

OLD CHESHIRE FAMILIES & THEIR SEATS

By

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STANLEY OF ALDERLEY.

The house of Stanley is one whose members have played a most distinguished part in the history of the nation. The first ancestor on record is one Adam de Audithlegh, who came over with William the Conqueror, and who derived his name from his paternal estate of Audithlegh in Normandy. He acquitted himself bravely upon the field of Hastings, and was rewarded with large grants of land. He had two sons, Lyulph and Adam de Audithlegh, from the elder of whom was descended the famous Lord Audley of Cheshire, represented at the present day through the female line by the Touchets, Lords Audley.

Adam de Audithlegh the younger married the heiress of the manor of Stanley or Stoneley, a hamlet three miles from Leek in Staffordshire, the name of which had the Anglo-Saxon meaning of stony lea or stony field. The old topographer Erdswick remarks that the place, "seems to take its name from the nature of the soil, which, though it be in the moorlands, is yet a rough and stony place, and many craggy rocks are about it." As a younger son Adam was probably without lands of his own, and it is therefore as we might expect when we find that after his marriage he made Stanley his seat. His action in assuming his wife's maiden name was also in accordance with the custom of the times, and in reality was nothing more than the adopting of a fresh territorial designation from his new landed possessions. The

original family of Stanley was of Saxon origin and of great antiquity.

Adam de Stanley thus became the founder of the Anglo-Norman Stanleys, whom Croston speaks of rightly as, "a race the most illustrious in the country's annals, and associated with the most stirring events of history." The same writer states elsewhere that Sir William Stanley, the fifth in descent from Adam de Stanley, "gave an impetus to the fortunes of the family by one of those matrimonial alliances to which the house of Stanley owes so much of its prosperity." His wife was Joan, the youthful daughter and coheiress of Sir Philip Bamville, Master Forester of the Wirral, and lord of Storeton near Birkenhead. The marriage was a true romance, concerning which we find the following record in the Cheshire Inquisitions:—

"That on the Sunday after the Feast of St. Matthew the Apostle and Evangelist, two years ago, viz., on the 27th September, 1282, Philip de Bamville, with his wife and family, was at a banquet given by Master John de Stanley, on which occasion Joan (Bamville), suspecting that her father intended to marry her to her step-mother's son, took means to avoid it by repairing with William de Stanley to Astbury Church, where they uttered the following mutual promise, he saying: "Joan, I plight thee my troth to take and hold thee as my lawful wife until my life's end," and she replying, "I, Joan, take thee, William, as my lawful husband." The witnesses were Adam de Hoton and Dawe de Coupe-lond."

This alliance had important consequences for the Stanleys. Through it Sir William inherited one-third of the manor of Storeton, the remaining