

EXTRACT FROM

Chronicles

OF A

Wharfedale Parish

Being chapters from the history of
Catholic life in and around the
village of Clifford in the West Riding
of Yorkshire

BY

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MONK OF FORT-AUGUSTUS



Permissu Superioris
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THE VAVASOURS OF HAZELWOOD

When the churches at Bramham, Collingham, Thorpe Arch, Newton Kyme and Tadcaster were no longer available for true Catholic worship, Hazelwood chapel still remained in Catholic hands ; and being extra-parochial, the ministers of the newly established Church had no jurisdiction or claim over it. From Norman times Hazelwood Castle had been the seat of the Vavasours. Sir Mauger le Vavasour is mentioned in Domesday Book, in 1076 ; his grandson, Sir William, lord of Hazelwood, was a judge in the reign of Henry II, and was one of the witnesses to the charter granted to Sawley Abbey, near Clitheroe, in 1146, when it was refounded by Maud de Percy, widow of William de Newburgh, Earl of Warwick. The same lady in 1184 endowed the Church of our Lady at Tadcaster, and the Chapel of St. Leonard at Hazelwood. The present building, nestling under the castle walls, must have replaced a former one : for this one was commenced in the reign of

Edward I, who granted a charter for a chapel to be built by Sir William Vavasour, dated 29th April, 1286. In recognition of Sir William's great liberality in granting the free use of his quarries for the building of York Minster, the then Archbishop made his chapel extra-parochial. Such acts of generosity became the noble tradition of the Vavasours, and when in 1829 a disastrous fire occurred in the Minster, the first help towards the repairs came from Sir Edward Vavasour, who offered stone. In graceful recognition of this gift, Archbishop Harcourt presented Sir Edward with a beautiful 17th century ante-ependium of white French silk, adorned with emblems of the Passion, stitched in gold, including a representation of the Sacred Heart, an almost unique instance of the employment of this sacred symbol in those days, when devotion to the Sacred Heart of our Lord was not so general and widespread as it has since become. In 1687, on the petition of James II, four viars-apostolic were appointed for

England ; among them was Dr. James Smith, who was consecrated at Somerset House 1688, and appointed vicar-apostolic of the Northern District ; he arrived at York on 2nd August of the same year, and was received with great ceremony by a large number of secular and regular clergy in the Minster, where he sang High Mass ; this ante-ependium, now used as a reredos in Hazelwood... chapel, formed parts of the portab altar at which he celebrated on this occasion.

During the middle ages Hazelwood was served by two chantry-priests or chaplains ; this seems excessive to us, especially when it is borne in mind that no parish duties were then attached to the chaplaincies. But in those days men considered that God's retainers and servants should not be less numerous than those of an earthly prince, and provided lavishly for the Divine service ; every parish church had its complement of well paid choristers and acolytes, besides priests and deacons. After the change of rel-

igion, and when the persecution was most severe, it was impossible for a priest to remain long in one place ; and there were no fixed chaplains or parish-priests anywhere, but the missionary priests and members of various religious orders went about from place to place, from one Catholic house to another, helping their persecuted co-religionists as best they could. Father Francis Vavasour, a Franciscan friar, and brother of Sir Thomas, the first baronet, laboured in the Hazelwood district for many years, both before and after 1636. His second brother, Henry, was a secular priest, and died at Antwerp in 1660, " in great opinion of sanctity " ; but owing to his weak state of health he had been considered unfit for the life of a missionary. Yet a third brother, John, was a Jesuit laybrother. Of his sisters, Mary became a nun of the Benedictine Convent at Brussels, of which she became the fifth abbess in 1652 ; Margaret and Catherine were also Benedictines at Cambray ; a fourth joined the Poor Clares at Brussels. Their

father, Squire AVilliam Vavasour of Hazelwood, suffered five years imprisonment with the loss of a great part of his estate for refusing to take the Oath acknowledging Queen Elizabeth as head of the Catholic Church in England, " all of which he patiently, and joyfully suffered for Christ."

His eldest son, Thomas, created a baronet by Charles I in 1628, had to pay £150 a year, which represents a much".77

larger sum in modern value, because he was a good practising Catholic. Yet, during the Civil Wars of the lith century, the family fought bravly for the king. Sir Walter Vavasour, the second baronet, raised a regiment of horse for the royal service, and his brother William served under him as a major, and held Hereford city for the king. A third brother, Thomas, was slain at Marston Moor in the same service.

It is said that Queen Elizabeth had a favourite maid of honour, Mistress Anne Vavasour of Copmanthorpe, and for her sake as well as on account of the

loyalty of Sir Thomas Vavasour, she would never allow the chapel at Hazelwood to be disturbed. This Sir Thomas was not the baronet, but his great-uncle and a knight, who, on the occasion of the Spanish Armada, distinguished himself by raising forces and ships to repel the invaders, and himself commanded the good ship *Foresight*. When Cromwell and Fairfax were victorious at 'Marston Moor in 1644, had the Vavasours been without influential friends on the Parliamentary side, they would have fared badly. But the Earl of Essex proved a friend in need, and Lord Fairfax, himself a Yorkshireman, also did his best to assist them. Thus it became a tradition that Hazelwood was not to be molested; the Blessed Sacrament has ever been in undisturbed possession there, the sanctuary lamp ever burning, and the altar free from pollution and desecration.

The following is a letter of Lord General Essex to the Parliamentary "Committee of both Kingdoms," written from Reading, 29th April, 1644:

"I received the enclosed from Col. Vavasour, and desire your direction as to the answer. He is a very good soldier and a gallant man, and if it be for nothing but to pass him out of the kingdom, I conceive it may be good service, but I refer it wholly to you, desiring your direction by the first conveniency that I may despatch his messenger." *Calendar of State Papers, Domestic*, 1644, p. 80.

To this request the Committee made answer, by return of post :

"We have received yours of the 29th inst. concerning Col. Vavasour, and upon consideration whereof, we are of opinion that it is not convenient he should come to London, but leave it to you to grant him a pass to depart any way out of the kingdom." *ib*, p. 84.

Some months later - Colonel-Walter -- Vavasour writes from Leyden in H.7-'1: land to his brother, Sir William Vava-sour, in the King's army, 25th December,

1644:

"Little Male is with my wife at Hazelwood, sharing in her good and bad fortune necessarily connected with the unfortunate death of Sir Wm. Fairfax; whoe civilities to them in his life were not more to their advantage_ than since his death to their prejudice, having given power as well as occasion to some of that party to use them worse than others. For myself, that Selby business (which I must never allow to be ascribed to disobeying orders or ill conduct, but to the cowardice of some foot officers) proving so unfortunately; my brother Bellasis taken, my regiment spoiled, and I, finding a strange unexpected entertainment at York thought it best to leave those few remaining men, and to take care, with my Lord's leave, to get myself into some fitter place than a besieged town, as York presently could not fail to be, to have my hurts cured, and then to begin anew somewhere else. This design carried me with some danger out of York, and with much trouble to Scarborough; where by that time I was well. The York defeat came to us at the same time with the certain news of the Prince's coming. This put strange thoughts into everybody; and the protection of the castle being absolutely denied to those of my religion_ made me resolve for this country; which I had not attained, but that poor Fairfax was the civilest in the world to

me. Here, I thank God, I can live free from the servitude of my countrymen, till I shall be able to do better." *ib.*

About twelve years later he seems to have been busy raising troops in England for the king of Sweden, and obtained a licence from Oliver Cromwell to levy " by beat of drum " 200 volunteers, also to receive 1,000 Royalist prisoners for the same service. His youngest brother, Peter Vavasour, M.D., of York, in 1660 founded the *Society of Yorkshire Brethren* for aged and infirm priests, and headed the donations by a first gift of £50. He married Elizabeth, daughter of Philip Langdale of Langthorpe, Yorks., and his eldest son, Walter, became a Jesuit, Father Walter Vavasour served the mission of Preston for many years, and died there on 10th April, 1740, in his seventy-seventh year. Through the death of his cousin Walter, the third baronet, in 1712, without issue, Fr. Vavasour became the fourth baronet, though he does not seem to have assumed the title : by an indenture of 16th April, 1698, between his cousin, Sir Walter Vavasour, himself, his father, and his brother Peter, he re-

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ceived, during his life-time, £100 yearly from the Hazelwood estates.

His nephew, Walter, succeeded him

as fifth baronet ; he married first his cousin Elizabeth Vavasour, of Willitoft, and secondly Dorothy, daughter of fourth Lord Langdale of Holme on Spalding Moor, and by her had two sons, Walter and Thomas, successive baronets. Walter died without issue in 1802, his widow remaining at Hazelwood till her death in 1824; she founded two weekly Masses in perpetuity for her own and her husband's souls, and a mural tablet on the Gospel side of the chapel near the Sanctuary, commemorates them both.

Sir Thomas Vavasour was never married, and at his death in 1826 the first baronetcy expired. During his life-time he made over Hazelwood to the vicars-apostolic to be what Ushaw afterwards became. Later on, however, when his god-son and cousin, Hon. Edward Stourton, married Marcia Lane Fox of Bramham Park, and settled down at Bramham Lodge, the old man began to entertain thoughts of resuscitating his

ancient family, and asked the bishops to allow him to withdraw his gift. To this they consented, stipulating, however, that Hazlewood Chapel should become church property, and that a pony and trap should always be at the chaplain's disposal for the needs of his ministry. When Sir Thomas died, the *Hon. Edward Stourton succeeded to the Hazlewood estates, and assumed the name of Vavasour ; and in the next year by a fresh creation became a baronet. Sir Edward's mother, Mary Langdale, was a niece of Dorothy Langdale, wife of the fifth baronet Vavasour ; and so he was a cousin of the Vavasours. When he married, his wife was a Protestant, but within twelve months of her marriage, so impressed was she by the exemplary conduct of her husband, she became a Catholic ; and her father, so far from resenting her change of religion, seeing the genuine goodness of Sir Edward, cordially approved of the step she had taken, and said to her :

• Edward Stourton married the Vavasour hieress and took the name of Vavasour. A Langdale married the younger daughter also taking the name of Vavasour.

"You cannot do better than embrace the religion of such a husband." The greatest sorrow of Sir Edward's life, which never left him, was her early death from a decline, very soon after the birth of her eighth child, afterwards the Very Rev. Philip Canon Vavasour, the founder of the Tadcaster mission.

Sir Edward's daily life was like that of a religious ; he would spend an hour or even two, in prayer every morn: before Mass ; all his children were *expected* to be present daily at the Holy Sacrifice and to make besides at least one visit to the Blessed Sacrament. The Rosary was said every day by the whole household, and during Lent the seven Penitential Psalms and the Litanies were said every evening. At the same time he was a good man of business and a keen sportsman, and was looked up to by all the chief land-owners and magistrates of the county. He was one of the first Catholic magistrates appointed after the Emancipation Act ; and on one occasion when all the magistrates of Yorkshire, who in those days did the

work of the County Council, had met together at York to decide whether or not the famous screen in the Minster should be removed, Sir Edward rose and objected to the removal, urging that all baptised men had duties towards and rights in every consecrated church, and declaring that he saw many reasons against the proposal : and so great was the universal respect entertained for this genuine Catholic that the meeting un-animously opposed the removal of the screen.

In his old age he wished to end his days in some religious order, and went abroad for that purpose, after resigning the charge of his estates to his son. He was on his way to Rome, to get the blessing of the Holy Father, when he dropped down dead at the roadside when climbing a hill behind the stage-coach. He was buried in the neighbouring village, till many years later Canon Vavasour brought his bones back to Hazelwood, and placed them beside those of his wife in the little churchyard.

All the Vavasours of the former line are buried in the vault beneath the chapel, the floor and walls of which are covered with tombs and tablets to their memory. There may be seen two Crusaders, in coat of mail and sword-girt, their legs crossed to show they died in the Holy land, their hands joined in prayer, and a large shield of the Vavasour arms by their side. Close by, kneeling devoutly with clasped hands is the venerable confessor of the faith, squire William Vavasour, with his wife, Anne, daughter of Sir Thomas Manners, who being a Protestant when he first married her, "was by his holy life converted to the true faith." They had thirteen children, seven of whom consecrated their lives to God in the priesthood and in religious life. Joined to this tomb is another in memory of their eldest son, Thomas, the first baronet, erected by his widow, Ursula, daughter of Walter Gifford of Chillington, Staffs ; on the base are carved in rather quaint fashion their nine children, all kneeling facing towards the altar, save two who

died in infancy, and who are represented lying in swaddling clothes.

The next monument is of the Georgian period, and is in marked contrast to the stiff, straight attitudes of the former tomb. It commemorates the third baronet, Walter Vavasour, who was married to Jane Crossland, and whose two children, represented on the monument, died in infancy. Jane Vavasour died 17th April, 1731, aged 83, and a tablet on the floor records the fact.

It would take too long to enumerate all the monuments and inscriptions of this historic place which lead us back through the centuries and unfold the history of a typical English, Catholic, country family, ever courageous, ever faithful in the service of God and the king.

HAZELWOOD CHAPLAINS.

Though there were no fixed chaplains at Hazelwood, or elsewhere, after the reign of Queen Mary until the close of the 18th century, and though the records

of any priest, especially during the 18th century, are necessarily scanty, and often non-existent, owing to the severe penalties in force not only against priests, but against those also who sheltered or entertained them it is yet possible to trace some of those who ministered at Hazelwood, and had the spiritual care of the Catholics in that neighbourhood.

In 1651 the Rev. John Thompson, alias Smith, was condemned to death at York for being a priest, but died in prison of goal fever before his execution. He was born in Netherdale, near Knaresborough, and was taken at Malton one Market day upon suspicion of being a priest, and set in the stocks to be gazed at by the people almost the whole day, till a cutler of the town affirmed on oath that he knew him to be a priest. He was examined before Mr. Robinson of Thornton Risebrough, near Pickering, and in the course of his examination stated that he had spent five years with old Mr. Vavasour of Hazelwood. Rob-

inson was an active magistrate, and a very zealous Parliamentarian ; he was member for Scarborough, but at the Restoration was driven out of the House of Commons. Father Thompson was a Jesuit and had been for a long time Superior of the Fathers of the Society in Yorkshire.*

In 1678-9 a priest by name Ellis was here, of whom nothing seems to be known. In 1689 one Paul Stevenson came here ; he was educated at Douay, and came over to England about 1657. "He was an able and witty man, and in the reign of King James II was made public preacher in the Clergy Chapel at York." At the Revolution, 1688, he was sent to prison, and on being released resided with Sir Walter Vavasour at Hazelwood and had the spiritual care of the Catholics in that neighbourhood.t

The next priest of whom there is any mention in connection with Hazelwood was a Benedictine monk, Dom George Anselm Carter ; he was a Worcester-

* *Records of the English Province Si., vol. v., p. 677,*
 t *Kirk's Biographies of English Catholics.*

shire man, professed in 1670 at the monastery of St. Gregory at Douay,t of which he was successively Sub-prior and Cellarer. In 1685 he was sent on the English mission to Yorkshire, and about the year 1716 was at Hazelwood, where he died in 1727. He was succeeded by Dom Edward Dunston Rogers, also a Benedictine, and a member of the monastery of St. Edmund's, Paris*; where he was professed in 1714. He was sent on the mission to Yorkshire, and stationed at Hazelwood in 1727, and remained there till 1731, when he removed to Parlington, a few miles away, till his death in 1746, It was quite possible and very probable that when there was a scarcity of priests, the same individual did duty as chaplain for the Vavasours at Hazelwood and for the Gascoignes at Parlington. The latter family lived successively at Barnbow, Saxton, Huddles-ton, Lotherton, and Parlington, and suffered much for the Catholic religion. There have been Benedictine chaplains

t The present Downside Abbey.

• Afterwards moved to Douay, now at Woolhampton.

at one or other of the Gascoigne residences for at least two hundred and fifty years without a break, and it would not be difficult to give a complete list of their names. It may very well have happened, therefore, that when there is a gap in the list of Hazelwood chaplains, the work, for some reason or another, was done by the Benedictine stationed at Huddleston Hall or at Parlington..

At this very time the vicar-apostolic of the northern district, Rt. Rev. Edward Dominic Williams, a Dominican friar, was living at Huddleston with his chaplain and Secretary, Fr. Thomas Worthington, O.P. Bishop Williams died in 1740, and was buried in the chapel at Hazelwood ; an inscription on the floor marks his last resting-place. The tomb of another priest may be distinguished by the paten and chalice engraved upon it, with the inscription : "Pray for the soul of George Crossland, who died October ye 12th, 1729, aged 66." He was brother-in-law to Sir Walter

Vavasour, and spent about two years at Hazelwood with his widowed sister Jane, Lady Vavasour, before his death. He was educated at Douay ; after his ordination he went to live with the English Carthusians at Nieuport, in Flanders, but with no intention of becoming a monk. Of his brothers, Henry became a Dominican, and died at Whenby, 1720 ; and Charles became a Jesuit, dying in Yorkshire, 1724.

In 1772 Rev. William Daniel, alia Foster (Mr. Foster was his uncle), was - at Hazelwood, and began to keep the Register of Baptisms ; if there were any earlier ones they have been lost or destroyed. William Daniel was educated at Douay, where he did much to promote the study of Greek. His brother Thomas, also a priest, was agent for the Yorkshire Brethren. - William died in Lancashire in 1777. His successor at Hazelwood was Rev. James Foster for a few months in 1776, and after him Rev. John Barrow, a nephew, probably, of the famous John Barrow, who used to style himself the "Old Tar of Claughton," in Lancashire,

where he was priest for nearly forty years : alluding to the fact of his having been seized by a press-gang, and compelled to serve for seven years on a man-of-war.

From 1780 to 1806 Rev. James Mel-ling was here ; and at his death, Dom William Alexius Chew, a Benedictine, came from Aberford to Hazelwood, where he remained for nearly thirty years, till his death, 25th February, 1832. He is buried in the church-yard. The famous Dr. Tate was the next incumbent, and it was during his time that Clifford began to grow in importance, both as a mercantile as well as a Catholic centre, and it was he who said the first Mass in Clifford, He was twice at Hazelwood, from 1832 to 1839, and again from 1853 till his death in 1863, and is buried close to his predecessor, Father Chew, and to the venerable vicar-apostolic, Dr. Briggs, who became the first bishop of Beverley in the restored English Hierarchy.

ComtEcTiox.—In 1863 Dr. Tate became President of Ushaw College, Co. Durham, and there he died in 1876, and is buried there.