuyt [issued] mayt please yor good Lordshippe that dyvers evydents chres [charters] & wrytyngs concernye the prmysses of right apperteynyng to yor said orator are casually comen unto the handes & custodie of one John Symes of Daventre aforesayd In holder & of Robert Bull, Rychard Smythe & pyerse Androwes by a havynge whereof the sayd John Symes Robert Bull Rychard Smythe & Pyerse Androwes unlawfully do kepe yor said orator from the possession of the premysse & thereof have contrived & conveyid dyvers secret estates unto divrs psons to yor said orator unknowne to thentente to dysinheryte yor sayd orator & hys heyres of the prmysses contrary to all right equitye & good conseynce And althoughe yor sayd orator hathe gentlye required the same John Robert Richard or pyerse af well to suffer your sayd orator quietly to enjoye the prmysses as of right he ought to doe as also to delyver to yor sayd orator the sayd evydence deedes & chres as of righte they ought to doe yet that to do the same John Robert Richard & Pyerse hytherto have alwaye denyed & yet denye to doe contrarye to right & good conseynce And forsomuche as yor sayd orator knoweth not the certentye neither the nomber certen of the sayd evidence chres & wrytyngs nether wheyther they be conteyned in any cheste locked or boxe sealed or such other like whereby yor said poore orator ys without all remeydye for the recovrye thereof by the course of the comen Lawes of thys Realme yt maye therefore please yor good lordshyppe to graunt the Quenes maiestyes gracious wryt of subpena to be dyrected unto the sayde John Symes Roberte Bull Richard Smythe and Pyerse Androwes comaundyng theyme & evry of theym thereby psonally to appeare before your honorable Lordshippe

in the Quenes maiestyes honorable hyghe courte of chauncerye at a certeyne daye & under a certen payne by yor honor to be lymtyed and appoynted to make answeere to the prmysses and yor sayd poore Orator shall dayly pray to god for the prservacon of your honorable L[ordship] in honor Longe to contynewe.

GASCOYGNE [attorney]

The joint & severall aunswere of John Symes and Robert Bull defendants to the bill of complaint of Robert Blisse Compl[ainant]:—

The saied defendants by protestation not knowledging nor confessing anie-thing in the saied bill of compleint contained being materiall or effectuall to be aunswere unto to be trewe All advantages and excepcons of thinsufficiencie of the saied bill to the defendants at all tymes saved, for aunswere & declaration of trewth the saied John on of the saied defendants saieth that trewe it is that one Thomas Blisse late of Daventre in the Countie of Northampt, mcer decessed, was seased of all & singuler the saied messuages & tents wth thapptennce in the saied bill of compleint specified in his demesne as of fee, as in the saied bill of compleint is alleged, but farther this defendt saieth that the saied Thomas Blysse so being seased, by his last will & testament in writing, dated the second daie of Julie in the yere of or lord god one thousand five hundred fiftie & seaven and in the third and fourthe yere of the Reigne of King Philipp and Queene Marie did will & devise that Agnes Blisse the wife of the saied Thomas Blisse shold have the distribution of all his landes & goodes And the saied Thomas Blisse so being seased of the saied messuages & other the prmisses at Daventre aforesaid thereof died seased wthout issue of his bodie after whose death by virtue of the saied Will the saied Agnes entred into all the prmisses & conveyed to the said John one of the saied defendants & his heires by vertue whereof the saied John Symes into the saied prmisses did entre & was thereof seased in his demesne as of fee. And farther this defendant saieth that if the saied Thoms had not devised the prmisses as aforesaid, then all the saied prmisses ought to have descended by order of the comen lawe of this realme to one John Blisse now or late of Hill in the prsh [parish] of Lemington in the countie of Warwicke as cosen and right heire to the saied Thomas, that is to saie sonne and heire of one Thomas Blisse sometyme of the saied prsh of Lemington nexte eldeste brother to Henrie Blisse sometyme of Daventre, father to the saied Thomas Blisse late of Daventre aforesaid decessed, which saied John Blisse after the death of the saied Thomas Blisse late of Davetre aforesaid by his dede sufficient in the lawe readie to be shewed to this Honorable court bearing date the eighteen daie of October in the fourth & fifth yere of the Reigne of Kinge Philipp & Queene Marie [1554–58] did geve grant & confirme unto the saied John Symes all his right title & interest of and in the saied messuage or tents wth thappurtennces to have & to hold the saied messuages or tents wth thappurtennces to the saied John Symes his heires & assignes for evr And moreovr by the same as in the same more at lardge doth appere. The saied John Blisse for him & his heires the saied messuages or tents and all and singular the prmisses wth there apptenncs to the saied John Symes his heires & assignes in manr & forme aforesaid against him & his heires did warrant for evr. By reason whereof the saied John Symes on of the saied Defts hath as he thinketh a good & pfect estate in fee simple of & in the prmisses

& thereby deteineth the evidence concerning the same as lawfull it is for him to doe: without that the saied tents & other the prmisses ought to discend to the saied compl as cosen & next heire to the saied Thomas Blisse late of Daventre as in the saied bill of compleint untrewlie is alleged. And without that, that anie deeds charters or writings concerning the prmisses of right belonging to the saied compl are come or bene in the hands of the saied defts, as in the saied bill of compleinte untrewlie is alleged. And the said Robert Bull the other Defendant for aunswere saieth that he hath not claymeth to have aine right title estate or interest of the prmisses or of or in or to anye pte or pcele thereof, other than to hold by sufferance of the saied John Symes by force of a lease at Will made to hime of one of the saied messuages by the saied John Symes. Without that the saied Defendants or either of them doe unlawfullie keepe the saied Compl from the possession of the prmisses as in saied bill is likewise falslie surmised. And without that anie other thing being materiall in the saied bill to be aunswerd unto, and in this aunswere before not sufficientlie confessed & avoided travrsed or denied is trewe, all wch matters the saied defendants are redie to averr & prove as this honorable court shall awarde & pray to be dismissed out of the same court wth their resonable costs & espenses by their wrongfull vexacon in that behalfe susteined.

BLANDFORD [attorney]

The Replycacon of Robert Blys Compl to the ioynt and sevrall aunsweres of John Symes and Robt. Bull defs.

The sayd Compl for Replycacon sayth that the sayd byll of complaint by him exhybyted into thys honorable courte ys verye certayn and suffycient in the lawe to be aunswered unto. And doeth and wyll averre and mayntayne the same and all and every the matters therein contayned to be just and true in such maner and forme as the same are in the sayd byll set forthe and declared wythout that that the sayd Thomas Blys sonne of the sayd Henrye Blys named in the sayd byll and aunswere beinge seased of the sayd three mesuages or tents wth thapptennces in hys demeanse as of fee dyd by hys last wyll and testament in wrytyng dated the second daye of Julye in the yeare of our lord god 1557 and in the thyrd and fourth yeare of the Raygne of Kyng phyllyppe and Queene marye wyll and devyse that Agnes Blys then wyf of the sayd Thomas Blys shulde have the dystrubution of all his lands and goods or that the sayd Agnes after the death of the sayd Thomas her husband by vertue of the sayd wyll entred unto all the sayd prmysses and after convayed or coulde conveye the prmysses to the sayd John Symes one of the defts and hys heyres as in sayd aunswere ys untruly alleged, and without that yf the sayd Thomas Blis had not so devysed the prmisses as aforesayd that then all the sayd prmisses ought and shoulde have descended by the order of the comon lawes of this Realme to the sayd John Blys in the sayd aunswere named as cosen and Ryght heyre unto the sayd Thomas. That ys to saye sonne and heyre of one thomas Blys next eldest brother to the sayd Henrye Blys father to the sayd Thomas Blys late of Daventrye aforesayd deceased or that the sayd John Blys last mencioned after the decease of the sayd Thomas Blys of Daventrye aforesaid by hys deede suffycient in the lawe beringe date the xviith daye of October in the fourth and vth yeres

of the Raynge of Kynge Phillipe and queene Marye dyd or could gyve and confyrme unto the sayd John Symes anye Ryght tytle or interest of and in the sayd mesuags or tents wth thapprtenncs to have and to holde the sayd mesuags or tents wth thapprtenncs to the sayd John Symes hys heyres and assynges for ever wth warrantyre of all the sayd prmysses to hym the sayd John Symes hys heyres and assyngs agaynste hym the sayd John Blys and hys heyres Or that by reason thereof the sayd John Symes one of the defts could or have thereof a good and pfecte estate in fee symple and thereby shoulde or ought to deteyne the sayde evydencs and wrytyngs from the sayd compl touchinge and concernynge the sayd mesuags or tents and other the prmysses ffor the sayd Compt sayeth and wyll averre and prove that he the sayd Compt ys next and lawful heyre unto the sayd Thomas second sonne of the sayd Henrye Blys of Daventrye aforesayd without that that anyeother matter or thinge in the said aunswere mencyoned and not in thys prsent Replycacon suffyayently confessed and avoyded traversed or denied ys trewe All wch matters the sayd complayaunt ys redye to averre and prove as thys honorable court shall awarde and prayeth as he before in hys sayd byll of complaynt hathe prayed.

ff BEAUMONT [attorney]

The reioynder of John Symes & Robert Bull defendants to the replication of Robert Bliss complainant:—

The said defendants averr & mayntein their aunswer & all and every thinge therein contened to be just and trew in suche manner and forme as in the said aunswear is pleaded and alleged wthoute that the sayed complainant is next and lawfull heir to the said Thomas second sonne of the sayd Henry Bliss of daventry in manner and forme as alleged. And wthoute that anye other matter or thinge alleged in the said replication beinge materiall or effectuall to be reioyned unto and in this reioynder not sufficientlye confessed or avoyded traversed or denied as trew All wch matters the sayd defendants ar redye to aver and prove as this honorable Court shall award and pray as they before in theyre sayde answer hathe prayed.

The point at issue was: Which was the next eldest brother to Henry Blysse, Richard, the plaintiff's grandfather, or Thomas Blysse who went to Leamington? Henry Blysse's son, Thomas of Daventry [will, 1557], and his wife Agnes, evidently considered their cousin John Blysse of Leamington (son of Thomas of the same) to be their heir, or at least their rightful assign. Robert Blisse of Oadby lost his case, evidently not producing any official records of baptism of his grandfather Richard, Sr., for none existed in the churches of England until 1538, a full generation after the births of the three brothers, Henry and Richard Blysse, Sr., of Daventry and Thomas Blysse of Leamington. Effort has failed to produce more facts about Thomas Blysse "sometyme of the saied prsh of Lemington," brother of Henry and Richard Blysse, Sr., of Daventry,

unless he be the Thomas who died some time after 1528 at Scalford, Leicestershire [adjoining Northampton and Warwickshire], leaving a will naming wife Agnes, "my brother Henry," and omitting reference to any son John, viz.:—

(This will is registered at the Probate Registry at Lincoln in Register Lyle, folio 94.)

Testamentum Thome blysse, alias matho de Scalford [Leicestershire].

In dei Noie Amen the xxiiij day off January the yer off our lorde gode a Mccccxxviiiith [1528] I Thomas blysse alias mothow of scalford hole off mynd ande in pyte memory make my testament ande Last Wyle in manr ande forme folowing ffyrst I bequeth my soule to almyghty gode to our Lady saint mare ande to all the holy company off heven my body too be buried wt in the church off scalford ande my best gode for my principall. Also to our Lady off Lincoln 11d It' to the hy alt[ar] off scalford 11s It' to the lyght off sanct Pulcure xiid It' to the Image off our Lady in scalford halff a pund waxe Ande to the Image off our Lady in the church porch halff a pund off waxe. Ande to the repacion off scalford church 111s 1111d Ande to the church off Clauston 1111s Also I gyffe to my Cosyne William Mason xxiiii s that *my brother Henry* yt moch eught vnto me off dewty for vi sylver spones and a fether bed. The residew off my goods I gyff and bequeth aftur my detts be paid I gyffe to my Cosyne William Mason ande to Agnes my wyffe whom I make my sole executeures And I do make Robt Wourthington supvr off this my testament ande last will Wytnes Sr Thomas Smyth vicare off the same towne William ffrysby and Thomas Nyke wt other moo—

[No probate Act]

Robert Blisse of Oadby had descendants and relatives in Leicestershire, John, Richard, Beatrice, and Margaret Blisse of Oadby; also there appears:—

(Record Office, London.)

Exchequer Depositions Easter term 33 Elizabeth [1591] No. 18: Abstract from the case of Roger Pallmer vs John Tatam both of Leicester; "Johane Blisse wyffe of Geoffrey Blisse of Leicester, of ye age of fifthe & foure yeres or theirabouts, sworne & examined saith . . . that she doth knowe that aboute three & thirtie yeres last past Margerie Tatam mother unto ye defendt and wiffe of Thomas Tatam deceased was seised of and in one messuage and certeyne grounde in St. Margaret's parish in Leicester" etc.

Twenty-five miles northwestwards from Daventry, and twelve miles to the southwest from Oadby, is the borough of Market Harborough, directly on the boundary between Northants and Leicestershire. Here, before 1600, appeared one Philip Bliss, born between 1520 and 1540; whether he was the son of Robert Blisse of Oadby, or a posthumous, or non-testamentary son of Thomas Blysse of



BLISS ARMS ON GRAVESTONE OF PHILIP BLISSE



FOURTEENTH CENTURY SEAL OF ROBERT, SON OF ROBERT BLIS

Scalford, Leic., who died about 1528, or connected with the Daventry family at some indiscernible point back of the Oadby man, we do not know. Four generations of his descendants are given in "*The History of Leicestershire*" (Nichols, vol. 2, pt. 2, p. 693) together with the Bliss coat of arms: "*Argent, on a bend cottised azure, three garbs or. Crest, on a wreath, a garb or.*"

The first Philip Bliss left no will of record; the will of his son Philip dated 3 Nov., 1628, is on file at Leicester.

The gravestone of Philip Bliss, grandson of the said testator, is the only Bliss memorial remaining at Market Harborough. It is also the second oldest Bliss gravestone in England. The oldest Bliss memorial is that to Frances, daughter of Mr. John Blisse and Elizabeth, his wife, buried at Weldon, Northants, March 31, 1709. Nichols refers to the former (vol. 2, p. 484):—

Churchyard of St. Mary in Arden, Market Harborough, Leicestershire: on an upright stone, east from the church, [inscribed with] the arms:—

"On a bend cottised azure, 3 garbs *or*,

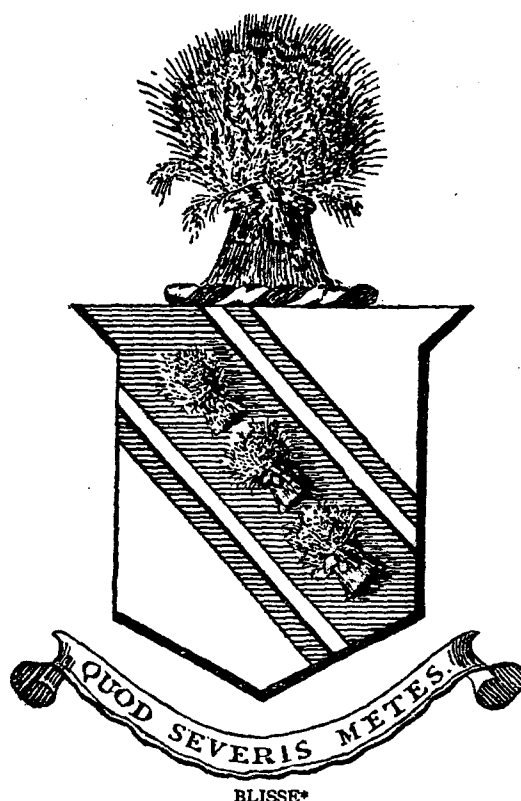
'Here lyeth the body of Philip Bliss gentleman
who departed this life the twenty sixth
day of March in the year of Lord 1714
in the 57th year of his age.'"

The inscription upon the stone is now almost illegible, but the arms may still be plainly seen. This is the Bliss coat of arms. There is none other. This bearing is mentioned as being the arms of the Bliss family in an *Ordinary of Armes*, a manuscript written in the sixteenth century, preserved at the College of Arms. The shield is of silver; the bend is of blue, cottised blue, and bearing three sheafs of wheat in gold. The crest is a sheaf of wheat in gold. The motto, "*Quod severis metes*" (You reap what you sow), was borne with the arms, as appears on the engraved marshaling of William Bliss, to be seen upon the cover of an old book at the British Museum.

How much older than the reign of Elizabeth this bearing is, when and to whom it was first granted, to what extent it was displayed by the Bliss family of England, what has become of the original document of the grant, whether the record of the grant that once was filed at the College of Arms was lost, or destroyed during the period of the Commonwealth (1649–1660) or afterwards—these are now questions that cannot be answered. Under the circumstances it is not inappropriate that the American descendants, with due

discretion, should take some interest in this coat of arms, to the end that it may not perish from view altogether. The bearing signifies that "they gathered unto themselves riches"—not by war, favor, oppression, or sudden fortune, but through meritorious labor.

John Blysse, the eldest son of the first Henry Blysse, the mercer of Daventry, married Jane Wallman of the same and became as prominent and successful a freeman of that borough as had been his father and as was his brother Thomas. All of the family in



Daventry of this time and to 1635 were representative countrymen of England. Though the eldest son John does not appear as a merchant or mercer Thomas succeeded to the cloth business, while John, like Shakespeare's father, his contemporary, was a yeoman—a true yeoman of England in the large sense of that word. A yeoman is interestingly described:—

The proper modern spelling is yoman. This word has three meanings. The third meaning: "In old English law a yeoman was a man having free land of forty shillings by the year (previously five nobles), who was thereby qualified to serve on juries, vote for knights of the shire, and do any other act, for

which the law requires one who was 'probus et legalis homo' (Blackstone's Commentaries I. xii); hence, in recent English use, one owning (and usually himself cultivating) a small landed property; a freeholder. [*Century Dictionary*.]

Macaulay, in a chapter beginning, "Great changes in the State of England since 1685," writes:—

The power which the country gentlemen and the country clergymen exercised in the rural districts was in some measure counterbalanced by the power of the yeomanry, an eminently manly and true-hearted race. The petty proprietors, who cultivated their own fields and enjoyed a modest competence, without

* See page 71. Duplicate copies of the arms, as in the frontispiece, can be had of the author.

affecting to have scutcheons and crests, or aspiring to sit on the bench of justice, then formed a much more important part of the nation than at present.

Hallam's description of the yeoman of the same period is illuminating:—

In the gradation of ranks we find the gentry or principal landholders, many of them distinguished by knighthood and all by bearing coat armour, the yeomanry, or small freeholders and farmers, a very numerous and respectable body, some occupying their own estates, some those of landlords. [Hallam's *Constit. History of England* from the Accession of Henry VII to the Death of George II, seventh edition, vol. i (1854), p. 5.]

John Blysse, yeoman of Daventry, is only found taxed in 1546, among the various lay subsidy rolls extant for Daventry, viz.:—

Public Record Office, London. Lay Subsidy, Northampton. Roll 156-222, first payment, 37 Henry VIII:—	valor. subsidy
Daventre, Johes Blysse in Lands	XLs — iiij s

This tax of one tenth of the annual income value of the land he held would be over £2, by present reckoning. The land itself was thus worth, by the same standard, about £400. This land may have been "the ferm in Drayton" hamlet, Daventry, mentioned in the will of his brother Thomas in 1557. That an English yeoman of that time was a man of spirit and often stubborn John Blysse has proved. The great commercial development and unexampled prosperity that lifted up England in the sixteenth century included these Blisses. In his independence John Blysse defied King Henry VIII, the lord of the manor of Daventry, the king of whom it was said: "He spared no man his temper, and no woman his passion." Well it was for plain John Blysse that the king was not present in Daventry about Easter in the thirty-sixth year of his reign, 1545. The king's deputy bailiff claimed that John Blysse's cattle and sheep had strayed from their proper enclosures and caused some damage, whereupon the said bailiff summoned him before the court-leet of the manor and caused a fine of about £15 [present reckoning] to be levied against him. Lords of manors were very prone, in those days, to levy various exactions, or penalties, upon their tenant-subjects upon the slightest of pretexts. They had the power to enforce their decrees, and also, the added incentive to prosecute of collecting fines, which were not all applied to the administering of justice, but went to swell the income that the lord derived from the residents upon the manor. It was an extremely heavy fine

that the manorial court levied upon John Blysse. He may have felt that the whole system was an unjust one. He had the courage to refuse to pay the amercement. For three years he refused. The refusal was tantamount to a contempt of court, though John Blysse doubtless was over-fined. The bailiff then seized and sold twelve of Blysse's sheep, which the defendant then sued to recover. The bailiff, in turn, had his victim summoned before the chancellor of the Duchy, by the following proceeding:—

(This document is in the Record Office, London.)

Duchy of Lancaster Pleadings [1545] Vol. 15, S. 11.

To the Right Hon. Sir John Gage knight Controller of the King's most honorable household and chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster.

In most humble wyse shewith and complaineth unto your good mastership your daily orator William Symis depute bailiff to William FitzWilliam gent. bailiff of our sovereign Lord the King his Majesty of his manor or township of *Daventry* within the County of Northampton parcell of the possessions of his Duchy of Lancaster that one John Blysse of Daventrye within the said county was amerced at the letes of our said sovereign Lord the Kyng holden within the said manor or toun of Daventry in the 33rd 34th & 35th yere of the reign of our said sovereign Lorde the Kynges reigne that nowe is for dyvers strayes assarts and dyvers other offences by hym comytted and done within the prescints of the said lete to the some of 36s 2d as yt shall finally prove to thys honourable courte by the 'estrete' of the same lete. So yt is ryght worshipful sir that your said orator hath many and sundry tymes required the said John Blysse to consent and paye to your said orator the said some of 36s and 2d to the use and behalfe of our said sovereign Lorde the king whiche to do the said John Blysse always denied wherefor your said orator toke and distrayned 12 shepe of the goodes and cattels of the said John Blysse within the prescints of the same late [i.e. leet] and the same shepe at the lete [leet] of the said sovereigne Lorde holden within the said manor or towne of Daventre was prised by the 12 men and the burgesses of the same lete in the presence of the steward of the said Lete and sold for to paye the said amerciements to our said sovereign Lorde the King as yt hathe been alwayes used heretofore. And the said Blysse not only intending to breke the lyberties and customes of our said sovereigne Lorde of old tyme accustomyd within the said manor or towne and to distresse ower said sovereigne Lorde of his said amerciements but allso intending to vex and trouble your said orator hathe sued out of our said sovereigne Lorde the Kinge's Courte of Chancery for the same shepe a [writ of] replevy against your said orator directed to the Sheriff of Northampton commanding hym thereby to delyver to the said John Blysse the said 12 shepe whereby the Lybertie of the said manor shall not only be broken but allso the Kinges Majesty delayed and disturbed of the retayning of the said amerciements to the manifest injury and wrong of the said sovereigne Lorde & allso to the grett Losse & hyndrance and vexation of your said orator onless your good masterhippes favour to him be shewed in this behalf. In consideration wherefor yt maye please your good mastership

the premises tenderly consideringe (to) grante the Kinges most gracious letters of Privy Seal to be directed to the same John Blysse commanding and injoining hym thereby that the successe of his sute in the said Replevy and the other processes and no(t) finde and prosecute the same nother by hymself nor any other person or persons for him nor in his name. And that the person to whom the said shepe was sold maye pesably and quietly injoye and hold the same without lett or hindrance of the said John Blysse or any other person or persons by his assent & consent or procurement untill suche tyme as the same shall be orderyd and injoined by this honorable court. And that the said John Blysse may also be commanded by the said prevy seale personally to appear before your good mastership in the Duchy Chamber at Westminster at a certain daye and uppon a certain payne by your good mastership to be lymytted then & there to make answer to the premises and further to abyde such orders as by your mastership shal be thought to stand with equity and good conscience. And your orator shall daily pray to God for the prosperous preservation of your good mastership long to endure.

Easter 36 Henry viii [1545]

Hereupon a Privy Seal to John Blysse to appear.

The final issue of this matter does not appear. That it cost John Blysse more than the original fine is likely. He had the moral courage of his convictions surely; and that he was a man of a noble and generous spirit is equally certain, for when he died, six years later, he chose the poor of Daventry as the residuary legatees of the reversion of his considerable estate, by the following abstract of his will which, it will be noticed, mentions no sheep or cattle:—

[This will is registered at the Probate Registry, Northampton.]

The wyll off John blysse of Daventrye marcer

In the name off God Ame the xxiiijte day off June in the iiij yere off ye reigne off or Soverand lorde kyng Edwarde the syxt. I John blyse of Daventrye in the cownty off north m'cer beyng off good & pfytt mynde & Reme bras but yet seke in body doo ordene & make thys mye last wyll & testament in manr & forme folowyng fyrst I bequeth mye soule unto All myghtye good and to the intercession off or blyssyd ladye marye the v'gyne & of All the holye company off hea'ne & mye bodye to be buryd in the pyshe churche or churcheyerde off Daventrye. It. I bequeth to ye hye alther therfor tythes bye me neclygetlye forgoote xiid. as towchyng mye funerall expe'ces I Remytt the holye to ye dyscressyon off mye executors. It. I wyll yt. iiij li in moneye immedyatlye afr mye decease shalbe dysposyd & dytributyd amonge the pore peple in Daventrye where shalbe thought most requesyte & nedefull bye ye dyscressyon off mye executryx & over seers off this mye prsent wyll. It. I bequeth to mye brother John walman v marks & to mye brother Edwarde wallman other v marks. The Resydwe off All mye goods & catells nott bequethd mye detts payd and mye funerall expences dyschargyd I geve & bequeth unto Joha mye wyff whome I make mye executryx off this mye prsent wyll & testament and Wyllm Gent

of Norton, gent. & mye brother John wallman & Edward wallman & John bedell off braunston supervisors off this same

I wyll yt ye house wherin I now dwell wythappurtences shall remaine unto mye brother thomas blysse & to ye heres off hys bodye lawfullye begotte and for lacke off suche yssue to remaine to mye bretherin John wallman & Edward wallman for the terme off ther lyves & after yr deceases the one mo'te [moiety] ther off to remaine to Alic wallman eldyst daught'r off the sayd John wallman and to hyr heres forever and to ye other moot yr off to remaine to henry wallman eldyst sone off mye brother Edward walman & to yee heres off the same Henrye for ever. . . . All ye Resydue off all mye lands and tenements in Daventrye a forsayd not dysposyd bye this mye last wyll In remaynder after the decease off mye sayd wyff shall be sould bye the sayd wyllm gente & the other mye supryfrs be fore namyd or be soche off them as shalbe the [n] alyff [alive] to ye most advantage and the monye ther off comyng or growyng to be dysposyd Among pore peple or in other deds of charyte as shalbe though most charetable & meretorius for the releff of ye pore.

[Probated 2 May 1552]

This will suggests the testator to have been among the most progressive Christians of his time in England. While fully one half of his countrymen, particularly the nobility and gentry, preferred the doctrines and services of the Church of Rome, John Blysse had opened his heart and mind to the spirit of the Reformation which was then moving the minds of thinking men. That this is true cannot be doubted, for John Blysse as well as his brother Thomas, did not conform to the almost invariable custom of making a bequest to the mother church of the diocese (Lincoln Cathedral, and afterwards Peterborough Cathedral) and to the parish church for the high altar, for the lights before different images, or for the maintenance of the sepulchre (Easter) light, the rood light, or the light that was kept burning before "the blessed sacrament."

Though Martin Luther's books had been burned in St. Paul's Cathedral, London, thirty years before the death of John Blysse, he lived to see the authority of the pope abolished in England and the establishing of the Church of England. He accepted the Bible and the three creeds as the sole grounds of faith, the reduction of penance to an equality with baptism, the justification by faith, the condemnation of purgatory, pardons, masses—the suppression of pilgrimages, and the discouragement of the worship of images and relics, and also the suppressing of monasteries and religious orders, which Portugal has only recently accomplished. He was one of the first Englishmen to read the Apostles' Creed, the Lord's Prayer, and the Ten Commandments as translated into the English

language. Not until fifteen years before his death was the Bible revealed in the English tongue and placed in the churches of England, after Miles Coverdale had translated it in the tower of the old ecclesiastical palace at Paignton on the shore of Tor Bay, Devonshire. These were some of the great and sudden changes that the histories tell us "took the people's breath away." Still England remained half Catholic and half Protestant for another generation. Though the pages of the Bible were opened to John Blysse, the laity were not permitted to interpret for themselves the messages upon those pages. Thus John Blysse witnessed the opening of the rift in "the allegorical and mystical theology" that had preceded him. Thus he saw men of the church that, in its worthy but unfortunate zeal for itself, "from the time of Wyclif had held the translation and reading of the Bible in the common tongue to be heresy and a crime punishable with fire," turn from "the decorating of statues of wood and stone with gold and gems *for the love of Christ*," to gaze upon the written words *that "presented a living picture of His holy mind."* Thus Thomas Cromwell, in the name of his king, Henry VIII, planned the foundations upon which an hundred years later Oliver Cromwell so largely helped to perfect and to erect, most firmly, the still-enduring structure of an unequivocal Protestantism.

Thomas Blysse, born about 1490, the brother of the last-named John Blysse (named in the suit in chancery and in John's will), first appears of record as an overseer of the will of Thomas Newman of Newman [Newnham] dated 28 May, 1537, in which document he is called "Thomas Blysse of Dayntre." [P.C.C. Dyngley, 25.] Later he figures only in the records of taxation, in his will, and in his wife's suit in chancery. Though a cloth merchant he neither sued nor was sued. He held the lease of a farm in that western part of Daventry called Drayton. This may be the bequest made to him in the will of his brother John Blysse in 1551. Thomas Blysse named John and Edward Wallman as being his brothers in 1557, as also did John Blysse who married Jane Wallman, sister of Agnes (Wallman) Blysse. These brothers Blysse married the sisters Wallman and neither couple had children that lived to maturity. Thomas Blysse was taxed only on merchandise; hence he may have rented the farm in Drayton to his brothers-in-law, John and Edward Wallman, to whom he later bequeathed his rights in that property. Thomas Blysse died between July 3 and 8, 1557. In 1558 his widow, Agnes, was one of the six persons taxed in Daventry upon goods:—

Lay Subsidy 156-309. 1 Elizabeth [1558] Hundred de ffaweffley Daventrye, Agnes blysse in goods xvi li-xv s.

The stock of cloth that Thomas Blysse had on hand at the tax-taking times was worth somewhere between £40 and £60. This was a goodly amount indeed for a country merchant to have then-a-days, small though it may seem now. That Thomas Blysse was independently wealthy we are assured by the words of his widow as sworn to by her in Her Majesty's High Court of Chancery in 1567, when she states that her late husband was "a man of greate welthe and havinge redye monie to the some of fyve or sixe hundred pounds or more." [To-day £3000.] Thomas Blysse's will does not contain a mention of his cousins, Richard Blysse, Jr., and John Blysse of Leamington, nor their issue. While this is unfortunate as a loss of record proof of the issue of those two cousins, no difficulty is encountered in perceiving that the sons of Richard, Jr., were the Robert of Oadby, heretofore named as eldest son of Richard, Henry [the second] of Daventry, and William of Daventry, the blacksmith, and the grandfather of the three emigrants to America, of whom presently.

Abstract of the will of Thomas Blysse registered at the Probate Registry, Northampton.

2 Julye 1557, I, Thomas Blysse, of the pshe of Daventrei marcer.

I bequeth my soule unto the mercye of almyghte God and to or blessed Ladye Saynt Marye and to all the company of Heaven.

To be buried in the church of Daventry.

Executrix Agnes Blysse, my wiffe & she to have the disposicon of all my goods and lands moveable and unmoveable.

To my brother John Waman & Edwarde Wama my leayes and tacke of the ferm in Drayton wt all that belongethe therewith.

Isabell Blysse my servant a tenement in the same land wch I bought of Robert Tyler.

Witnesses—John Catema [n] Rich. Iswell, Rich. Williams & Barnard Massaye, Curat of Daventrei.

Probated 10 July 1557.

["Wama"—a contraction of Wallman.]

Some years after the death of Thomas, her husband, Agnes Blysse, the relict, when she had about completed the administration of her husband's estate, found herself possessed of less money than she had expected that the estate would yield. There was quite a large discrepancy she imagined, as though some of her late husband's money had mysteriously disappeared. She told her friends of her

suspicious and from them learned of what she thought was a clue to the whereabouts of the money. This led her into trouble with her husband's cousin, Henry Blyse [the second Henry], against whom she caused to be filed the following petition in chancery, which is one of the most interesting documents in the Bliss family's history:—

(The original parchment MS. of this document is in the Record Office, London.)

Chancery proceedings temp Elizabeth—1567–19–74.

To the right honorable Sr Nicholas Bacon knight Lorde keeper of the greate seale of England [father of Francis Bacon the essayist]

In his mooste humble wise lamentablie complayninge shewithe unto your good Lordshippe your poore and daylie oratorice Agnes Blyse, wydowe Executrix of the will of Thomas Blyse late of Daventre Northampton, mercer— That where the saide Thomas Blyse in his life beinge a man of greate welthe and having redye monie to the some of fyve or sixe hundred pounds or more by reason, that before tyme by casualtye of fyre, he had loste the moste parte of his substance, in buildinge of his house and wyane made a stone wall in his house in Daventre aforesaid and enclosed in the same stonewall all his monye to the intent to save the same from casualtye of fyer and after that is to saye, aboute tenn yeres paste made and declared his laste will and testament and by the same he ordeyned and appointed your poore suppliant his sole executrix and dyed. After whose death, one Henry Blyse of Daventre, aforesaid Lynnen Draper, beinge then but a poore man entered into the same house, and havnge understandinge upon the report of the testator in his liffe tyme that he had monye hidden within the stone wall of his house, fell in communication with one Richard Allen, Shoemaker, beinge also a verye poore man, secretlye to breake the walles of the house and to take awaye the monye and devyde the same between them and thereupon the saide Henrye Blyse and Richard Alleyne brake the wall and toke suche monye as theye there founde and parted it betwene them as hath bene opened ptelye by their owne confessions and as many festlye appearithe by such contractes and bargaynes as theye have made syns that tyme amountinge to the some of fyve hundred poundes and above and by their welthe that theye have attayned unto syns, where theye had not bene able to have done (as is well knowed in the cuntrye) if they had not had the same ayde And albeit that theye and everye of them hath bene Dyvers and sundrye tymes gentellye required by your oratrice to restore unto her the same monye or some parte of it, yet that to do theye and everye of them have alwayes denyed and yet do the contrarye to all equitye and conscyence And forasmooch as the certayne quountytie of the saide some of monye so hidde in the saide walle or wherein it was conteyned whether in Bagge, Boxe, cheste locked or otherwise unto your oratrice is unknown, she is thereby remedylesse by the due course and order of the Comon Lawe of this Royallme for the recovye therof and so lyke to lose the same forevr to her greate losse and hindrance and to the lett and hindrance of the Execution of the administracon of the gooddes of the saide Thoms Blisse, if that your Lordshippe' lawfull favor would wth pytie

be not to your poore Executrix shewed in this behalfe. In tender consyderation whereof the prmises by your good Lordshippe tenderlye consydered, maye be maye it please your good Lordshippe of your goodness to graunt to your poore oratrice the Quene's maties gractius wrytte of Subpena to the saide Henrye Blysse and Richard Alleyne to be dyrected comaundinge them and everye of them by the same psonallye to appeare before your good Lordshippe in the Quenes maties highe Courte of Chauncerye at a certayne daye and under a certeyne payne by your good Lordshippe there to be lymited and appointed then and there to make answer to the prmises and further to stande and abide suche order and dyrection therundr as to you good Lordshippe and the saide highe courte of Chauncerye shall be thought to stande and be mooste consonant and vyseable to right equitye and good conseynce And your said poore oratrice shall daylie praye to god for the prsvacon of your good Lordshippe in honor longe to contyune and endure.

E. B. HONE [attorney]

The answer of Henrye Blisse defendt to the bill of complaint of Agnes Blisse complaint:—

The sayd defendt saith that the sayd bill of complainte againste him exhibyted in this honorable corte is uncertaine and insufficient in the lawe to be answered unto and the matters therein conteyned moste false and slanderous and rather devysed to put the sayd deff. to wrongfull trouble and vexacon then uppon anie wise cause. The advantage whereof to hym alwaies saved for further answer he said that of what welth in many or otherwise the sayd Thoms Blisse husband of the sayd compt. was the sayd Deff knoweth not, nor howe much nor of what valewe so loste by fire But he sayth the sayd Thomas Blysse in his lief tyme dyd buyld a stable of stone in Daventre aforesayd, to what intent other then to be used as stables are commonlye used he knoweth not, Synce the death of wch said Thom's Blisse the sayd compt entred into the same, by what title the sayd deff doth not knowe After wch entree the sayd Compt dyvysed the same to the sayd deff. to hold at her will and pleasure. By force whereof he entred into the sayd Stable and was thereof possessed accordinglye, until suche tyme as she after by the procurement of some other, who bare this deff no good will dyd putt this deff from the tenure and possession thereof. During the tyme of which occupation and possession thereof by the sayd deff. he used the same as a stable for horses an haye wythout taking or findinge ane comodyte of money or treasure therein as by the sayd compt. ys moste untrewlye syrmysed, other then suche comodytye as this deff hath before recyted And so remayneth this deff. the selfsame poore man nowe that he was before he entred into the same stables not amende thereby any whit more than he hath declared wherein this deff. marvayleth varye much what moved the sayd Compt. to so unjustly tocharge the sayd deff wth so untrew and unlikelye a matter. And so unto the bargaines and encrease and of welthe wch the sayd Compl dreameth to be greate since the sayd stable so occupied by the sayd deff. for so muche as he knoweth hymself of no such increase other then by the poore trade of which he used before, he cannott butt wonder what hath moved the sayd compt to this her sute, without that the sayd Thomas Blysse made a stone

wall in his howse in Dayntre aforesayd and enclosed in the same any money to the knowledge this deff, or that the sayd deff. entred into the sayd howse in aine other maner then is by hym aforesaid. And without that the sayd deff. hath anie understandinge uppon the reporte of the sayde Thomas Blisse in his lief tyme that he had money hydden in a stone wall of the saydhowse or that the sayd deff. fell into comnyxacon with one Richard Allen to brake the walls of the sayd howse and to take awaye aine money from there, or that the sayd deff. and the sayd Richard Allen did break the sayd wall or take from thence any suche mony or psorted anie such betwene them and without that the sayd deff. hath confessed anie suche thinge or that anie other matter alleged in the sayd bill not allreadye denied or avoyded and materiall to be answered unto ys trewe. Allwhich matters the sayd deff. ys readye to averr and prove as this honorable corte shall award and prayeth to be dysmyssed out of the same with his coste and charge in this moste unjuste sute most wrongfully sustained

ARDEN WAFERER [attorney]

The Replicacon of Agnes Blysse Complt. to the Answer of Henrye Blysse Deft.:—

The sayd complaint saving unto her selfe at all tymes hereafter the advantage of excepston to the Incertayntyte and Insuffyentsie of the said Answer, for Replicacon thereunto saythe that the said Bill of complaynt ys sartayne and suffysient in the Lawe to be answered unto and not devysed by the said complaynant to any such Intent or porpose as in the said answer ys surmysed, for ther doeth and will avarre mentayne and pve all & everye matter and thinge in the said Byll of Complaynt to be good just & trewe in soche sort & manner and forme as theye & everye of them be therin trewlye allegdde set forth & expressed wethout that the said Thomas Blysse lat husband to the said complaynant dyde in his lyffe tyme bulde anye stable of stone in deyntreye aforesaid or any other bylding of anye svch chargis to the intent to convert or use the same as Stables, as comenlye used, as in the said Answer most untrewlye is suggestede, for the said complaynant sayeth that the said Thomas Blysse her late husbände att his great coste & chargis buldede and erected the same howse for a dwellinge howse and to the intent to make hit stronge and substauncyall, amongste Dyvers other his great chargis thereuppon Employed, bestowed & used averye Stronge Stone walle and a Stone chymney for his necessarye use of fyre and in the same walle near unto the said chymney inclosed all the said monye in the said Bill of complaynt very fyed, to the intent to pserve and kype the same from casualtye of ffyre or for losing the same by any other extorte, waye or means as in the said Bill ys alleged. And without that the said complaynant after the death of the said Thomas Blysse and her entrye unto the prmysses dyde demyse and Lease the same premisses to the said defendt. to hold use or ocupie as a Stable, but as a dwellinge howse for wch porpoze the same was erected and usid, or that the said defendant Duringe the tyme of his ocupacon and abode therein ocupyed the same as a Stable as he surmyseth that he dyde to the knolyge of this complayaunt as in the said answer ys allso untrewlye alleged And yt be so dyde the same was not honestly done and otherwise then he hade warrande or Authoritye from the said complaynante to doe &

without that the said defendaunt never found nor hade anye other gayne or comodytie in or by the said howse other then in keping of horses & haye in the same as in the said answer most Impudently and contorarye to his one affyrmacon ys syggested or that he ys not in farre better ease to lyve by reson of having of the same or that howse and other comodytie therein ontayned then ever he was att anye tyme before the having of the same at that the welthe that he ys givine unto nowe of verye Late ys only by reson of his trade of byinge & selling of lynen cloth allso in his said answer he hath moste untrewlye alleged & srmysed and that wthout that therbe anye other matter or thing in the said answere conteyned materyall or effectual to be Replied unto and nott [torn—two words] -ently confessed and avoydede traversed or denyed ys trewe all which matters the said complt. [torn four or five words] pve [prove] as this honorable Courte shall awarde and prayeth as she before in her byll hath [torn—probably, most trewlye prayed.]

As no further record appears of this suit, it is probable that the plaintiff's allegations were not proven. She sold the bulk of the real estate, with the consent of her late husband's cousin, John Blysse of Leamington, to John Symes and Robert Bull, thus ignoring the claims which her husband's cousins had or imagined that they had as heirs to her estate, and for the recovery of which suit was brought by Robert Blysse of Oadby, the eldest son of Richard Blysse, Jr., first cousin to Thomas Blysse, the wealthy mercer, as we have seen in the case of *Blysse v. Symes*.

Isabel Blysse, to whom Thomas Blysse, the mercer, bequeathed a tenement, may be considered as a granddaughter of the latter's uncle, Richard Blysse, Sr. Her burial is the second-earliest recorded in the register of the parish church of the Holy Cross, Daventry:—

1574 Isabel Blysse bur. ye XXII of Aprill

"Stronge and substauncyall" and "buldede att his great coste & chargis," as was the stone house of Thomas Blysse, the mercer, its identity is now lost because of the modern fronts that have been added to almost every structure in the two business streets of Daventry. The "stone chymney" mentioned by the widow Agnes Blysse was something of a novelty in Daventry in 1550. Chimneys were rare in country houses as late as 1558. The reign of Elizabeth brought to her countrymen a prosperity such as they had never known. Thomas Blysse, the mercer, was a good example of the merchants of the "middle class," who placed carpets instead of rushes upon the floors of their houses, bought the carved oak bedsteads and furniture that are now so famous, made the use of glass in windows a common feature, and introduced the general domestic

comforts and refinements that date from Elizabeth's time [1558-1603]. More than all, they were the types of men who afterwards rose to supreme power and played a great and grand part in the social, political, and religious history of England.

In Elizabeth's time culture came to be looked upon, like good manners or good clothes, as part of the sound and personal equipment of the well-born and well-to-do, but the notion that education was for the common man would have been everywhere dismissed as a dangerous paradox. [Prime Minister ASQUITH.]

Jane (Wallman) Blysse, wife of John Blysse, the yeoman, died before 1561. This is the year back to which nearly all of the records of baptisms, marriages, and burials for Daventry are preserved in the registers of the parish church.

Agnes Blysse, who hunted for the imaginary treasure, outlived her husband, Thomas Blysse, the mercer, seventeen years.

Burialls 1574 Agnes Blysse bur. ye v of Aug.
[Register of Holy Cross, Daventry.]

Henry Blysse, the linen draper, sued by the said Agnes, was born 1520-40, before the church registers began, yet he was probably the son of Richard Blysse², Jr., of Daventry. Henry was quite as prominent a freeman of Daventry as were John Blysse, the spirited yeoman, and Thomas, the mercer. All that can be learned of him has been found. In 1571, four years after Agnes Blysse sued him for the money in the chimney, a survey was made of the manor of Daventry. In this valuable record Henry Blysse figures as holding of the Crown (as of the Queen's Duchy of Lancaster) several small parcels of land which he very likely used as gardens.

(The original MS of this survey is in the Record Office, London.)

Duchy of Lancaster. Misc. Books Vol. 113. 13 Elizabeth. [1571.]

The mannar of Daventree cu Drayghton in com Northmpton

The dragge or ffeildebooke made of the said Mannor in the moneth of Auguste in the xiiith yere of the Reigne of or Soveraigne Ladye Quene Elizabeth by Edmunde Twynyhs, Surveyor there by vertue of the Queenes Maistes commissyon to hym and others directed for the srvey of the same bearing date under the seale of the Dutchie of Lancaster the sixte daye of Julye in the xiiith yere of her maistes reigne aforesaide. By the oath of other of dyvers of the tennts there.

In the Toune of daventree, on the west syde of the streate called Newlande:
Thom Wallman 1 close 1 R [rood] 1 fur [furlong]

The Hyghe streate:

Edwarde Walman 111 cotags & 111 backfides quond vun mess voc buckebies
9 R fur

Henr. Roper unu pomar nup ptin mess pd voc Buckebyes [one orchard lately belonging to a house called "Buckebyes"] Edw. Walman west & Inlandes south.

[One of these houses occupied by Edwarde Walman may have been bequeathed to him by his brother-in-law John or Thomas Blysse. The location being on the north side of the short High street this property, therefore, was surely close to it if not inclusive of the site of the "Malte Mylle" owned in 1500 by the first Henry Blysse.]

On the south side of the highe streate:

Hered Walman 1 cot called xpofer's $\frac{1}{2}$ R [rood]

Nobolde Lane: Henr. Blysse 1 close 1R [rood]

The fferme holdeth the scite of thover mannor and the greate close called Inlandes wth a pcell of meadowe Lyeing together.

Henry Blysse 1 close i R

Edw. Wallman vun mess 111 cot voc Buckbyes R

Thom Wallman 1 close maydwell 1 R

Hered Wallman 1 cot. called the xpofer $\frac{1}{2}$ R [rood]

[This land held by Henry Blysse is identified as that bordering upon the present Lichfield street near its junction with Sheaf street, opposite the site of the present "Plough Inn" and extending eastward. This Inn is believed to have been the residence or on the site of the residence and blacksmith's shop of Wm. Blisse⁸, brother of the said Henry and grandfather of Thomas Blisse⁶, the emigrant to Rehoboth, Mass.]

In the coen [common] ffealdes of Daventree, viz:

In Hawkenell ["Hawken hill"—late called Falconer's or Faulkner's Hill]

Henr. Blysse 1 Ley Furl[ong] R $\frac{1}{2}$ a [acre]

Henry Blysse $\frac{1}{2}$ acr

In Kyngesmeade in a nother furl[ong] there Henr. Blysse ij Swathes in the midst of the meade.

In Estmeade: Henr. Blysse 1 R [rood]

Tenant Dve	In Villa	In corbz	In corbz
Regine p	Terr meluss	Campis terr	pratis
Indentur	Tents & Cots	arr ibm	terr pti ibm
[Tenant by	[Land with a	[arable land	[Pasture land
indenture-	house upon it	in the common	in the common
lease]	in the village]	fields]	fields]
Henr. Blysse	R [rood]	1 $\frac{1}{2}$ acr	1 R [rood] 1 acr

On the 19th of July, 1524, Henry Blysse witnessed the will of William Blysse⁸, blacksmith, undoubtedly his brother.

Records of the Borough of Daventry (in the town hall).

The order for poste horses agreed upon the Eighte daye of maye anno Regni Elizabeth Regine decimo Septimo [1575] . . . Henrie Blyse vi d [48 others paid vi d each for the carrying of the mails.]

Henry Blyse was chosen a member of the Common Council:—

XXIX Septembre being the feaste Daie of Saint Mychhell tharchaungele
[1576] Comoners: Henrie Blisse, Edward Wallman.

Forty-six days after Henry Blyse had signed his name to an agreement, as a member of the Borough Council on Nov. 28, 1587, the thin-toned bell in the tower of the church of the Holy Cross summoned the people, the freemen, and the officers of the "Borough & Comonalty of Daventre" to listen to the last rites of earth, beside the open grave of their esteemed friend and master, Henry Blyse:—

Burialls 1587 Henry Blisse bur. ye XIII of Jan.

[Register of the parish church of Daventry.]

Richard Blyse², Jr., (Richard¹) left no will and almost no record of himself. He died before the burial records began (1560). It is a mere conjecture that his wife may have been the Joyce of this record in the register of Holy Cross Church, Daventry:—

Burialls. 1567 Joyes Blisse the XXIX of Dec.

Nevertheless her probable son William³, (Richard², Richard¹) the smith, named his eldest daughter Joyce. Henry Blyse, brother of William³, also left no will, nor did he marry in Daventry before 1561, or after, if the parish register is to be relied upon as complete. (We fear that, like many others, it is not complete.) There are two births (baptisms) and burials, however, that can only be accounted for as being those of two of his children, in addition to five other children, whose baptisms were not recorded at Daventry. The two children whom we tentatively credit to the said Henry Blyse, whether rightly or wrongly, are recorded in the parish register of the Church of Holy Cross, Daventry, viz.:—

[Baptism] 1575, John Blisse bap. ye XIII of June

[And who died] 1598. John Blyse bur. ye XXVIII of Dec.

[Baptism] 1576. Agnes Blyse bap. ye XIII of Sept.

1597. Agnes Blyse bur. ye XX of Augt.

Henry Blyse was a member of "The Companye of M'sers, Wollendrap's, Taylers, Inkepers & fullers" of Daventry. After his death there appears in the records of this company, instead of his name, the name of Margaret Blisse, who paid iiid. dues in 1589, as a member of the company. That she came to be a member

thereof through inheritance can scarcely be questioned. There is no direct record proof that she was the widow of Henry Blyse, the draper. Nevertheless the evidence, though merely of a circumstantial nature, is of sufficient merit to convince the careful analyst, after a study of all Bliss records, that she was Henry's widow and his successor in the linen drapery trade. Her will of 1598 proves that she was engaged in business at Daventry, that she left goods to the value of £81 17s. 3d. [now about £500] and that "Maister H. Edm Quelye, Esquire" owed her £10 18s. for "wares delivered." Her will names five children as living in 1598—her probable son, John, having been buried just forty-eight days before she made her will, and her probable daughter, Agnes, had died in the year before, as shown hereinbefore.

(Registered at the Probate Registry, Northampton.)

Archdeaconry Court of Northampton.

Abstract of the will of Margaret Blisse of Daventry dated 6 Feb. 1598.

To be buried in parsh church of Daventrie.

To repaire of parish church of Daventrie ijs

To the poore of Daventrie iijs

To my sonne Edward Blisse £10 18s, which is due for wares delivered to the use of Maister Edm. Quelye, Esquire.

To my daughter Jane £10, executrix.

To Eliza Currale 40s

Residue to be divided between two of my children, Eliz Currall & Ursula Spencer.

Wm Blisse, my eldest sonne, oweth me 50s

Overseers, Thos. Marriat, minister, Rich Farman, Draper, John farmer butcher, Henry farmar shoemaker, to them ijs

Witnesses Wm. Blisse, Agnes Grace, francis Corral, Geo. Brokblancke

Probated 13 March 1598. Estate inventoried at £81 17s. 3d

The testator was buried three days after making her will:—

1598, Margaret Blisse bur. ye IX of feb.

[Register of Holy Cross, Daventry.]

Her son Edward had no issue in 1600. No marriage, or child of his, is recorded at Daventry. The drapery business, however, continued in the Bliss family at that place until 1870. It was last owned by the late Richard Bliss and Charles Lee Bliss, whose successor, Percy Farmer, is now a general linen draper or dealer in dry goods. Margaret Blisse's eldest son was residing at Pattishall, twelve miles southeastward of Daventry, where he died soon after his mother, leaving this will:—

(Registered at the Probate Registry, Northampton.)

Archdeaconry Court of Northampton (abstract) dated 31 Oct. 1600.

Wm Blisse of Eastcot in the psh of Patteshull, Northton.

To sonne George Blisse a payre of sheetes etc. & £8; £4 within 3 years & other £4, within six yeares; the money to be paid by my exec. into the hands of Geo. Maple & John Wates, overseers & by them to be employed to the use of Geo. till he is 21 years of age. If Geo. die, £4 to the eldest child of my brother Edward Blisse, if he happen to have any.

To my sister Eliza Corrall's eldest child, XXVIs. VIIIId.

To eldest child of Jane Ander, my sister.

To Wm. Tibbes, son in law, 1 ewe & 1 lamb when 21.

Towards the belles mendinge XIIId

Probated 15 Jan 1600, Inventory £80-14s.-00d

The Family of William Blisse of Daventry

This narrative has now come slowly, surely, step by step, across many years, over many records and through searching explanations thereof, to the day and the contemplation of a man who to his descendants is a great personage in the Bliss family of England. We refer to William Blysse³, blacksmith. We mark him as the brother of Robert Blysse of Oadby, and of Henry Blysse, the linen draper, of Daventry; and these so marked, as the three sons of Richard Blysse², Jr., of Daventry, who, in turn, was the son of Richard Blysse¹, Sr., of the same and brother to both Henry Blysse, the miller-mercier of 1500, and the Thomas Blysse who became lost to us in the leas of Leamington; the said Richard, Jr., having been the first cousin of the childless brothers, John Blysse, the yeoman, and Thomas Blysse, the mercier, who married the two sisters Wallman, and died both loving their Wallman brothers-in-law more than they loved their nearest of Bliss kin.

William Blysse³, the blacksmith of Daventry, was the grandfather of the three Blisses who forged with the white-hot iron of resolution their way to the New World, *circa* 1638, through two of his four sons, all four sons blacksmiths, and the sons of them blacksmiths, and the grandsons of them blacksmiths, in both England and America, simultaneously. Benjamin Franklin was the human product of generations of blacksmiths at Ecton, seventeen miles north-eastward from Daventry. This philosopher said that the sturdy family from which he sprang had "augmented its income, arising from a small patrimony of thirty acres, by adding to it the profits of a blacksmith's business, the eldest son always being bred to that trade." Then-a-days the smith was a man of far greater importance than now. William Blisse³ wrought many things other than iron shoes for the feet of horses. He was a general worker in metals for all sorts of purposes, the chief artisan of the town, the indispensable citizen. His was the day when the horse was in its glory in the use and esteem of man. Inland commerce moved only with the steps of Bucephalus. If the blazing forge has been idealized by poets, the Yakuts of Siberia still believe that spirits are more afraid of the clink of the smith's hammer and the roar of his bellows than of any other manifestation of force. A vestige of the ancient idea that smiths were wizards is seen in the expression in the articles of apprenticeship to the trade of a smith, used in the eighteenth century, which specified that a novitiate was to be taught "the

art and the mystery" of the trade. Sir Walter Scott made an itinerant blacksmith the wizard, the alchemist, the magician, who so mysteriously protected Amy Robsart. Though the smith nowadays is a less romantic figure, we are not at liberty to esteem any the less William Blysse⁹ and his forceful family.

William Blysse was born at Daventry, in what year no record remaineth and saith. He was born with the English Bible. The supreme power of the pope in Britain ceased almost with his first breath. The famous period of 1530-35 was in the cycle of his nativity. The Reformation was his cradle. The supplications before painted images he did not see, and the mass he never heard. He was baptized into a world pregnant with newly-applied ideas. Those new ideas became his ideas, even while the old ideas still hovered round. William Blysse, the smith, was the first of our Bliss ancestors who lived to witness the sounder demonstration of the fact that religion was a matter of deeds and not of words. He was our earliest ancestor to catch a first faint gleam of the truth-light of whatsoever in the name of which one man kills or injures another is not the religion of the New Testament but, instead, fanaticism.

The Daventry days of William Blysse were not many, and the records of his life are few. His second marriage, the baptisms and the burials of three of his eight children, his will, and his own burial are the only recorded items that now remain. He was first married when quite young, about 1550, and had by his first wife, before 1561, sons George, Nicholas, and William, the daughter Joyce, and possibly Jone. The first wife died before Sept., 1561. There is no record of her name or burial. The twelfth entry in the first column of the first page of the first register book of the parish church of Holy Cross at Daventry (which register begins in 1560) is the record of William Blysse's second marriage, viz.:—

A true Regyster of the churche

Maryges—

1561. Willm smith Blisse

Elizabeth his wiffe the XXth of Septe

The parchment page bearing this entry is blotted and stained with the tawny discoloration of time, and the ink is brown and pale. The word "smith," with a line drawn through it, was the clerk's intention to state the man's business, obviously and erroneously written before instead of after the surname. The family names of brides were not recorded in this book for the first few years.

Such omissions formed a common practice in the sixteenth century. Since then woman's position in England, however, has improved, yet the "Suffragettes" still claim to find room for a further improvement.

Sixteen-and-a-half months after the marriage of William and Elizabeth Blysse there was baptized their son, John⁴, who became the father of the brothers, Thomas⁵ and George⁵ Blisse, the emigrants, *circa* 1638, to Hartford, Connecticut, and Newport, Rhode Island, respectively:—

1562 John Blisse baptized the second of februarye
[Register of Holy Cross Church, Daventry.]

The second and third children of the second marriage were:—

1564 Agnes Blisse, bap. the xv of March
1573 Anne Blysse bap. ye XIX of July
[Register of Holy Cross Church, Daventry.]

Two of the four daughters died unmarried:—

1574 Joyce Blysse bur. ye XVII of Aug.
1592 Agnes Blysse bur. XX of May
[Register of Holy Cross Church, Daventry.]

Twenty-eight days before the burial of the said daughter Joyce her father was buried:—

1574 Willm. Blisse bur. ye XX of July
[Register of Holy Cross Church, Daventry.]

Elizabeth, the second wife and widow of William Blysse, blacksmith, outlived her husband twenty-two years:—

Burialls 1596. Elizabeth Blisse b. ye iiij of Sept.
[Register of Holy Cross Church, Daventry.]

The last testament of William Blysse, blacksmith, written on the day before he died:—

(Registered at the Probate Registry, Peterborough.)

Archdeaconry Court of Northampton. Liber 4. folio 230 (abstract).

19 July 1574 Willm Blysse of Daventry Northton, black smythe.

Body to be buried in the churche yarde of Daventry

I doo owe as folloithe ffyrst to Henrye Blisse xliiij s xi d.

To Nicolas Sherwood xx s: to Alice Deakes xii s viii d; to Law raunce batte xiii s iii d

Debttts owinge unto me as thes: John Gardiner x s x d harrye Rop ix s iii d.
John batman vi s vi d Henry warwicke v s vi d John hurlies ii s iii d and a loode

carriage of fyrres* from farthingstone, Willm hychis v s ix d Robt. Cooke iii s ii d boddington of Newman, iii s v d, Cheton of byfyld ii s Richard batte of buckebye x d. Thomas Clarke & John Walson of Daventry v s vi d Richard Iswell xvi d

To Nicolas blysse my second sonne the lease of my house in daventrye in consideracon that my wife shall have her fyndinge in the same howse so long as she kepythe her selfe wydow.

To sayd Nicolas all the shoppe tooles yt I have at Stavton ii fayre hammers excepted wch I doo gyve unto my sonne John.

To my sonne Willm my third sonne all my tooles & all things that p'taynes to my forge at Daventry.

My son John shall serve & be prentys wth my sonne Nicolas untill he shalbe xxti yeres old; that Nicolas shall teache hym his occupacon and at thend when he shalbe at his full age then Nicolas shalpaye unto hym vli

To my wife a browne cowe

To Jone blysse a blacke cowe

To Anne my daughter a browne heffer.

To Joyce my daughter a heffer.

To Jone my dau. a trusse bed & a mattris, & ii payre of sheets.

To Agnes blisse xx s

To joys blisse xx s

To Jone blysse ij platters a sawser & posenet

To my eldiste daughter the great panne so that she shall paye unto her syster Jone x s

To Agnes my daughter a towe bed & a payre of shetes

The rest of my goods not bequethed, my debttis being payd & my bodye honesly broughte to the earthe, I doo gyve and bequethe unto my wife & to my sonne Nicolas, executores.

Phillipe steven & harrye [Henry] blisse overseers.

In wittes, George blysse Robert Grene, gylbrt Rive, Thomas Chyles.

Probated v Feb. 1574. [No inventory preserved.]

Here was a testator who did the unusual thing of specifying his debts in a will a few hours before his death and before he named his creditors or his legatees. William Blysse, the testator, was a freeman of the Borough of Daventry and a member of "The Companye of the Shoemakers, Tanners, Whittawars, Glovers and Smithes" one of the two merchant companies or tradesmen's guilds which controlled the general business of the borough. These combinations formed by the masters of trades, for mutual protection, the governing of apprentices, the control of competition, etc., exercised an arbitrary authority quite akin to modern "trust methods." William Blysse was the head of his profession. He had reached out and taken the forge in the neighboring town of Staverton. There was ample work for two or three men in his two

*Fyrres, coal.



THE ANCIENT KITCHEN OF THE INN, DAVENTRY

shops. His sons were his assistants. The old forge at Staverton continued as such up to within the memory of men now living there. Parts of its ancient building still stand at the rear of the old stone house near the corner of the little open square in the center of the village, where the road from Daventry enters the center of Staverton. On the right side of the latter road, about twenty feet from the corner, may be seen the outer wall of the former smith's shop. The patched-up wall shows where the wide door, that opened from the street, has been closed up with stone, as also has a small window. The thatched roof has changed to iron and the interior is now devoted to less noble uses than of yore. The ancient forge at Daventry, also owned by the Blissés, is said by local antiquarians to have stood at the rear of the "Plough and Bell" Inn. This inn is a building of stone of the age of three hundred years, if a day. While an earlier house may have occupied the same site, we are in great danger of proclaiming this old house to have been the residence of the Bliss blacksmiths who, it is reasonable enough to suppose, carried on their business "at the old stand" close to the rear of the residence, after 1600, if not before then—and to so proclaim without any better evidence than that of the good memory of the local antiquary, Samuel George Leigh, who in 1910 related how an acquaintance of his worked at that same old forge forty years ago. The house, now the "Plough and Bell," is of itself, however, visible evidence of the abode of a substantial citizen of Daventry three centuries ago if not longer. The ancient smith's shop at the rear has been pulled down.

The absence from the will of William Blysse³ the smith of the customary bequest to the parish church suggests that he had stronger inclinations towards Puritanism than did the majority of his fellow freemen. This idea may gain strength perhaps from the fact that several who must have been his grandchildren were not presented, after birth, for baptism at the parish church. The only alternative is that if baptized therein the clerk of the parish omitted to record the baptism in the register. The frequency of such neglect to record such events in the parish registers of England is realized by antiquaries who study such parish records. While we are satisfied with the entire plausibility, in this instance, of the belief in the omission by neglect of the recorder, before 1588, the absence of any record of a Bliss baptism in Daventry for the twenty-three years, 1588 to 1612, can only be explained by the failure of Puritans to present their babes for baptism by the parish priest, who con-



SHEAF STREET, DAVENTRY, LOOKING WESTWARD



THE INN, DAVENTRY, FORMERLY HOME OF THE ANCIENT BLACKSMITHS

sidered the Puritans in his parish to be disorderly persons, or because they might have been excommunicated or, possibly, by there having been no Bliss births for that long period.

One year, five months, and thirteen days after the burial of William Blysse, in 1574, his second son, Nicholas, to whom he had bequeathed the shop in Staverton and the dwelling in Daventry (likely a house at or near the Plough and Bell Inn), died unmarried:—

1575 Nycholas Blysse bur. ye ij of Jan.

[Register of Holy Cross, Daventry.]

Nicholas had been promptly chosen to succeed his late father, viz.:—

The Companie of the Shomakers, Tanners, Whittawars, Glovers and Smithes
Nicholas Blysse was made free of the smythes the xvii of Julye in the yeare of or Lord god one thousand fyve hundreth seventie and fyve and the yeare of the reigne of or Sovraigne Ladie Quene Elizabeth xviiti, who paied to the chambre for the same iii s iiii d

Wardens of the same companey chosen the xxx of octobre 1575, Nicholas Blysse for the smythes

Nicholas Blysse iiii d

The order for poste horses agreed upon the eighte daye of Maye anno Regni Elizabeth Regina decimo Septimo [1575] Nicholas Blysse vi d

George,⁴ William⁴, and John⁴ Blysse, the three brothers of the said Nicholas, succeeded their father and brother at the forge in Daventry and at Staverton. All three became the fathers of sons and daughters. George and William lived in Daventry and assumed the obligations and rights of the deceased Nicholas. John, their youngest brother, after being taught the trade, as stipulated by his father's will, set up business for himself at the forge in Preston Capes, five miles southward from Daventry, whither we will follow him, after due reference to George. William⁴, of whom we shall write finally, was the father of Thomas Blisse⁵, the emigrant to America, *circa* 1638, who settled at Rehoboth, Massachusetts.

George Blisse, the eldest son, witnessed his father's will in 1574, but received no bequest by that instrument. He was then of legal age and self-supporting. Whatever his father had done for him had been done before 1574. We cannot peer into his circumstances closely enough to determine whether he had intended himself for some other business than that of a smith, or had become independent of his father as a smith, hence requiring no provision by his father's will. Fourteen years after the death of Nicholas, George Blisse's

name appears as a smith at the head of the list of members of the company who paid dues. At this time he was the head of the family and its representative in the company:—

(From records of the "Borough and Commonalty of Daventry.")

The Companie of the Shomakers, Tanners, Whittawars, Glovers and Smithes
1589.

Smithes: George Blisse iiiij [dues]

George is not of record as having married at Daventry nor in any of the sixteen towns surrounding. In six of these towns the records of baptism, marriage, and burial before 1635 are lost. But two of his children are of record. The gap of twenty-three years in the church records at Daventry, heretofore referred to, in which no Bliss baptisms or marriages were recorded (1588 to 1612) covers some of the years in which children were certainly born to the brothers George⁴ and William⁴ Blisse. They were the only two male Bliss heads of families discernible in Daventry, 1587 to 1612. Some of their children were either born or baptized at the home parishes of the wives of these two brothers, or baptized in Daventry but not recorded, or not presented for baptism for reasons already noted. Therefore to which of the two brothers, George or William, to credit these three females, we cannot decide:—

1588 Ales Blisse bap. ye xxviii of Augt. —[who died]—

1614 Alce Blysse spinster buried the 20 of Marche

1578 Agnes Blysse bap. ye xxx of Maye

[Register of Holy Cross Church, Daventry.]

Of the two girls baptized in 1582, Mary and Ann, the latter was surely a daughter of George, as it is judged that Mary was the daughter of William.

1582 Mary Blisse bap. ye xii of April

1582 Ann Blisse bap. ye x of Dec.

[Register of Holy Cross Church, Daventry.]

George Blysse's daughter, Margaret, is only recorded, viz.:—

1601 Margaret Blysse buried daughter of George Blysse Sen. buried the
19 daye of January

[Register of Holy Cross Church, Daventry.]

George Blysse, Sen., died in middle age without making a will. The final record of him reads:—

1608 George Blysse blacksmith buried ye 2 feb

[Register of Christ Church, Daventry.]

George Blisse, Jun., son of the last-named George, Sr., though not recorded as baptized at Daventry, passed his life there however as a blacksmith. He is identified by his will, in which is mentioned his only surviving child, Jane. George Blisse, Jun., married Agnes Pinckard and had two daughters:—

1627 Mary Blisse fil George & Agnes Blisse bapt. Sept ix [She died]:—

1627 Mary Blisse bur. the xiii of Jan.

1630 Jane Blisse filia Georgii Blisse & Agnis baptiza July 18

[Register of Holy Cross Church, Daventry.]

The wife, Agnes (Pinckard) [Pinkard] Blisse was buried six years later:—

Burials 1636 Agnes Blisse, Janua 7th

[Register of Holy Cross Church, Daventry.]

George Blisse, the widower, died seven months and six days later. His burial was not recorded, but his will is extant:—

(Probate Registry, Northampton.)

Archdeaconry Court of Northampton. Liber 1637.

The will noncupative of George Blisse of Daventry Northton, Blackmith, three daies before his death, viz, upon the 20th day of Aug 1637:—

I give all the goods I have to my daughter Jane Blisse and I desire my brothr Wm. Pinckard to take care to see her brought upp and to manage & dispose of her estate till she comes to age & likewise take care that my debts be duly & truly pd.

Probated Aug 19 1637. Inventory (in detail) £24:4:10

The Home of Thomas⁵ and George⁵ Blisse

"An old place, full of many a lovely brood,
Tall trees, green hedges, and ground flowers in flocks
And wild rose tip-toe upon hawthorn stocks."

True that is of the time-worn town of Preston Capes, or Preston-on-the-hill, as it is sometimes called, within which, a mile away from the village center, is the hamlet of but four or five houses called Preston Parva, meaning Little Preston. John Blisse⁴ (William³, Richard², Richard¹), born at Daventry in 1562, the youngest of the aforesaid four sons of William Blysse the blacksmith who died in 1574, had been, no doubt, taught at Daventry and Staverton "the art and the mystery" of his father's trade by his elder brothers, George and William, as stipulated in their father's will that the deceased brother Nicholas should do: "that Nicolas shall teache hym [John] his occupacon and atthend when hee shalbee at his full age then Nicolas shall paye unto hym v li."

We doubt not that George and William paid the £5, and that John soon after left Daventry to become "the village blacksmith" at Preston Parva six miles to the southward. Was his first wife the daughter of the former smith at Preston? And were they married there in St. Peter's Church? No definite answer is possible; the probabilities are affirmative. The vital records of the parish of Preston Capes are missing before the year 1614. This record-chasm is a lamentable loss to us; but we can easily make a safe-and-sound attempt to bridge it. Here are recorded John Blisse's second marriage, the baptism of his last child, his own burial, the burial of his second wife, and the marriages of two of his children; and here he wrote the will that names all of his seven sons and daughters. Particularly named therein are his two eldest sons, Thomas⁵ and George⁵, the now famous and well-known emigrants to Hartford, Conn., and Newport, R. I. Here, we may well believe, that the first six children were born as surely as was the seventh. Here Thomas and George grew to manhood. Here they served the customary apprenticeship of seven years at the forge. Here, we can but believe, Thomas with several of his neighbors was excommunicated by the church and the rite of baptism denied to some of his children. Preston-on-the-hill is ours, therefore, and a picturesque possession it is. Quite uplifted will be the spirit of him or her whose eyes first see Preston from the northward approach.

If the visitor but stroll herewards at afternoon in the sunshine, by the footpath from Fawsley's most quaint and lovely church, over the downs, sheep-dotted, to the mead that smiles beneath St. Peter's foot, the view will be worth the mile of walking. The manicured slopes are sleek in the sunlight, and the shadows of the hedges that divide the fields, and the dark-fringed wood along the top and down the westward vale, will satisfy the preconceived imagination of what an ancestral English landscape should be. The byways of the village are just as well swept as the fields, and behind the white latticed windows, filled with flowerpots a-bloom and set in the gray stone walls, are snug interiors, cozy and clean.

This afternoon the scene is quite as the Blisses last saw it. But æsthetically the scene said nothing to them. The Puritans were insensible to any view but the heavenly vista. They were unhappy here; here where nature bestows a benediction. Conscience and ambition found no solace on Preston-hill for George and Thomas Blisse. "They had their smiles and their tears, their raptures and their sorrows, but not for the things of this world. Enthusiasm had made them stoics." Yet Lord Macaulay called the Puritans "the most remarkable body of men, perhaps, which the world has ever produced. . . . They went through the world," he says, "like Sir Artegal's iron man, Talus, with his flail, mingling with human beings, but having neither part nor lot in human infirmities, insensible to fatigue, to pleasure, to pain, not to be pierced by any weapon, not to be withstood by any barrier. They rejected with contempt the ceremonious homage which other sects substituted for the pure worship of the soul. They recognized no title to superiority but His favor; and, confident of that favor, they despised all the accomplishments and all the dignities of the world. If they were unacquainted with the works of philosophers and poets, they were deeply read in the oracles of God. If their names were not found in the registers of heralds, they were recorded in the Book of Life. If their steps were not accompanied by a splendid train of menials, legions of ministering angels had charge over them. Their palaces were houses not made with hands; their diadems crowns of glory which should never fade away. On the rich and the elegant, on nobles and priests, they looked down with contempt, for they esteemed themselves rich in a more precious treasure, and eloquent in a more sublime language—nobles by the right of an earlier creation, and priests by the imposition of a mightier hand. They were not



ST. PETER'S, PRESTON CAPES, FROM THE WEST



NORTHWARD FROM ST. PETER'S, PRESTON CAPES, SHOWING FAWSLEY WOOD

men of letters, they were, as a body, unpopular. But those who roused the people to resistance, who directed their measures through a long series of eventful years, who formed, out of the most unpromising materials, the finest army that Europe had ever seen, who trampled down King, Church, and Aristocracy, who, in the short intervals of devotion, sedition, and rebellion, made the name of England terrible to every nation on the face of the earth,—were no vulgar fanatics."

Although the Blisses were nestled on this rural hilltop, far from the thickest of the fray, they felt on every seventh day the heavy hand of ecclesiastical command. While becoming uneasy in their minds over their poor prospects of gaining control of the church, state, and nation (which the Puritans achieved after the Bliss emigrants had left), and the Blisses were not present to join Cromwell's "Ironsides" in the battles of the Civil War, they nevertheless gave all their strength to accomplish what was a greater work than the overturning of the monarchy, i. e., *they helped to found a new world.*

Yet this autumnal afternoon, as we stand on Windmill-hill, in the footpath from Fawsley, let us not brood too long over the thought that our ancestors here harbored hatred against the church that we now see set so nobly upon the mount before us, lest we mar our memory of the blissful landscape that we have come so far and so oft to see. We are welcome where they were bidden adieu. Where they lamented, we rejoice. Down to the meadow, and over, then up—now we are in the churchyard! Standing free of the ivy that formerly lavished its leaves lovingly over every stone, from turf to top, is the venerable tower of St. Peter's, the parish church of Preston Capes,—mediæval, majestic, embattled. St. Peter's was here when the Magna Charta was signed, when Parliament was an experiment, before the peasant of Lorraine ceased to watch her father's sheep in the fields of Domremy and became a witch in the minds of the English and then the greatest heroine of the world up to her time—the beatified Jeanne d'Arc. It was here before gunpowder was invented, and now the church overlooks a landscape wealthy in the gifts of tranquillity and hope. Solemn yet pleasing thoughts will come upon the Bliss visitor here, if the *chauffeur* is not in his usual hurry. John Blisse, father of the two emigrants, probably raised no discordant note within these walls. He may not have been "the village Hampden"; instead one believes that—



"GOD'S ACRE," ST. PETER'S, PRESTON CAPES

"At church with meek and unaffected grace
His looks adorned the venerable place."

And to a contradictory voice he, more like, would have said:—

"Speak low! the place is holy to the breath
Of awful harmonies, of whispered prayer."

Whatever were his ideas of religious progress, he did not withdraw from the church wherein he had carried all of his seven children to baptism, and wherein he had knelt, as a dutiful communicant, before the chancel, as the marriage service of the Church of England was read which united him and Alice Smith in the most sacred bonds of holy wedlock. He was not "doomed to bitter persecution like his father for nonconformity," nor was his father before him, nor was he imprisoned therefor, nor did he die in prison, as alleged in *The Bliss Genealogy* of 1881; and his name was not "Jonathan," and he did not die in 1635-36 aged about 65; he did not bury, while they were young, four of his children, and he did not have a sister "Elizabeth who married Sir John Calcliffe of Belstone" or any other man, nor a sister Mary or Polly, nor a daughter Mary, who survived him, as stated in that said book. John Blisse was not excommunicated, nor was his wife Alice. Both were buried in "consecrated ground" at the edge of the Danish intrenchment, in heroic soil, in the town in which they lived and died and within the shadow of the church that they both loved in one way or another. Like most of their neighbors they fulfilled the mission allotted to them by Providence, and he died in the fifty-fifth year of his age, and she died eight years after.

Burials 1617 John Blisse, blacksmith, buried the 8th of September
1625. Alice Blisse widdow buried the xxvith day of March.

[Register of St. Peter's Church, Preston Capes.]

His second marriage:—

1614 John Blisse was married to Alice Smith August 1st 1614

[Register of St. Peter's Church, Preston Capes.]

The baptism of his only child by the second wife:—

1615. John Blisse, sonne of John Blisse & Alice, his wife, was baptized
March 17th, 1615 [-16].

[Register of St. Peter's Church, Preston Capes.]

His will:—

(The original of this will is on file at the Probate Registry, Northampton.)

Archdeaconry Court of Northamptonshire, Q. 20

In the name of God Amen. The eight day of Septembr in the yeare of or Lord God 1617 I John Blisse of Preston parva in the county of Norhampton, blacksmith beinge sick in body yett of good and pfect remembrance prayesd be god doe make this my last will and testament in manner of forme

(Facsimile of the will [registered at Northampton] of John Blisse.)

In the name of God Amen. The eight day of Septembr
in the yeare of or Lord God 1617 I John Blisse of
Preston parva in the county of Norhampton blacksmith
beinge sick in body yett of good and pfect remembrance
prayesd be god doe make this my last will and
testament in manner of forme followinge I first doe
commend my soule into the hand of Almighty god
my creator and maker havinge a specially for fildred
by the only merits and mediation of Jesus Christ my
only saviour and redemer. And for my temporal
goods I do dispose of them as followeth first I do bequeath
unto every one of my children viz Thomas George
Agnes Joane Constance Elizabeth and John six
pence a peece And the rest of all my goods and
cattell [chattels] my debts beinge payd and my
funerall expenses discharged I doe give wholly
unto Alice my wife whome I do make my sole
executrix of this my last will and testament.
And to see the same pformed accordinge to my
will I do appoint my overseers Peter Smith my
wiffe's brother and Thomas Blisse my sonne.
In witnes hereof I have sette my marke
the daye & yeare above written

11 Octobris 1617
Probatum coram meo Edwardo Reede Clerico et Surrogato
sub sigillo suo in archidiaconatu Northamptonensi
et filio suo
Joh. Blisse
54.9.4

followinge, first, I doe comend my soule into the hands of Almighty god my creator and maker hopinge assuredly for salvation by the only merit and mediation of Jesus Christ my only saviour and redemer. And for my temporal goods I do dispose of them as followeth—first I do bequeath unto every one of my children, viz, Thomas, George, Agnes, Joane, Constance, Elizabeth and John, six pence a peece, And the rest of all my goods and cattell [chattels] my debts beinge payd and my funerall expenses discharged I doe give wholly unto Alice my wife whome I do make my sole executrix of this my last will and testament. And to see the same pformed accordinge to my will I do appoint my overseers Peter Smith my wiffe's brother

and Thomas Blisse my sonne. In witnes hereof I have sette my marke the daye & yeare above written.

(The mark of John Blisse)

11 Octobris 1617. Probated before Mr. Edward Reede Clerk and Surrogate by Alice relict and executrix.

Total Inventory of estate £54:9s:4d [much more by present reckoning.]

This document bespeaks the quiet, order-loving Christian citizen, dependent entirely upon his daily labor, a man whose sorrow had softened his spirit and whose responsibilities had concentrated his



ANCIENT DWELLINGS, PRESTON CAPES



THE CENTER OF THE VILLAGE, PRESTON CAPES

mind and his hands upon his domestic duties. Undoubtedly John Blisse was in some sympathy with the radical religious Puritanism of his two sons. May not this Englishman's faith so clearly expressed in this will be esteemed a nobler crown than any titled wreath that man might have made him?

The reader may need to come to see the quiet-mannered, slow-spoken, true-hearted folk of Preston-hill, and to note their wholesome faces, hardy ways, and practical capabilities, to gather some semblance of what it was to be the blacksmith here. The house, forge, and the garden that John Blisse rented revealed much before they were remodeled in 1907. Leaving the White Swan Inn at the top of the village street of Preston Capes, the visitor will find the ancient Bliss homestead quite easily by walking a half-mile southeasterly along a very pretty road lined with pleasant trees for nearly all the distance. To the right are the open fields, to the left the view northward is uninterrupted for miles. Thrift is the note of the entire prospect—pasture, meadow, ploughed soil, or yellowing crops, defined one from the other by modulations of green and by graceful trees, ivy clad, somewhat sparsely set in lines to divide the lots, with evergreen hedges from tree to tree, and a few acres of woodland at intervals. "We have acres of woodland and oceans of grass" is the saying in Northants, to say nothing of the hills. There is a quiet nobleness in the northward prospect. Preston Parva, now a hamlet of five houses, formerly seems to have consisted of three or possibly four residences. The first house upon the right, after leaving the White Swan Inn, is a stone structure surmounted with a roof of thatch. This is a very ancient house, though not old for mid-England. It dates back into the time of Queen Elizabeth, who died in 1603. From the upper windows is an unbroken view of thirty miles north and south. This place is identified as John Blisse's home by its connection with the ancient forge, a small shop at the left end of the dwelling. The latter had been externally unchanged up to 1907, these many scores of years. It was photographed both before and after the remodeling. Dozens of houses of its type and age are in every small village in western Northants. The small shop also has been restored modernly, the upper walls relaid and strengthened for the roof of slate which superseded the once-mossed thatch. The antiquity of the lower part of the walls remains unquestionable. In 1906 the premises had been long untenanted. Then the shop contained, in one corner, the remains of the brick fire-bed or basin of a forge. No aged resident

remembers when a smith last wrought therein; but the tradition of this shop having been once a smithy's has been easily perpetuated and not alone by virtue of the evidence of the forge that was for so long visible. The house and grounds, greatly improved in 1907, afford now a comfortable residence.

Changes come slowly in a hamlet of four houses. A close scrutiny of the other three antique structures will leave no doubt in the investigator's mind as to the identity of the ancient black-smith's premises. It is not always that an emigrant to America can be traced back to the town of his English birth. Still less possible is it that the roof that sheltered him there can be often found. "Time has stood still" in Preston Parva, almost. To that fact alone is due the rare good fortune of the extant ancestral homestead. There are larger old houses in the parish and some are more picturesque, but in the accompanying picture is revealed the veritable home of Thomas and George Blisse (the emigrants to Hartford, Conn., and Newport, R. I., respectively), their sisters, brother, and parents. The house was formerly divided into two parts; so it may be imagined that John Blisse allowed his son Thomas the smaller half of the dwelling upon the latter's marriage. This house, now called "Wayside," was palatial in comparison with the log hut he first dwelt in at Hartford in Connecticut. This Preston mansion was John Blisse's castle, and after him his son Thomas's, more so than is realized in American life, for as Pitt proclaimed: "The poor man may in his cottage bid defiance to all the force of the Crown. It may be frail; its roof may shake; the wind may blow through it; the storm may enter—but the King of England cannot enter; all his forces dare not cross the threshold of the ruined tenement."

This venerable house! What a contemplation it is! It had no name; it had no number; yet ten generations of men have called it "home." Thousands are the descendants now alive whose ancestors abode here. Into what remote regions of the earth have some of those descendants wandered! What a place it is for them to make a pilgrimage to! And what a host if all were gathered here together! What laughter and what tears! "The stones have voices and the walls do live." To us, it is a friend which old custom has made sweet, a "keep" of treasured history, and to our ancestors none-the-less of homely virtues, bastioned with domestic love and fortified against the world by their honest endeavors—a home the draw-bridge of which was ever down for the feet of the pure in heart, the only passport of entry requisite.



PRESTON PARVA, PRESTON CAPES



BLISSE HOMESTEAD, PRESTON PARVA, AFTER RESTORATION 1909

The two eldest daughters of John Blisse (by a first wife, whose name is unobtainable) must have lived here with their Puritanical brother, Thomas, after the death of their father. They did not withdraw from the parish church. As they became somewhat dependent upon their eldest brother, they seem to have represented a partial compromise in the dissent between their brothers and the parish church. The brothers Thomas and George could not have easily maintained the sisters had they been severely ostracized by any of the members of the community upon whose patronage at the smithy they depended. Agnes and Joane were both married in St. Peter's Church:—

The Register booke of Preston Capes, alias Preston on the hill, of all christenings, Weddings and burials within the same parish beginning anno domini 1614

Anno dom 1629

marriage John Hardinge and Agnis Blisse were married the xiith of July.

Anno dom 1632

John Payne and Joane Blisse were married the xith day of febr.

George Blisse⁵ (John⁴, William³, Richard², Richard¹), the second son, about the time of the latter marriage felt freer to turn his thoughts more to his individual welfare. He secured employment at Daventry, where doubtless he still further added to the skill that in Rhode Island in 1650 caused him to be one of the men appointed "to mend and make all the arms in Newport." The last news of him in England is the record of his marriage to a young English-woman who, when she placed her hand in his as both knelt before the chancel of the Daventry church, well knew that she would soon be called upon to go with her husband on a journey the length of which was entirely beyond her comparative comprehension.

1635 George Blisse & Ann Shaw both of this parish mar. Maye 30

[Register of Holy Cross Church, Daventry.]

George Blisse named his only known child after his father, John of Preston Parva. This son was born in New England. George Blisse was born about 1591 according to a statement made by him "in a court at Newport, R. I." He died at that beautiful place August 31, 1667, aged 76 years.

Thomas Blisse⁵ (John⁴, William³, Richard², Richard¹), of Preston Parva (born 1585-88, will proved in Hartford, Conn., in 1650), young and headstrong, found his late father's little blacksmith's shop

unsuited to his ambitions. He felt himself capable of larger things, and he sought larger things spiritually. He heard his next-door neighbor, the widow Alice Thompson of Preston Parva, talk of going to America with her children, and she heard him so aver. He listened to the tramp of many far-stirred feet moving seaward from the midland hills. He felt himself equal to the task that these other men had set. "No preaching and dumb ministers" had made him impatient. "The droning of ecclesiastical services," referred to by Erasmus, was a dead weight upon his spirit, an artificiality to his aspiring soul. When he did not go to hear the Rev. John Dod, the Puritan, in Fawsley Church a mile away, he walked in the woods or read his Bible beside his open fire. He told the churchmen what he thought; then they excommunicated him. The hierarchy of the church excommunicated nearly one half of the adults in Preston Capes parish between 1607 and 1633. This did not mean imprisonment. Chiefly it excluded the dissenters from the privileges of marriage and burial at the parish church, and denied them the rite of baptism for their children. This proceeding was ecclesiastical, not civic. It was launched against them by the surrogate to the chancellor of the diocese of Peterborough, not by the civil or criminal courts of the shire. The recusant rolls of the national government bear no Preston Capes names. The Blisses were not "star-chambered" before the king's privy council. That process was somewhat reserved for dissenting clergymen and large offenders, like Sir Richard Knightley, lord of the manor of Fawsley, which manor included Preston Capes and a part of Daventry. Complaints were laid before the criminal court of the county of Northampton at Northampton city, and a few convictions and fines resulted therein; but no Blisse figures in those records. The book of excommunications before 1663 for the diocese of Peterborough happily has been destroyed. Upon a fragmentary page of an otherwise unused leaf of the first register-book of St. Peter's Church, Preston Capes, the following references to excommunications still linger. The ink is fading; and the power that put the entries therein is fading. The headings intimate that the record originally began in 1607, but the entries between that and 1618 are missing, and the record, as a whole, as existing cannot be considered as complete.

[.] la in Preston vii die Febr. 1607 et follio 337 coram
 [.] Butler Surrog. in Cancell et inter alia Maria Stanton
 excommunicat.



ST. PETER'S CHURCH, PRESTON CAPES



INTERIOR, ST. PETER'S CHURCH, PRESTON CAPES

[.] Bosworth decreed excommunicate the 26 of March and denounced in Preston church Apr. 22, 1618.

[.] Bosworth decreed excom the 24 July 1618 and denounced in Preston church the 9 of Aug.

Richard Welch decreed excom vicessimo die mensis October 1618

Richard Welch absolved fro the sentence of excom by Mr. Middleton the 10 of Febr. 1618.

Judith Jackson decreed excom tercio die Mensis July 1620.

Judith Jackson absolved fro the sentence of excom in July 1620.

Richard Freston & his wife were absolved from the sentence of excommunication denounced against them the 20 day of decebr. 1620.

Henry Adkins decreed to be excom the 27 June & denounced the 8 of July 1621.

Henry Adkins was absolved fro the sentence of excom the 14 of January 1622

The excommunicat decreed agt. Rich. Trubshaw the vii of March 1622

Elizabeth Lapworth & Mary Wood were absolved fro the sentence of excom by Richard Holbrook Surrogate to the Chancellor the 15 day of May 1624.

Thomas Haddon decreed to be excom the 7 of May 1624

Thomas Haddon absolved from the sentence of excom the 22 of May 1624.

[.] Wanor decreed to be excommunicate the 14 of Octo 1629.

John Hone decreed to be excommunicate to excad by the chancellor the 13 of Sepr. 1633.

[The Corrections Books of the diocese for 1617-18 preserved at Peterborough give "Amiam Bosworth" and "Maria Stimson" of Preston Capes as being corrected for not receiving communion.]

After searching the records of the entire deanery for the baptisms of Ann, Mary, Thomas, Nathaniel, Lawrence, Samuel, Sarah, Hester, and Elizabeth, the first nine children of Thomas Blisse of Preston Parva (all born between 1615 and 1640), without finding a trace of one of them, we are almost forced to believe that though born at Preston they were all, singly or together, never taken for baptism into any church of the Church of England. The law of England was that infants should be so baptized within a reasonable time after birth. Excommunication only could have been Thomas Blisse's legal or likely reason, for not complying with the law. Excommunicated he was without the pale of the law, and beyond the reach of the church, in that respect. We miss the records of baptism, but we prize higher than if we had them the independence and courage of the father and the mother, Thomas Blisse, blacksmith, and his wife, Margaret. Her maiden name we have completely failed to find. The fact that one of her sons was named Lawrence has no significance. This was a very common Christian name in Northants. They never begged to be absolved from excommunication, as did

some of their neighbors. Each had the solace and the exaltation of one "whose conscience is his strong retreat."

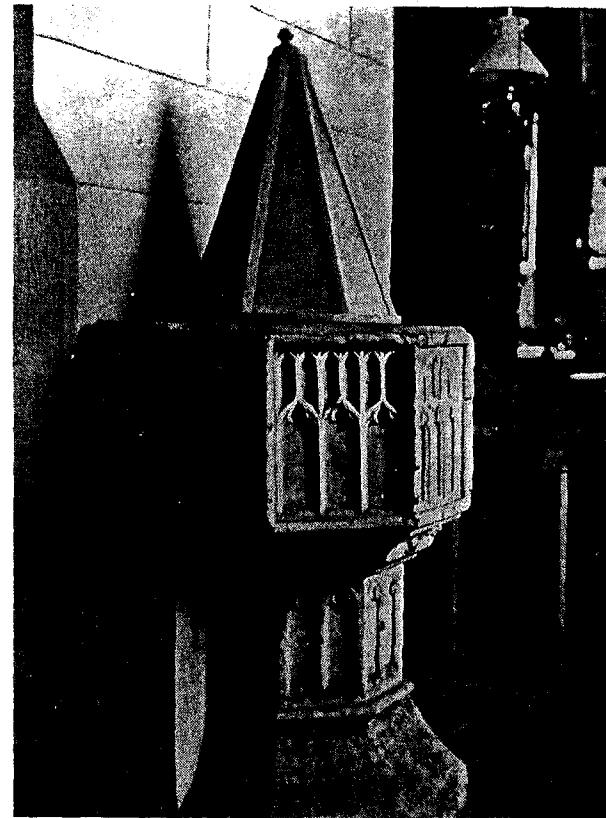
The Northamptonshire historian gives an interesting account of Preston Capes parish:—

This parish includes Great Preston, West Preston, or Preston on the hill, and Little Preston, or Wood Preston. It is bounded on the north by Fawsley, on the east by Farthingstone and Maidford, by Charwelton on the west, and Canons Ashby on the south. It contains 2280 acres; and its population in 1801 was 360, in 1831, 378, and in 1841, 354 souls. The soil is principally a deep loam, and the greater part of the lordship is in permanent pasture.

Manor. At the time of the Conqueror's survey (1088) Alured held $1\frac{1}{2}$ virgates of land and Nigel $1\frac{1}{2}$ hides, in Preston, of the Earl of Morton, the whole of which had been the freehold of Fregis before the conquest (1066) and had been valued at 6s. but was now advanced to 40s. Soon after the conquest, Hugh de Leycaster, who founded a priory adjoining his castle here, and then removed it to Daventry, was lord of the town and castle of Great Preston. In the reign of Henry III the manor of Great Preston was purchased by Hugh de Capes, who obtained license from the prior of Daventry to build a chapel within the said manor. From him it descended to Thomas de Capes, his son, who sold it to John Hylberd of Fawsley. The lordship of Little Preston appears at this time to have been held of the family of Montacute. In the 11 of Henry III (1227) John de Montacute paid a fine of 40 marks for leave to inclose a park in Little Preston; and his successor, William de Montacute, accounted for half a fee in Little Preston, as held of the honour of Aquila. "This William de Montacute," writes Mr. Bridges, "in the 19 of the same reign came to an agreement with the monks of Daventre, by which for the benefit of his own soul, and the soul of Agnes his wife, he gave to the convent all the tithe sheaves of his demesne lands in Little Preston, with all the small tithes, four acres and two roods of arable land, pasture for 2 cows and 25 sheep, with pannage or mast for 5 hogs, upon condition that they should provide him a chaplain to officiate daily in the chapel adjoining to his house in Little Preston, whenever he or his family should reside there. The chancel of this chapel was to be covered at the expense of the convent, and the body of it by William de Montacute and his heirs, and the chaplain was to eat at his table. This gentleman seems to have died without leaving any male issue; for in the 4 year of Edward I died Thomas de Audenham seized of this half fee in Little Preston, which he is certified to have held of the honour of Aquila; and of the inheritance of Isabel his wife, whom I therefore apprehend to have been the daughter and heir of this William de Montacute." In the 32nd of Edward I (1304) John de Lyons held half a knight fee in Preston Capes, of Thomas de Wahul, as of the fee of Wahul; and in the 9 of Edward II (1316) Richard Francis de Athell and Margery de Lyons were certified to be the lords of the two Prestons. Sir John de Lyons levied a fine of the manor of Great Preston in the 20 of Edward III (1347) and soon after conveyed it to Thomas de Beauchamp, Earl of Warwick, with whose descendants it continued till the 10 of Edward IV (1471) when Richard, Earl of Warwick and Salisbury, with Anne his wife, made a grant of it, with the manor house and



PRESTON HILL, FROM THE DAVENTRY ROAD



MEDIAEVAL BAPTISMAL FONT, ST. PETER'S, PRESTON CAPES

all the lands and tenements which they held in Preston, to the Dean and Chapter of the Collegiate Church of our Lady of Warwick, who levied a fine of them in the same year. Upon the dissolution of the Collegiate Church, in the 37 of Henry VIII (1546) the manor of Preston Capes was granted to George Tresham and Edward Twynchi; the estates in this parish belonging to the monasteries of Kenilworth, Bittlesden, and Canons Ashby, having been given in the previous year to Thomas Palmer and Lawrence Grey. In the 1st of Elizabeth (1558) they were all in the possession of William Butler, Esq., son of Thomas Butler, Esq., of Bewsey in Lancashire. Richard Butler, his son and successor, sold it to Edward Knightley, Esq., the second son of Sir Valentine Knightley, of Fawsley, in whose family it has been since, and is now in the possession of Lady Knightley, who owns the whole of the lordship containing 1744 acres, except the vicarial estate of about 165 acres.

To return to the manor of Little Preston; from the Montacute family it descended to the St. Clares and their descendants, and in the 19 of Henry VIII (1527) Thomas Chiprey of Northampton, merchant, sold a moiety of it to Sir Andrew Windsor, afterwards created Lord Windsor. In the 13 of Elizabeth (1572) Peter Coles died seized of the manor, having purchased one moiety of it of Edmund Ford, Esq., of Harting in Essex, and the other moiety of Thomas Andrews, Esq., of Charwelton. Mary, granddaughter of this Peter Coles, brought it in marriage to Edward Knightley, Esq., who purchased the manor of Great Preston from Mr. Butler. This lady married Sir Robert Bevill, K.B., after the decease of Richd Knightley, Esq., and her son, Richard Knightley, Esq., in 1635, sold the reversion in fee of this manor for £1000 subject to the lives of himself and his wife Bridget, to his uterine brother, Sir Robert Bevill, K.B., on whose decease in 1640 without issue, his three sisters and co-heiresses became jointly entitled; and it was divided amongst their heirs or successors in 1701.

The Castle of Hugh de Leycester stood on the hill at the entrance from Fawsley. Every vestige of this building has now disappeared, but the keep forms a prominent elevation. A short distance from it stood the mansion of the more modern lords, now degenerated into a farm house; and in the neighborhood was a religious house founded, as has been stated, by Hugh de Leycester, steward to Maud, the wife of Simon de St. Liz, the first Earl of Northampton since the conquest, for four monks; but the situation proving inconvenient, both from want of water and its contiguity to the castle, it was removed to Daventry.

The Manor House of Little Preston stood on the hill northeast of the village. The Chapel is supposed to have stood in a close called Graves Piece.

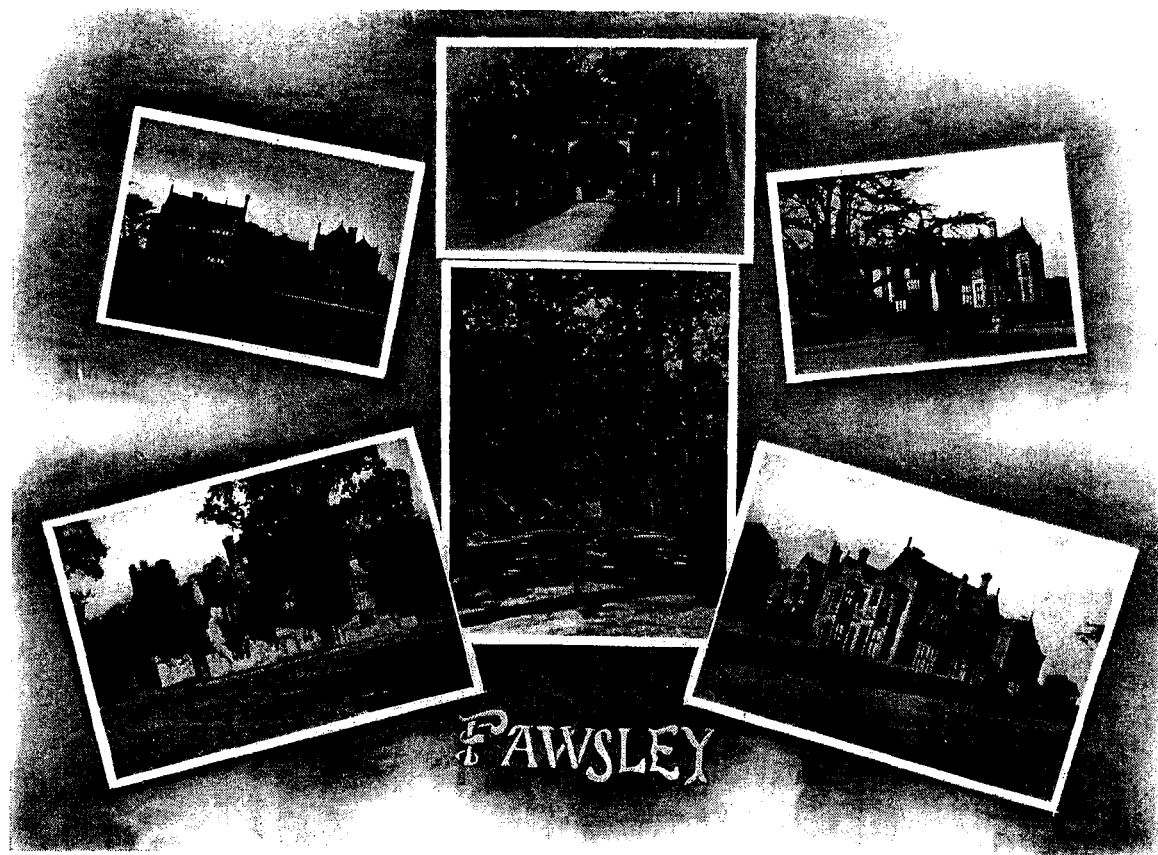
The Church stands in the village and is principally in the Perpendicular style of architecture. It consists of a nave and side aisles, south porch and chancel, with an embattled tower, containing a peal of five bells. Nearly the whole of the church was covered with ivy, which all but reached the summit of the tower until quite recent years, and both in appearance and situation is highly picturesque.

Mr. Baker, the historian, discovered traces of the Roman road, built before the year 400, from Benaventa or Isannavaria (near

Daventry) to Brinavis (Chipping Warden) near the hill south of the church, where are vestiges of a foss and intrenchment.

The precincts of the church are pensive and serene. The Bliss descendants visiting here may turn from the spot reluctantly, perhaps feeling with William Winter: "What a blessing would be ours, if only we could hold for ever that exaltation of spirit, that sweet resigned serenity, that pure freedom from all the passions of nature and all the cares of life which come upon us in such a place as this!" And as the visitor stands in the cool and dusky silence of the church, sensing its air of stately age and its memories of departed spirits while "the light of the western sun streams faintly through the painted windows and softly falls upon the quaint pulpit and decorous pews and, looking forth through the low arched door, also sees the dark and melancholy boughs of the dreaming yew-tree and, nearer, a shadow of rippling leaves in the sunshine of the church-way path," there may come this thought in veneration of our ancestors who followed the light of the bolder faith that flamed so newly bright around Preston Church and on Fawsley Manor:—

Put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground.



Thomas Blisse, the Emigrant to Rehoboth

William Blisse⁴, Jun. (William³, Richard², Richard¹), of Daventry, brother of George Bliss, Sen., of the same and of John Blisse of Preston Capes, and third son of William Blysse, blacksmith of Daventry who died in 1574, was born *circa* 1556-58. He received by his father's will "all my tooles and all things that p'tayne to my forge at Daventry." He married shortly after the death of his father, and before 1580. If the marriage occurred at Daventry no record of it was entered in the register of the church in either that or in any other of the sixteen towns adjacent to Daventry, in so far as it is now possible to determine. There are two burial records of women who were not baptized at Daventry, and bearing christian names not found before in the Bliss family, which it seems impossible to account for unless they are the entries of the wives of the said William, Jun., and George, Sen.

1628 Judeth Blisse bur. Dec. xvi

1630 Amie Blisse buried Julie 15

[Register of Holy Cross Church, Daventry.]

But George Blisse, Jun., named his two only children Mary (the eldest) and Jane. Thomas Blisse⁵, son of William, Jun., brother of George, Sen., named his second and third daughters also Mary and Jane, and William, son of William, Jun., named his third daughter Mary. Though this proves nothing, it is suggestive. We grasp at the suggestion. If further speculation be indulged in one may imagine that because George, Jun., named his first child Mary, his mother was a Mary, and hence the wife of William, Jun., was Judeth, Amie, or Jane. Two other more soluble problems arise:—

(1) How long did William Blysse, Jun., continue in the Daventry smith's shop that he had inherited from his father? The burial records afford no answer and he left no will. (2) Who were his sons? The evidence that he had two sons is partly circumstantial, the baptism of only one of them, William, having been recorded. That the other son was Thomas⁵, also a blacksmith, is the only conclusion deducible, logically, from the attending circumstances. This judgment is laid down without fear of reversal. The facts are these, first as to the son, William. His baptism:—

1580 Willm Blisse bap. ye vth of June

[Register of Holy Cross Church, Daventry.]

His marriage:—

1619 Willm Blisse & Elizabeth Brothers married the xxiiith of Sept.

[Register of Holy Cross Church, Daventry.]

Their children were:—

1620 Thomas Blisse, fil Wm & Elizabeth Blisse, bapt Sept. the 3d.

1625 Thomas Blysse bur. the sixth of October.

1621 [2] Willm Blisse fil Wm. et Eliz. bapt. March xth

1624 Elizabeth Blysse fil Wilhelmi & Eliz. bap the same day [as the previous entry in the same year, which was] Nov. xiii

1628 Agnes Blisse fil Willia et Elizab. Apr. xxvii [Baptised]

1630 George Blisse the sonne of Willia and Elizabeth September 29 [Baptised]

1633 feb 2. Maria [Mary] Blisse fil William & Elizabeth [Christening]

1636 Mar. 19 James Bliss fil William & Elizabeth [Christening]

1640 Burials. James Blisse Aug. 22

1639. Jany 24 Elias Bliss fil William & Elizabeth Christening

1639 Burials Elias Blisse Jan. 27

[Register of the Holy Cross Church, Daventry.]

It was Elizabeth, the mother of these children, or her daughter Elizabeth, who was buried, viz.:—

Burials 1655. Elizabeth Blisse November 13

[Register of Holy Cross Church, Daventry.]

Thomas Blisse⁵, famous as the settler at Rehoboth, Mass., brother of the aforesaid William (who did not leave England), and first cousin of his fellow-voyagers, Thomas and George Blisse of Preston Parva and of Hartford, Conn., and Newport, R. I., respectively, was born (doubtless at Daventry) 1582-86, baptism unrecorded. He married at Daventry, Dorothy, daughter of John Wheatlye, viz.:—

Anno Domi 1614 Thomas Blisse and Dority Wheatlie both of this pishe married the 22th of November.

Wytnes Thomas Mariott minister. John Allen [Warden]

[Register of Holy Cross Church, Daventry.]

(Facsimile of the original of the above entry.)

Anno Domi: 1614
Thomas Blisse and Dority Wheatlie both of this pishe married the
22th of November
Wytnes Thomas Mariott minister
John Allen

This marriage was crowned with seven children born in England and baptized in the Church of the Holy Cross in the parish of Daventry and of the Established Church of England. Two children (Jane and Thomas) died in Daventry. One son (John) died or was left behind in England, or possibly died on the voyage, or ere long after arrival in New England, an eventuality which no record reveals. The four other children are named in their father's will written at Rehoboth in the year 1647. At the time of their embarkation for America, the daughter Elizabeth was twenty-three years of age, Mary twenty-one years, John eighteen years, Nathaniel sixteen, Jonathan twelve years, and their father Thomas not less than forty-seven years of age. The register of baptisms and burials of the parish church of Holy Cross bears, upon its mellowed and crowded pages of parchment, these records of the children of the said emigrants, Thomas⁵ and Dorothy (Wheatlye) Blisse:—

1615 Elyzabeth blysse fil Thomas blysse blacksmyth bap. ye 19 Sept.

1616 Mary Blisse fil Th: Blisse bapt March xvith.*

1618 Jane Blisse fil Tho: & Dorothy Blisse bapt. the xiiii of January.

1621 Jane Blysse bur[ied] the xvith of September.

1620 John Blisse fil Tho. & Dorotheie bap. Nov. xii

1622 Nathal. Blisse fil Tho. & Dorothee† bapt Dec. 8 [Nathaniel]

1624 Thomas Blisse fil Tho. Blisse & Marie bapt. the xix of September

["Marie" is the clerk's error for Dorothy and the "& Marie" was entered after the original entry was written, and also above the line and in the same hand and ink. Another after-thought and after-entry occurs in the very next baptism entered. Three other similar after-entries occur on the same page. "Marie" was a mistake for "Dorie."]

(Facsimile of the original entry of the above record)

1624. Thomas Blisse fil Tho. Blisse & Marie bapt the xix of September

1628 Thomas Blisse bur[ied] October iiiii

1626 Jonathan Blisse fil Tho: et Dorotheie bapt. ead die [the same day]
April ij

(Facsimile of the original entry of the above record with its preceding item.)

1626 Jonathan Blisse fil Tho: et Dorotheie bapt. ead die
April ij

*All dates before 1752 are "old style," when March 25th was the first day of a new year, instead of January 1st, since 1752.

†Called "Dorie."

John Wheatlye, the father-in-law of Thomas Blisse, was a mercer and also the master warden of the "Company of Mercers, Woollendrapers, Taylors, Innkeepers, and Fullers" and also the bailiff of the Borough of Daventry in 1619. The bailiff was the highest officer, similar to mayor. The records of the company and of the borough contain various references to Wheatlye, and to "Mr. Bliss," several of which may be here noted:—

"The warden's accompts 1615. Remaining in the Cheste the 9th of Noveber 1615 John Wheatlye being Mr. warden of the Companye of mercers the some of 18l-6s-6d. To bee answered back again unto the nexte newe warden uppon the accompte daye wthall such Arrerags some and somes of money as maye or shall come to his hands during this whole yeare and thereunto I have sette my hande. John Wheatlye.

(Facsimile of the original of the above record in the handwriting of John Wheatlye.)

1615
~~Remaning in the cheste the 9th of November~~
~~1615 John Wheatlye being Mr. warden of the~~
~~companye of mercers the some of 18l-6s-6d.~~
~~To bee answered back again unto the nexte newe~~
~~warden uppon the accompte daye wthall such~~
~~Arrerags some and somes of money as maye or~~
~~shall come to his hands during this whole yeare~~
~~and thereunto I have sette my hande~~
~~John Wheatlye~~

Midsomer quarter accounte the xxviith daye of September 1617. Remaining wth Mr. Bliss due to the toun at the laste accounte—x li-xv s-1 d

the 13th day of Novembe 1623, laid out of the stock for Ric. Brothers to Mr. John Wheatley the some of 5s

xvth day of November 1626. Receaved by Mr. John Wheatly for his brother Beniamen farmers use the some of 35l 5s. By me John Wheatlye. [Farmer was the master warden for this year.]

Recd. of Mr John Wheatly the second day of July 1629 for the enrollment of Steephen wright his apprentice the some of ijs

A record who hath in keeping the Companyes Holberds, 1631: Mr. John Wheatly, one.

John Wheatlye was master warden again in 1634.

Paide unto Mr. Bliss the xith daye of Jannarie to the tounes use for the freynge of Raphe Harsley of Rugbie habardasher the some of xx s

Thomas Blisse⁵, the emigrant, owned no land, but John Wheatlye was taxed in the subsidy on land worth about £300, for example:—

Record Office, London. Lay Subsidy 157-378. Elizabeth.

Daventry John Wheatley in ter—xx s [annual value] iiij s [subsidy].
157-411 3 Charles I [1627]

Daventry John Wheatley in ter xx s—iiii s

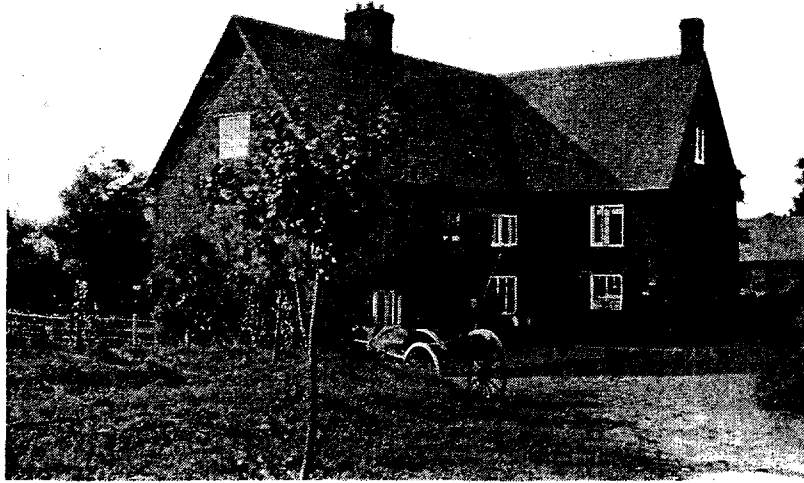
Thomas Blisse, his male relatives, and his and their immediate male ancestors all became freemen of Daventry upon subscribing to the following oath:—

The freeman his othe. You shall swear yt you shalbe trewe and faithfull unto or most drede and sou'aigne Ladye the Quenes matie that now is and to her heires and successors kings and quenes of England and obedient to the aforesaid Mr. bayliffe of the Borough for his time beinge and to those that shalbe bayliffes hereafter. The fraunchises libtyes usuages rights and customs of the aforesaid borough you shall well and truly keepe and by no meanes willingly infrynge or breake the said borough against such as prtend to hurte and hinder the same or to saye evell of the aforesaid Mr. bayliffe or of any that shalbe hereafter bayliffe undeservedly, you shall to the uttermost of yor power save harmeles and speake in the defence thereof, yo shall contribute to all mann of charge of the aforesaid borough as Saviors watches contributiors taxes stal-lages lott and scott and thereof beare yor pte as an other freeman dothe, you shall cullor no fforyners goods within the said borough whereby our Sov'aigne Lady the quenes may lose hir custome and right. You shall keepe the kinge maties peace in your oune psoune within the said borough, you shall not knowe nor be privye of anye conventicles nor conspiracies made against the quenes maties peace within the said borough or the libties thereof but you shall so speedily as you can warne the aforesaid Mr. Bayliffe and those that shalbe bayliffes after him thereof or some other of the officers within the said borough whereby the said conventicles and conspiracye may be lett and hindered of muche as in you lyethe all these ladable usages and customes of the said borough you for yor pte shall well & truly keepe as god shall kepe you

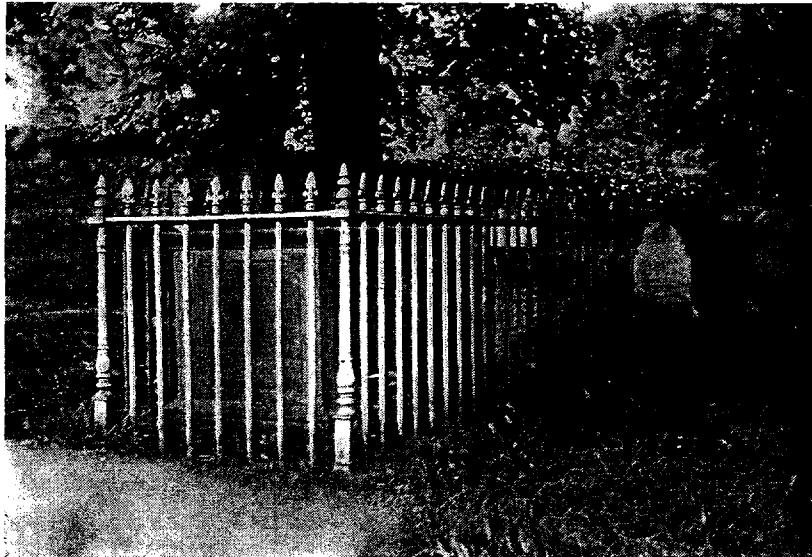
[MS. Records of the Borough of Daventry. Aug. 1571, Borough Hall.]

Neither Thomas Blisse, of Daventry, the emigrant, his father, nor grandfather owned either land or dwelling house. They rented what they required of the landlord, so too did nearly all of their

neighbors. Having no merchant's stock of merchandise they frequently escaped being assessed in the national subsidies. Their skill and experience as smiths were about all the capital, aside from the implements, that they needed for the transaction of business. Thomas Blisse was by no possible estimate a poor man there and then. The profits of the smithery could not have made him rich. His position was better and more secure than that of his cousin Thomas of Preston Parva. The smaller the means of himself and of his valiant cousins, the said Thomas of Preston Parva and George of the same and later of Daventry, the grander is the fact of their emigration. The cost of their transportation to America consumed the greater part of their means. George Blisse had only himself and wife to transport. But think of Thomas of Daventry with wife Dorothy (who died early in Massachusetts) and their four children!—and then think of Thomas of Preston Parva with wife Margaret and their eight sons and daughters! A family party of four and a dozen! What a loss to Fawsley Manor! Immortal sixteen! How did they accomplish it? The savings of twenty years and the selling price of their business privileges were sufficient for the one and only magnificent achievement of their hitherto commonplace yet none-the-less noble lives—their transportation to the New World.



BLISS FARMHOUSE FOR 200 YEARS. AT THRUPP, DAVENTRY



TOMB OF JOHN BLISS (DIED 1811) OF THRUPP, DAVENTRY

The Causes of the Emigration

"Green is the churchyard, beautiful and green,
Ridge rising gently by the side of ridge;
A heaving surface
And mantled o'er with aboriginal turf
And everlasting flowers."

The vaulted elms inclose an avenue of state from the gate to the churchyard walls. The morning sunshine streams o'ertop the hill of the Danes to cheer the early saunterer among the treasured tombs. The thousands of the parish dead have been laid within this three-acre plot for nigh unto a thousand years. The ancient church is rebuilt, and its parent priory has vanished with the ideas that were cherished within it centuries ceased. Whatever its history, "the Ship of Heaven" here to-day remains anchored fast at the high edge of the village, where the structures of the street meet the wind-wafted waves of the fields. The storms of dissension that have come, have also gone, as the rains have gone, adown the slopes. The western tower still is lifted above the eastward pastures and the southward sea of roofs. The golden cross of Christendom is flying this morning at the spire head. The buttressed bows impress the market place, and the bells chime above the weekly fair. Whatever they believed, myriads of souls have voyaged to heaven in this stone ship since ever so long. The pilots and crews come and go, the ship remains, laden with a cargo of "hope and faith, tears and laughter,—the inheritance of generations, a store richer than a king's ransom."

No, we are not forgetting the goodly chapel erected by the dissenters of Daventry in 1700. Its congregation long since became increased to fill three churches, Baptist, Methodist, and Congregational. These fraternize in a common cause; but the rift rendered so long ago between Nonconformity and the Church of England still remains a chasm not quite closed. It is related in Daventry that when the vicar of the parish church asked a local nonconformist: "Why do you go there to church?" and received this reply: "Isn't it better than going to the public house?" (saloon)—the vicar said: "Well, I don't know!"

The smiles have not yet subsided in England over the incident (they say that it occurred in Daventry) of the vicar who, appearing in his robes to perform the ceremony at a wedding in his church, instead of reading the marriage ritual, read the burial service until

reminded by a friend. Such tales as these should be offset by one from the dissenter's chapel that we listened to from that very pulpit. The preacher's sermon was upon the text of the two roads to Jericho, the safe upper road chosen by the godly, and the dangerous lower road infested with brigands and used only by the ungodly. The good man was relating how a robbed-and-wounded man, lying in that lower road, was happened upon and helped to Jericho by a priest, whereupon a boy inquired: "How did the priest come to be in the lower road?"

There must have been "jolly times" in the "good old days" hereabouts when the dissenters were called in *The Clergy's Bill of Complaint* (1643), "globe-headed or Brownistical men, Cobblers, and Howists and Shameles Mekanicks"; while the lay preachers were called, in the same bill, "satyrs," "vultures," "wild beasts of the desert," "dragons," "doleful creatures." Emmanuel and Sidney Colleges at Cambridge were called "nurseries of Puritanism," "from whence come these People's Creatures" to "blow upon the bellows of their sedition." Bishop Hall of Exeter "capped the climax" of ecclesiastical invective, in 1640, in his arrogant assumption entitled, *Episcopacie by Divine Right*, wherein he waxed merry over the Presbyterian plan of each parish producing an ecclesiastical consistory composed of one or more pastors, a doctor, elders, and deacons: "What stuff," he wrote, "would these be? Perhaps a young, indiscreet giddy Pastour, and for a Doctor, who? where? and what? John-a-Noakes, John-a-Styles for the elders; Smug-the-Smith a deacon: and who or what should these rule but their own ploughshares?"

The Puritans were not so clever with invectives, or else refrained from them. One of their opinions, however, seems to have been mirrored by the poet Cowper:—

The things that mount the rostrum with a skip,
And then skip down again; pronounce a text,
Cry hem; and reading what they never wrote,
Just fifteen minutes, huddle up their work,
And with a well-bred whisper close the scene.

Why did the Blisses go away? They were not banished. They need not have gone. Time's changes brought reforms some years later. Human happiness has been as full here as anywhere in England. The county historian's accounts of the religious controversies in Northants are too lengthy for our quotation, but when

the dream of the mediæval Erasmus became a reality, in the latter part of the sixteenth century, "when the weakest woman might read the Gospels and the Epistles of St. Paul, when the husbandman shall sing portions of them to himself as he follows the plough, when the weaver shall hum them to the tune of his shuttle, when the traveller shall while away with his stories the weariness of his journey,"—in short, when such Englishmen and Englishwomen first read the New Testament, they became enlightened; Puritanism inevitably resulted. The Bible's declaration of the common brotherhood in Christ annihilated, in the minds of the Puritans, that overpowering sense of social distinction which characterized the age of Elizabeth. "The meanest peasant felt himself ennobled as a child of God." [Macaulay.] From that hour he became a force that could not be compromised with. The revelation was a revolution. As he saw before him the unchristianlike barriers that he could not then and there surmount, the revelation led, encouraged, and brought him (the Puritan) to execute the conception, thus conceived, of raising himself to a personal and a material eminence elsewhere. The idea of emigrating to America, by the host that traversed the sea, was that host's own. No brain of bishop, king, or of any genius of a greatness then recognized conceived that great exodus of fifty thousand people in twenty years. It was the idea of the unknown citizen, the scheme of the lowly yet fiery spirit, the work of the mere man, the yeoman, the artisan, the farmer, the tradesman, and his few clerical leaders. It issued from the cottage, not from the court. It started from the soil, rather than from the pavements. When the American tourist visits his English ancestral home and is told by the vicar or rector there that "the better class of people remained loyal to the church and did not emigrate," there is truth in the remark, considering the application of the word "class" in England, but Michael Drayton's words, written "To the Virginian Voyage," should be remembered:—

You brave heroic minds
Worthy your country's name,
That honour still pursue;
Go and subdue!
Whilst loitering hinds
Lurk here at home with shame.

And in regions far
Such heroes bring ye forth
As those from whom we came;

And plant our name
Under that star
Not known unto our North.

Though Thomas Blisse of Daventry may be classed with the radical element in the Church of England, he continued his attendance at church, and unlike his cousin, Thomas of Preston Parva, saved his family much concern. He was not a Separatist, or a Brownist; nor was his attitude like the definition of nonconformity given by an anarchistic speaker: "Hi ham a nonconformist! Hi conform to no religion!" But he scarcely would have agreed with his contemporary, Dorothy Osborn, who described how she attended a "morning exercise" at Westminster Abbey "on purpose to hear the noted preacher" [Stephen Marshall, Puritan of Finchfield, Essex] "who is so famed that I expected vast things from him, and seriously I listened at first with as much reverence as if he had been St. Paul. But I have to confess I was near laughing when I should not. What do you think he told us? Why, that if there were no kings, no queens, no lords, no ladies, no gentlemen, or gentlewomen in the world, it would be no loss at all to the Almighty."

The Lord Chancellor of England, *temp.* Elizabeth, declared that "the county of Northampton swarmed with sectaries." In the reign of James I [1603-23], the Archbishop of Canterbury stated concerning the dissenters of Northampton, "the refractory dispositions of the people of that town cannot be borne with." In 1604 fifty-seven ministers in the parish churches of Northants refused to comply with the requirements of their superiors. These fifty-seven met at Northampton and signed this confession on their own behalf:—

"The word of God contained in the Old and New Testaments to be the perfect will of faith and manners, and that it ought to be read and known by all people: and that the authority of it exceeds all authority: not of the Pope only, but of the Church also, and of councils, fathers, men, and angels."

"There was no county in the whole of England," states the *Victoria County History*, "where Puritanism gained such a stronghold, or made such open demonstrations of its objects and methods." Sixteen lay preachers were imprisoned and ejected, and one, John Penry, was executed before 1600. John Kurde, a poor shoemaker of Syresham, had been burnt to death in 1557, for denying transubstantiation. A list of the charges brought against the Puritan preachers of Northants is in the *Burghley Papers* in twenty articles.

In 1587 Daventry was chosen as one of the three places in Northants for the "classes,"—Puritan headquarters where meetings of the reformers were held and lectures delivered. In the next year, 1588, almost with the birth of Thomas Blisse the blacksmith of Daventry, "suddenly a series of bomb shells, which startled court, prelates, and people, burst on the nation. . . . From the house of Sir Richard Knightley, Knt., of Fawsley [lord of the manor for Daventry and Preston Capes, somewhat of a Puritan sympathizer and associated with Lord Say and Sele of Broughton Castle], there issued the early numbers of those formidable tracts signed by one who called himself Martin Marprelate! They consisted of bold, biting satire against the archbishop of Canterbury. The queen ordered the arrest of the author, then unknown, the martyr John Penry. "Hatred of episcopacy was the keynote of the whole series." Knightley was not convicted; but in 1605 his son, Valentine, as a knight of the shire, "undertook to present to the king and council a petition against the suspension of the nonconforming ministers in Northamptonshire; but it was delivered back to him to amend. On declining to do so he was put out of all commissions in His Majesty's service and ordered to depart the country. His father, Sir Richard Knightley, was then deposed from the lieutenancy and commission of the peace, fined £2000 and imprisoned in London.

State Papers, Domestic, 1637-38. Extract from a letter dated June 24, 1638. Dr. Robert Sibthorpe (substitute of the chancellor and commissaries of the bishop of Peterborough for the visitation of the diocese) to Sir John Lambe:—

Northampton men continue still inveighing against idolatry, yet idolizing their own inventions, insomuch that on the 21st instant there was a preaching-fast by Mr. Ball in the forenoon and Mr. Newton in the afternoon, but neither of them prayed for any archbishops or bishops, nor used the Lord's Prayer at conclusion of theirs before sermon, nor did they or the people use any of the reverend gestures or rites and ceremonies enjoined. How those things are like to be amended, except some higher hand vouchsafe to assist, he may perceive by the enclosed copy of a letter sent to Dr. Clerke, from a reverend man, a bachelor of arts of 16 or 17 years standing at the least . . . The assizes at Daventry were very small by reason that the gaol could not be removed from Northampton . . . P.S. These Towcaster men, on whose behalf the enclosed letter was written were infected by Stoner, a lecturer, maintained by the Londoners, now gone to New England, and they have misapplied divers texts of Scripture against the communion table standing at the east [before the chancel] and their coming up to receive, with divers others disorders (not to call them blasphemers or profanators) which I will acquaint you with hereafter.

January 12, 1637-38, same to same:—

In requital of my love and pains they now do what they list in the church service at All Saints in Northampton. Some very lately cut the rail or cancel that was about the Lord's board in pieces and brought down the Lord's table into the middle of the chancel. I long since advised the mayor and his brethren that the Thursday lecture, and sermons on Sundays in the afternoon should be forborne in these infectious times. They then raised a report of me that I was about to starve their souls. You may do well to acquaint his Grace [the bishop] with so much of this as you please. The schismatical puritans now bring their appeals from the Audience, as, namely, the churchwardens of Towcaster, for not presenting some eighty or a hundred of their parish who refused to receive the blessed sacrament at the cancel rail at Easter last, and one Mr. Clarke my namesake of Eastcote, in the parish of Pattishall, for calling the Divine sermons porridge, and the long puritan sermons roast meat.

Rev. John Dod (born in 1555), "the Decalogist," so called from his celebrated *Exposition of the Ten Commandments*, and his *A Plain and Familiar Exposition of the Lord's Prayer*, was the minister at Canon's Ashby, the small village adjoining Preston Capes on the south, and also later of Fawsley Church, one mile to the north of Preston Church, after having been silenced elsewhere. He was a Puritan. At Fawsley he was patronized by the lordly Knightleys, whose beautiful tombs are a feature of Fawsley Church. Dod was buried there August 19, 1648.

The aforesaid John Penry, who was executed in 1593, also had been at Fawsley. William Prandley, the minister at Fawsley from 1562 to 1577, was ejected for his Puritanism. Rev. William Fleshurn (ejected in 1588) was a member of the general Puritan synod that met at Fawsley and Northampton in 1590. Rev. John Preston, also ejected, was buried in Fawsley Church in 1613. The reason that so much radicalism centered at Fawsley was because the Knightley family owned the patronage of Fawsley Church, and so always chose the minister that best suited their ideas. The Knightleys may have had occasion to regret their earlier radicalism when, after 1630, they saw many of their tenants leave the manor for America.

Thomas Blisse⁵, the smith of Preston Capes, afterwards of Hartford, Conn., during his non-attendance at Preston Church, must have often gone to hear Dod preach at Fawsley, and thus have imbibed a spirit of unyielding independence, and also have received confirmation of his nonconformity. Dod may have been Blisse's personal adviser. Rev. John Oxenbridge, born at Daventry in

1608, may have somewhat influenced Thomas Blisse⁵ of Daventry (later of Rehoboth, Mass.). Oxenbridge was dissatisfied with or excluded from the Church of England and preached at the Bermudas till 1641. Ejected from the church at Berwick-upon-Tweed, after his return to England, Oxenbridge settled in New England in 1669 and died at Boston, Mass., of apoplexy, which seized him towards the close of his sermon.

Aside from the religious contemplations that were in the minds of our emigrant ancestors they entertained other thoughts and feelings, if not motives, with respect to America. These were the material aims, the aspects of land, the prospects of possession thereof, the dream-desire for material independence always nursed in the breast of a man who is without a fortune. Land challenged them as well as liberty. They wanted a new deal all around, a "square deal." The cards of fate, so to speak, had been shuffled against them. The dealers of the cards dealt themselves the best "hands." The Bliss emigrants craved for a chance to start more on a level with other men. Land to them was money, power, independence. They were eager to work new land and to make it valuable, as well as to work their will with metals as smiths. Other men, going or gone to New England, were men of their own stamp. Such men would rule the new country; they would divide it fairly, share the common lot, and live and work as brothers, man to man. Thus to rise, politically, from insignificance to consequence was no uninviting prospect, religious considerations omitted. Considering the caste system and the domination of the landowning nobility and gentry, as then in force in England, how, as they made up their minds to go, could the emigrants have escaped the thoughts that were in the minds of thousands who to themselves rightly could have said: I shall be no man's man; no man may be my master, no man my lord; no man shall have dominion over me. The advantages of the land and of education, religious and secular, that would make me think the more of myself, I shall and will have. No longer will I hurry at the "Here, you!" of any nobleman's son who lacks respect for human nature, nor prostrate myself at the approach of the bewigged and bepowdered "Her Ladyship," and the "Mistresses Disdain," her bewildering daughters. I will not longer be subject to manorial imposition and social oppression. The edicts of the caste system never more shall belittle or enslave my spirit. I will not abide by the notion that God never intended me to be other than were my fathers, or to have aught else than they had.

Equal opportunities I will and I shall have, as much as hath those who have so long lorded it over me.

Such was one of the reasons that moved so many men to betake themselves and their families so far away from the arbitrary decrees of a ruling class that exalted itself above them. Such was the spirit that made, and then freed, the American Colonies. Some semblance of that spirit still there remains. It is a spirit that some Englishmen do not understand. But the descendants of the founders of the United States, to-day in their vast prosperity and independence, are not unwilling to regard their distant kin in England as of one blood and one speech with themselves, and to feel that both represent two nations that might be linked together, as friends, in a common cause for the orderliness and advancement of the whole world.

The question has been asked: "In what ship did the Blisses sail for America?" The three nearest ports were London, Ipswich, and Maldon. The lists of passengers embarking at London for America in 1635 are largely preserved. The Blisses did not take in London the oath of allegiance and supremacy in that year; 1635 may have been the year of their departure from England; if so the probabilities are that they sailed from Ipswich in Suffolk. They may not have sailed before 1637-38. We do not know the exact date. More than this, we now can never know. Also lost to us are all the minute records of the daily lives of our ancestors at Daventry and Preston, as written down in the court rolls of the manors of Fawsley and Welton. Thoughtlessly the modern lords of these manors allowed these valuable records, before 1680, to be destroyed. Manorial court records are similar to American town records.

As Thomas Blisse of Daventry turned to go away, his father might have said:—

"My son, thou wilt dream the world is fair,
And thy spirit will sigh to roam,
And thou *must* go; but never when there
Forget the light of home."

To their kin and friends the brave adventurers then felt (if their tongues failed them): "Our hearts shall be fountains of tears for your everlasting welfare when we shall be in our poor cottages in the wilderness."

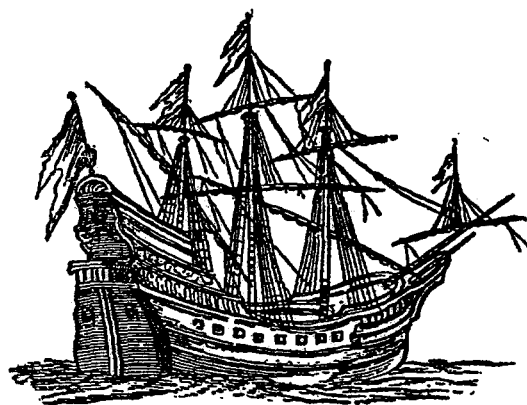
And so, here, around Borough-hill, where rise the ever-gracious springs, the headwaters of three of England's rivers, and wherefrom

westward bounds a brook to form the famous Avon,—“the Avon to the Severn flows, the Severn to the sea,”—where onward to the east falls the Nen down to the German Ocean’s foam, and southward slips the Cherwell to the Thames, herefrom, as these pure founts send their tributes to the main, so too the hill from whence they stream sent its strong sons to nourish a new land.

Placing a flower upon the graves of their nearest and dearest dead the emigrants turned their faces seaward, never to look back. Where are those graves now? Where are the tombstones? Where are the stone memorials to all the scores of Blisses of Preston and Daventry for three hundred years? They have been all ruthlessly “wiped out” by the church authorities.

In memoriam there is

No lettered bronze, no etched brass,
No tablet on the mem’ried wall;
To them no gleam through tinted glass,
No stone, no urn: *This* book! that’s all!



SHIP OF 1630

The Will of Thomas Blisse of Preston Capes, England, and Hartford, Connecticut

Feb. 14th, 1650 Mary Parsons of Springfeild the Daughter of Thomas Bliss, Late of Hartford, deceased, doth testifie that when her father Lay on his death bed shee heard her mother Aske him, how hee would dispose of his estate, hee answered hee would give it to her, who should have it else. her mother asked him if hee would not dispose of it to his children, her father Answered again no, her mother should have it this shee shall bee ready to testifie if Called thereunto

Wittness

JOHN PYNCHON
HEN: SMITH

Children: Lawrence Bliss, John Bliss, Sam Bliss, Hesther Bliss, Eliz Bliss, Hannah Bliss, Sarah Bliss.

[From volume II, page 28, Probate Records of Hartford County, Connecticut, 1650.]

The Inventory of the goods, Chattells, and Cattles of Thomas Bliss of Hartford, deceased, taken by Joseph Mygatt and Nathaniel Warde this 14th Febr. 1650. [51]

	[£] [s] [d]
It: his wearing apparrell	02:00:00
It: one bedstead with 2 featherbeds upon it with Sheets and Blanketts	08:00:00
It: a trundle bed, a flock bed upon it with Sheets and Blanketts 1 pr. of each	03:00:00
It: for Sheets and table cloths & yearne in ye howse	03:00:00
It: 2 brass potts, 1 Iron pott, 2 kettles, 1 skillet & a mortar	03:10:00
It: in milk vessells & other Small dishes	00:10:00
It: in pewtr as much as comes to	01:15:00
It: 1 Spitt, 1 frying pann, 1 tramell, 1 fier pan & tongs	00:08:00
It: one beetle, foure wedges	00:06:00
It: one old trunck, 2 chests, & one boxe, old ones	00:10:00
It: 2 paire of Scales & weights to ym	00:06:08
It: 2 old bibles	00:05:00
It: one powdering tubb & a Cowle	00:07:00
It: one beare vessell and old tubbs	00:12:00
It: 2 wheeles & 2 old seines	00:08:00
It: 1 chaire and 2 old stooles	00:02:00
It: 1 charne, 1 buckett & 2 payles	00:06:00
It: one Loom with barrs & Stayes & 1 wheele	02:16:00
It: 2 Axes & 4 old howes	00:09:00

It: 2 Sawes & one Spade	00:12:00
It: 2 cowes & 2 yeare old Calves	16:00:00
It: Due to him in a Debt	02:00:00
It: his howse, and Lott belonging to it	02:00:00
It: of meadow and upland	35:00:00
It: another howse & Lott	02:00:00
	<hr/>
	86:12:08

Natha: Warde
Joseph Mygatt

[From Probate Records, Hartford County, Conn., Vol. II, p. 28.]

Goody Bliss of Hartford complaining to this Courte of Wilbain Ayres for detaining her cowe wrongfully and selling it when hee had no right nor power so to doe The Courte Adiudges Wilbain Ayres to pay to goody Bliss the sum of six pounds five shillings in good pay for her cowe : execution d'd. the 14th of May 1651

[Probate Records, Hartford County, Connecticut, Vol. II, p 20.]

The Will of Margaret Blisse, Widow of Thomas Blisse, the Emigrant to Hartford, Connecticut.

At the Countie Corte in Springfeild Sept: 30: 1684 A copy of Margaret Bliss her wil given into the Countie Corte Sept: 30: 1684

I, Margaret Blisse of Springfeild, being by Gods Good hand of Providence kept alive to this present day, & being aged, & not Knowing how soone the Lord may call me out of this world, I Knowing that I ow a debt to Nature, I thought It my duty to Settle my Estate that soe I may the freelyer Leave this World, when God shal cal me home.

And First I shal declare my faith & Leave it wth my surviveing children, wch is this. That I doe beleive in the free mrcy of God the father, in & through the merites of God the Son my blessed Redeemr, & In Gd the Holy Ghost the Applyer of al that Good Jesus Christ hath purchased for his People: I beleive the Resurrection both of the Just & the Unjust, & That we must al stand before the Judgment Seate of Christ, My Body I comitt to the Earth to be decently buried at the discretion of my Executor (hereafter Named). And now being of sound and pfect mind & memory doe bestow my Estate, wch God hath graciously given me in manner & forme followinge

First, I haveing given Something Considerable formerly to my son John Blisse, & under the consideration thereof, I do in this my

Last wil & Testamt give to him the said John Bliss no more but this wch followeth (being sufficient wth what he has had alreadie) That is to say Twenty pounds to be paid to him, wth in Two yeeres after my decease, & that shalbe paid him in Cattle or Corne, as it passeth betweene man & man, & also that four acres of land he bought of mee in the Long Medow wch I was never paid for, I do now give that to him.

Item, I give to my son Lawrence's Son, Samll. Blisse my seven acres of Land in the necke over the River, onely he the said Samuel shal pay to Each of his sisters Two pounds:

Item, I give to my grandson Nathaneel Morgan Three pounds wn he comes to the age of Twentie yeares.

Item, I give to my daughter Parsons, And my daughter Scot my weareing clothes, bedding & household Stuffe, onely my Bason, I give to my son Samuel's daughter Hannah:

Item, I give to my Daughter Scot five poundes, & if my Cowes doe live, & I be not forced to sel them for my necessity, I then give one of them to my Grandson John Scot:

Item, All the Rest & Residue of my Personal Estate goods Lands housing Cattell whatsoever I have in Springfeild or else where, I do give and bequeath to my Loveing son Samuel Blisse & his heeres for ever, & if his wife Mary Blisse shal survive my son, then she shall have a Third part of my Land during the time of her Widowhood, & then to Return it to my sons children as He shall see good to bestow it on ym. And him the said Samuel Blisse, I do make full & Sole Executor of this my Last Wil & Testament, & I do revoke disannul & make voide al formr Wills & Testaments, by me heretofore made. In witnes whereof, I Margaret Bliss do to this my Last Wil & Testament Set my hand & Seale

June: 25th: 1684:

the marke of
M. B.

Widow Margaret Bliss, wth her Seale affixt.

Widow Margaret Blisse declared this Writing her Last wil & Testamt & being of Good & Sound understanding, Subscribed her hand, & seale theretoe, all being fully & distinctly Read to her, she declareing her satisfaction & Resting in this her last Disposure of her Estate: in Testimony whereof we here unto set or hands: this 25th of June: 1684:

JOHN PYNCHON

BENJAMIN PARSONS SAMLL. MARSHFEILD

(Proved Sept 30 1684 by Samuel Blisse)

[From Probate Records, Northampton, Mass., Book II, page 22.]

A Coppy of The Inventory of the Estate of Widow Margaret
Blisse Late Deceased as prsented to the Countie Courte
Sept: 30: 1684

A true Inventorie of al & Singular the goods Lands & Cattel of
the Widdow Margaret Bliss deceased prized by us whose Names are
underwritten, as followeth:

	li	s	d
A bed & Bolster	04	00	00
3 Pillowes	00	15	00
1 Rugg	01	05	00
The bedsteed	00	15	00
The Cupboard	00	10	00
A chest	00	08	00
A Castor hat	01	04	00
another old hat	00	05	00
A green apron	00	05	00
A red blanket	00	01	00
An old Cloath coate	00	15	00
A red Coate	00	06	00
A water stufte Coate	01	10	00
A red tamy coate	00	16	00
A sad Color Serge Coate	01	04	00
A Linsy woolsey Coate	00	04	00
A cloth wastcoate	00	15	00
2 Linsy woolsy Wastcoates	00	10	00
An old Cloth wast coate	00	06	00
A red night wast coate	00	06	00
Another old one	00	01	00
A white blanket	00	05	00
A Smal Blanket	00	04	00
Curtaines & Vallience	01	00	00
A Cloth Cloake	00	12	00
A Sarge hoode	00	06	00
4 blue Aprons	00	13	00
2 Peuter Candlestickes	00	05	00
a Small Flagon & beer bowl	00	05	00
3 porringers a pint Cup a bottle & salt seller	00	06	00
4 spoones	00	01	06
wooden ware	00	09	00
1 glass bottle, gally pot & Tin kettle	00	02	00
A brass & Iron pot Skillet	01	10	00
Tramel warming pan & frying pan & pot hookes & Two Smal hookes	01	05	00
A brasse Kettle	00	12	00
A Sive & Two pailles a Can & 3 Chaires	00	12	00
3 barrells & an anker	00	07	00
A butter tub, a meal barrell with some smal things in it & a Cowl & cheese pailat	00	10	00

An old spit	00 02 00
A Chamber pot	00 01 06
a paire of Shoes	00 04 00
Lining yarne	00 10 00
2 formes	00 02 00
2 Cowes & Two Calves	08 10 00
A peel & Tongs & stock Locke	00 08 00
7 Cheeses an old pair of bodys & knife	00 10 00
A pr of sissers & Combe 2 bags & a bed rope	00 06 00
2 pair of Sheetes	02 10 00
3 Shifts	00 18 00
4 pillow beeres	01 04 00
4 Towels	00 04 00
5 Napkins	00 08 00
a blacksilk hood & handkerchr	00 10 00
head linning and neck trimming	01 14 00
2 white aprons	00 16 00
linning Gloves pocket handkerchers & sleeves	00 06 00
2 pair of Gloves	00 03 00
2 paire of Stockins	00 05 00
3 caps 2 neckclothes & a litle tape & long sleeves	00 07 00
a bible	00 02 00
a pair of brasse Scales	00 03 06
5 peuter platters	01 05 00
a Bason	00 06 00
	<hr/>
	30 02 00
homelot, meadow & wood lot	94 00 00
upper lot in Long meadow	80 00 00
Lower lot	20 00 00
7 acres in the neck over ye River & Land at Pacowseek	20 00 00
Land over Mill River & over the great River below Agawam al at	05 00 00
the apples in the orchard	01 00 00
	<hr/>
	247 18 00
Totale	30 02 00
	<hr/>

[£] 278 00 00

SAMLL. MARSHFEILD

ROLLAND T THOMAS
his marke

as attests
JNO HOLYOKE,
Clerke

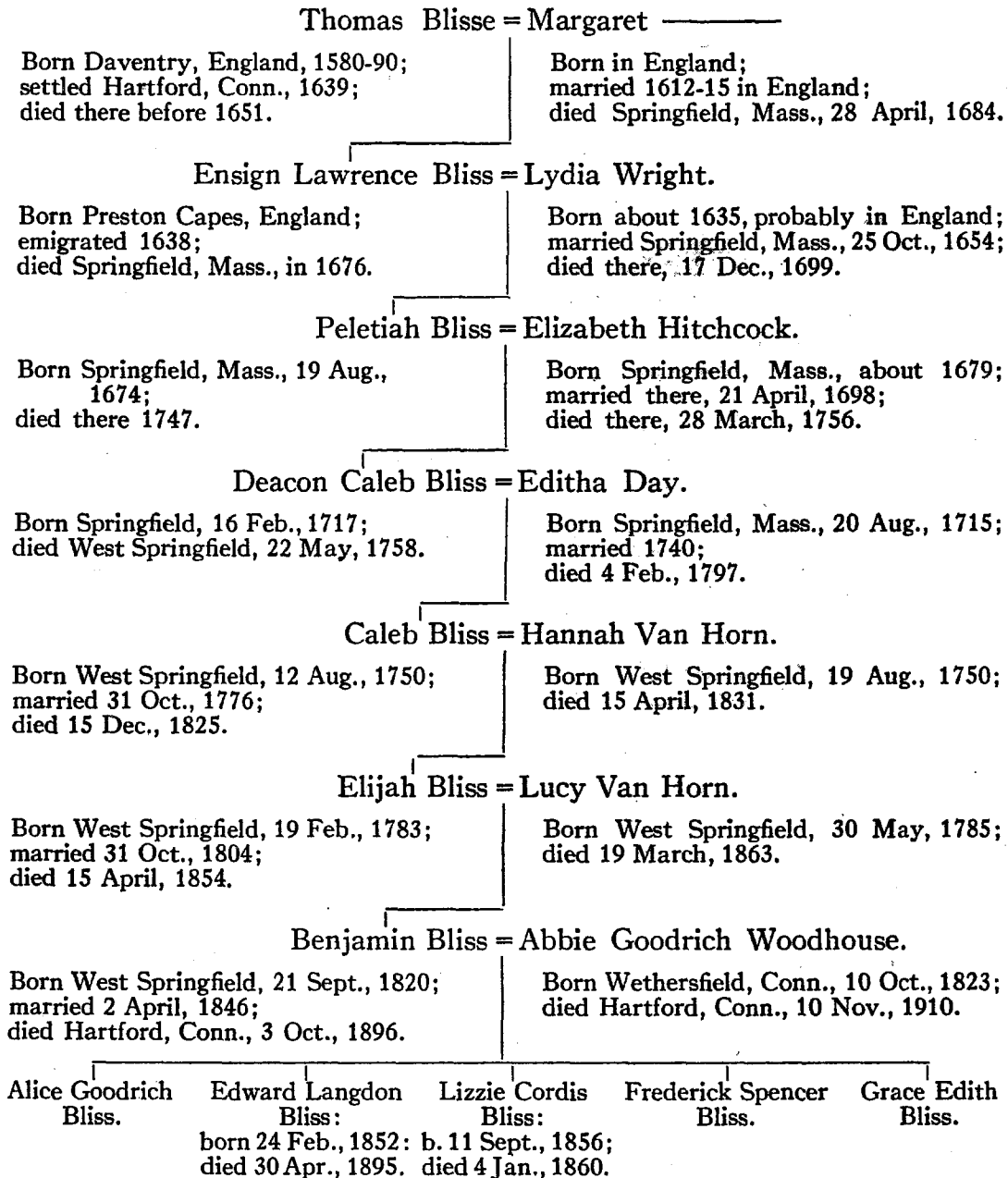
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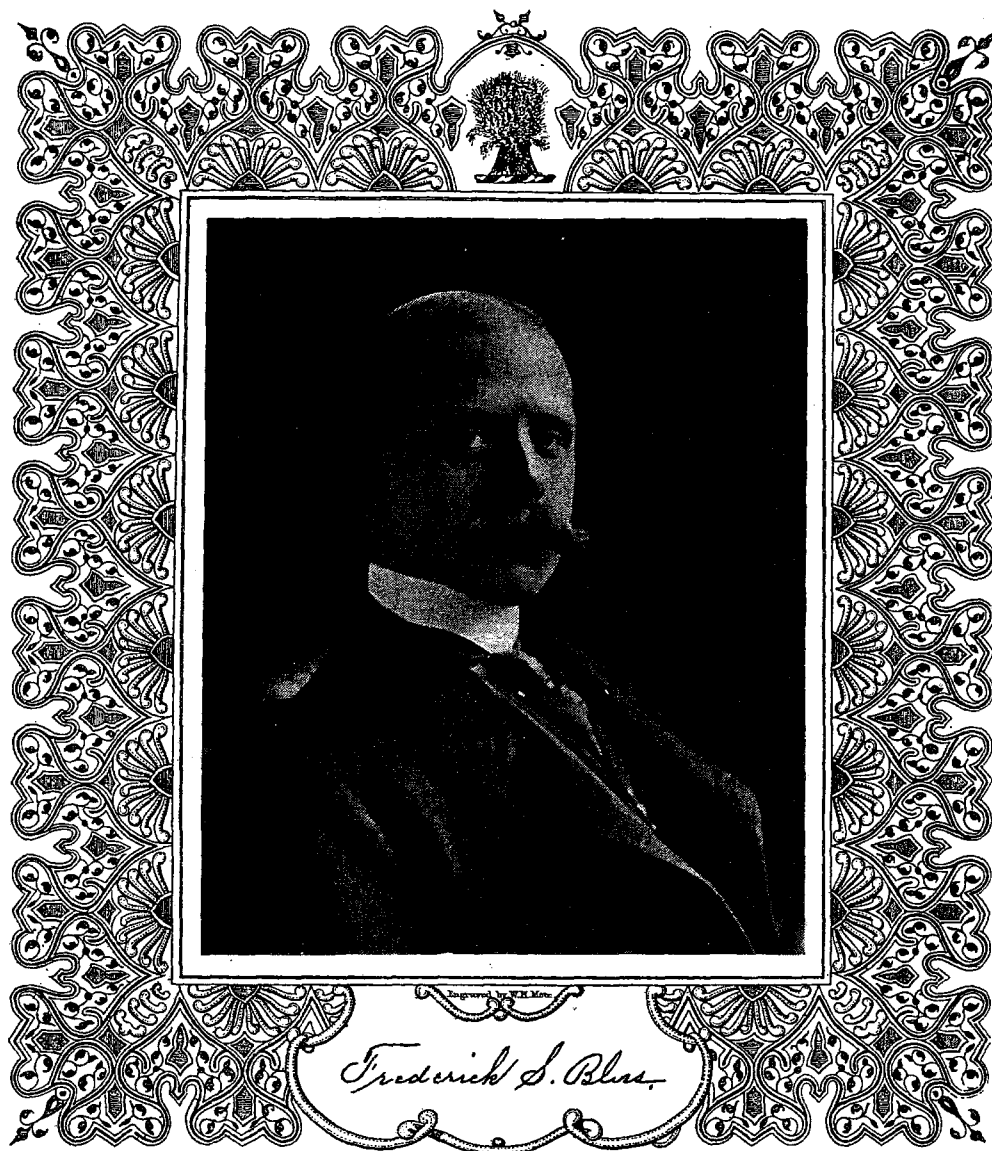
JNO HOLYOKE.

Recordr

The Line of Descent

from Thomas Blisse of Preston Capes, England,
to Frederick Spencer Bliss of Hartford, Connecticut





The Will of Thomas Blise of Daventry, England, and Rehoboth, Massachusetts

[Plymouth Colony wills 1647, folio 67.]

The last Will and Testament of Thomas Blise being sick in body but in perfect memory made the seventh Day of the eighth month; 1647 the said will allso Exhibbited unto the Court holden at new Plymouth the eighth of June 1649, upon the oathes of Steven Payne Edward Smith

Imprimus I give in the name of the father sonn and holy Goste my soule unto the hands of god yt gave it and my body to the earth

It: I give unto my soon Jonathan my house and home lot Conditionally yt hee shall give unto my sonninlaw Thomas Willmore his lot wh hee now hath and allso the one half of my broken up ground for two yeares and shall heelp him to build him an house and let him peacably and quietly live in the house with him untell they shall bee able to set up a house for him

It: I give unto Jonathan two of my oxen Called Spark and Swad and my heifer wh is Called traveler and my heifer Calfe at the Iland and all my beding and all my tooles Conditionly yt hee shall use them in my trade or els thay shalbee Devided to my fouer Children

It: I give unto my eldest Daughter and her husband Thomas Willmore my other two oxen Called quick and benbo an my broad headed heifer and my Cow Called Damson and all my wearing aparrell

It: I give to my Daughter Mary and her husband Nathaneell harmon my three two yeare ould steers and ten bushells of wheat

It: I give unto Nathaneell the sonn of my sonninlaw Nicolas Ide my browne heifer and my two steere Calves wh are at the Iland

It: I give unto Nicolas Ide ten bushells of Rye

It: I give unto my son Jonathan and my sonninlaw Thomas Willmore the Resedew of my Corn and allso the Rye now sowne on the ground and my Coult and all my tackling and Implements as plowes Cart and Chaines all these to be equally Devided between them allso my pot and ketell; and I Doe make them exequeters Joyntly of this my will and Testament; and I Doe Intreat my trusty and wellbeloved friends Richard Wright and Steven Payne to bee overseers of this my Will yt it bee Dewly and Justly performed in Wittness heerof I have set to my hand the Day and yeare first above written; I give unto my fouer Children my hide of leather

which is in William ffields hand to be equalli Devided between them;
and if any of my Children shall seeck to Defraude the others of any
pt of thaire Right or shall bee any wayes troublesom and it bee
Justly proved hee shall forfeite all his part heer menssioned to be
equally Devided between the Rest

In the prsence of
Steven Payne
Edward Smithe

THOMAS BLISE

[fol. 68] An Inventory of the goods and chattels of the late deseassed
Thomas blise takein The 21 of the eight month 1647.

	£	s	d
Impri his wearing aparell	3	0	0
It: one fether bede 2 bolsters one blanked and one coverlid and 2 sheets	4	0	0
It: one Iron pot one brasse kittle	0	10	0
It: 3 payls one tube.	0	6	0
It: in bookes	0	5	0
It: 3 axsses one throw one hatchet one adds one wimble	0	12	0
It: 2 sithes one how	0	6	0
It: one ould muskate one pistoll one pistoll-barell and one barell of a peece and 2 ould swords	1	10	0
It: 3 pitchforks one mukeforke	0	5	0
It: Iron and Steele	0	9	0
It: 2 beetle Rings one wedge one mortising axe	0	6	0
It: one warming pan one pot crooke one paire of pot hooks one frying pan	0	10	0
It: one payer of stillyards	0	3	0
It: one horse harnesse one Sadle tree	0	7	0
It: 2 meale troughs tow old hoggsheads	0	6	0
It: one ould bagg	0	1	0
It: in oattes pilcorn and peasen	0	12	0
It: all the tooles belonging unto the Smiths trade	12	0	0
It: one hyde of soallether	1	4	0
It: 2 sives	0	1	4
It: 2 oxen	11	10	0
It: one Cow	5	5	0
It: 2 oxen	12	0	0
It: one Cow	5	0	0
It: one heaifer	4	15	0
It: 3 young Steers	8	0	0
It: one Cow	5	5	0
It: one coult	7	0	0
It: 3 Calves	4	0	0
It: 2 swyne	2	10	0
It: haye	8	0	0
It: wheat	6	15	0

It: Rye	1	0	0
It: in chaynes	0	12	0
It: 2 plows and plow Irons	1	0	0
It: one cartrope	0	4	0
It: 2 yookes	0	5	0
It: one cart	1	0	0
It: Indian corn	1	6	0
It: hempe	0	1	0
It: one ould Sawe and other ould lumber	0	10	0

Som	117	16	4
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Aprised by Steven payne and Richard Bowin

at a generall court holden at neu plimouth the 7th of March 1647 Jonathan Blise and Thomas willmore testified upon oath before the said court yt this is a true Inventory of the goods and chattels of thomas Blise above written.

Pedigree of the Author

Thomas Blisse = Dorothy Wheatley.

Born Daventry, England;
died at Rehoboth, Mass., 1647.

Married Daventry, Eng., 22 Nov., 1614;
died before 1645.

Jonathan Bliss = Miriam Harmon.

Bapt. Daventry, England, 2 April, 1626;
died Rehoboth, Mass., 1687.

Born in England; married 1648;
died Rehoboth, Mass., 21 May, 1706.

Ephraim Bliss =

Born Rehoboth, Mass., 5 Feb., 1649.

Jonathan Bliss =

Born Braintree, Mass., 1672-73;
died 30 Nov., 1746.

John Bliss = Rebecca Whitaker.

Born Rehoboth, Mass., 1711;
marriage intention 6 Dec., 1735;
died June, 1752.

Born Rehoboth, Mass., 3 Aug., 1712.

Nathan Bliss = Joanna Bowen.

Born Rehoboth, Mass., 19 Dec., 1736;
died Royalston, Mass., 3 Dec., 1820.

Born Rehoboth, Mass., 27 Oct., 1735;
married 26 Dec., 1760;
died 10 March, 1823.

Nathan Bliss = Ruth Briggs.

Born Rehoboth, Mass., 19 Dec., 1761;
died Royalston, Mass., 31 Jan., 1852.

Born 22 Dec., 1764;
marriage intention, 12 April, 1785;
died Royalston, Mass., 28 Nov., 1862.

Abel Bliss = Nicena Ballou.

Born Dighton, Mass., 23 Aug., 1785;
married Royalston, Mass., 12 Oct., 1806;
died 4 July, 1852.

Born Richmond, N. H., 6 March, 1788;
died Royalston, Mass., 1 April, 1847.

Nathan Bliss = Emily Lovett.

Born Royalston, Mass., 15 Sept., 1808;
married 1832;
died Royalston, Mass., 7 Aug., 1889.

Born 21 Jan., 1806;
died Royalston, Mass., 21 April, 1865.

Alfreda Maria Bliss = Charles Augustus Hoppin.

Born Winhall, Vt., 7 May, 1843;
died Worcester 29 Oct., 1899.

Born Templeton, Mass., 9 Aug., 1834;
married Royalston, Mass., 15 Oct., 1865;
died Worcester, Mass., 28 March, 1910.

Charles Arthur Hoppin.

Born Worcester
19 Nov., 1866.

Fred'k Wm. Hoppin =

Born Worcester 7
Oct., 1869;
married 21 June,
1892, Ada M.
Bickford, born 25
June, 1872.

Harry Bliss Hoppin =

Born Worcester
29 Dec., 1872;
married 21 Feb.,
1896, Eva Pike,
born 15 Nov., 1875;
died 29 Dec., 1905.

Alice Janet Hoppin =

Born Worcester,
4 March, 1876;
married Thomas
Henry Mack,
June, 1903.

Harold Earl. Stuart Bliss. Gladys May
Born 17 Born West- Born Fall
July, 1894; field, Mass., River, Mass.
died 26 16 Dec., 12 March,
July, 1896. 1895. 1902.

Mildred Bigelow.
Born Wor-
cester 25
July, 1897.

Clifford Pike
Born Wor-
cester 6 Jan.,
1900.

Richard Bliss.
Born Wor-
cester 29
Nov., 1905.

Helen Mack
Born
Worcester
3 March,
1904.

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Charles Arthur Hoppin

DRAWN FROM LIFE BY JAMES BRITTON

Copy of an article on the English ancestry of the Bliss emigrants to New England, (as put forth by C.A. Hoppin) written by and communicated to the Boston Transcript by J.GARDNER BARTLETT in 1915

Comment on Note *1523. Bliss. V.H. June 2, 1915, and M.A.M.S. June 28, 1915. The two questions asked by V.H. are important; first, what evidence does the Bliss Book by Mr. Hoppin give that Thomas Bliss of Hartford came from Daventry or Preston Capes or any other place in Northamptonshire; and secondly what evidence does he give that William (4) Bliss junior of Daventry, born about 1555, had any children at all?

Records in New England indicate that Thomas Bliss of Hartford had nine children, viz. Thomas, Anne, Nathaniel, Mary, Lawrence, Hester, Elizabeth, Hannah, and Sarah, all born in England between about 1620 and 1638, (See Bliss Book, p.151) and that at his death in 1650 he left a widow Margaret who probably was a second wife and not the mother of his three oldest children. Although the Daventry registers exist from 1560 and those of Preston Capes from 1613, neither the marriage (or marriages) of this Thomas Bliss nor the baptism of a single one of the above nine children appear in the registers of either of these parishes or in the registers existing of the entire deanery, (See the Bliss Book, p.151).

Mr. Hoppin suggests that Thomas Bliss was excommunicated for nonconformity and so his children were not baptized for that reason; but although he gives a list of excommunicants at Preston Capes between 1618 and 1633, no Bliss is mentioned. (See the Bliss Book, p.151.) This suggestion also lacks force, as infant baptism was not one of the points of Puritan nonconformity; in fact they were very particular to have their children baptized; further, although the Puritans were persecuted and persecuted for nonconformity, the percentage of them actually excommunicated was very small, nor did the partial excommunication for the chief

Puritan nonconformity, refusal to kneel for communion, preclude baptism for their children. Isaac Stedman of Biddenden, co.Kent, was continually presented for several years for remaining excommunicate; and yet his children born during this period were each baptized when babes. As the Bliss Book gives no evidence whatever to show that Thomas Bliss of Hartford came from Daventry, Preston Capes, or vicinity, or ever lived in that neighborhood, its claim that he was son of John (4) Bliss, blacksmith of Preston Capes (William (3), Richard (2) Richard (1), rests on no foundation at all.

But this John (4) Bliss, blacksmith, certainly did have a son Thomas (5), born about 1590, as shown by his will in 1617. What became of this Thomas? There can be no reasonable doubt that he was the Thomas Bliss, blacksmith, who married at Daventry in 1614 Dorothy Wheatley, and there can be no question that the Thomas Bliss of this marriage was the emigrant to Rehoboth, Mass.

But the Bliss Book having unfortunately and erroneously assigned Thomas (5), son of John (4), as the emigrant to Hartford, Conn., an attempt is made to place the Thomas (5) of Rehoboth who married Dorothy Wheatley, as son of William (4) junior, (William (3), Richard (2), Richard (1).) This William (4) Bliss was born about 1555, and was living in 1574 when mentioned in his father's will; but the Bliss Book gives no other record whatever that mentions his name, and there is nothing to show he ever married or had any family. The Bliss Book (p.155), claims that William (4) Bliss had a son Thomas (5) Bliss, a "judgement laid down without fear of reversal"; but no evidence is given that William (4) had

a son of that name or any other name. This imaginary Thomas (5) is then claimed to be the emigrant to Rehoboth.

To sum up, there is evidence of only one Thomas Bliss born about 1590, belonging to the Daventry and Preston Capes family, and he was son of John (4); common sense makes this Thomas the one who married Dorothy Wheatley in 1614 and who was certainly the emigrant to Rehoboth, Mass. As for Thomas Bliss of Hartford, Conn., there is not the slightest evidence or even reason to believe he belongs to the Daventry or Preston Capes family at all.

Concerning Nicholas Ide, it seems evident he was a step-son of Thomas Bliss of Rehoboth. The will of the latter in 1647 mentions eldest daughter wife of Thomas Willmore (means Elizabeth wife of Thomas Wilmarth), daughter Mary wife of Nathaniel Harmon, son Jonathan, and son-in-law Nicholas Ide. The will also mentions "my fouer children". On 7 June 1648, Nicholas Ide petitioned the Plymouth Court for a child's portion of the estate of Thomas Bliss. These evidences and the fact that the wife of Nicholas Ide was named Mary (while Mary the daughter of Thomas Bliss was wife of Nathaniel Harmon) makes it clear that Nicholas Ide was step-son of Thomas Bliss and not his son-in-law in the modern sense of this phrase. It therefore seems necessary to assume that Thomas Bliss, of Rehoboth, had a second wife, widow of one Ide and mother of Nicholas.

