

7. The Scarffes.

The name Scarffe has never been a common one either in the Isle of Man or elsewhere, but in its history it is so typical of other Anglo-Manx surnames that a short account of it may perhaps be of interest. It is of ancient standing in the North and East Ridings of Yorkshire, in Lincolnshire and in Norfolk, where it seems to have been confused with Scarth, which occurs rather more frequently. Scarth, Scard, de Scarth, are found in Yorkshire in the 12th and 13th centuries as grantors of land to monasteries, and are, with Scurff and Scarf, topographical names in the North and East Ridings. Scarborough was formerly Scardeborough. Barber, in his *British Family Names*, equates Scarffe with the German, Danish and Dutch Scharf ; and Scharf certainly occurs once in the Lincolnshire portion of the Hundred Rolls.

Confining myself henceforward to Scarffe alone, I may mention a few sporadic occurrences of this extremely rare name. Hugh Scarf, fisherman, was a Freeman of York about 1300 ; in the Church Registry of Pocklington, between York and Hull, for 1602, John Scarf is credited with 6d. for repairing the ducking-stool; and a Thomas Scaff (which may, however, stand for Scaife) is named in Flower's Visitation of Yorkshire, 1563-4, no date or locality being given. Yorkshire Wills also yield a few instances of the name.

In the Isle of Man Scarffe has long been peculiar to Lonan, and even there is less common now than formerly. It would be difficult to find in the parish registers of a century ago a Scarffe who lived in a country district outside Garff Sheading — one might almost say outside Lonan parish. The earliest of the family on record are William Skerffe and Michael McSkerffe, members of the Keys in 1408 (Oliver, Mon., [ii., 248](#)). From the positions in which their names occur in the list it may be inferred that they both lived in the South of the Island. William or a name-sake is found again in the Legislatures of 1417, 1422 and 1429, and is described as one of " the eldest and worthiest of all the Lande of Man." The McSkerffes in 1511 held land amounting to one-ninth of the parish of Lonan. But at the same date a Donald McSkerff paid for a portion of Ronaldsway a rent considerably greater than that of any of the Skerff holdings in Lonan ; and the name survived in the South in the 17th century. It seems probable that the family, like so many other English families, first settled in the neighbourhood of Castletown, where they are found a century before the date of the Roll, and afterwards acquired land in the treen of Swarthawe, Lonan. Ballaskirroo, which is situated in this

treen, evidently contains the surname, the final " ff " being aspirated just as in tarroo, a bull, for the Irish tarbh, familiar in " Clontarf," near Dublin. Ballaskirroo or Skerrow was spelt Ballaskerff so late as the Setting Quest of 1704, but was Ballyskirroo in 1747. Very likely there existed, as I believe to have been the case with certain surnames, an official and a popular form concurrently.

One would expect to find the surname follow the same phonetic law, and though I have never heard it thus pronounced, I find a James Skerrow in Lonan Parish Register for 1733 ; earlier dates of this Register than 1718 are unfortunately not extant. Oddly enough, Skerrow occurs with some frequency in the North of England ; e.g., in the Lancashire Military Muster of 1574, in the Forest of Pendle rental about 1662, and in the Parish Register of Bingley, Yorkshire, for 1602. It is also in the Oxford University Register for 1528.

While speaking of Oxford it seems worthwhile to mention a certain Johannes de Scurf, a medieval student there, in case he is the first Scarffe whose exploits have been handed down to us. One summer evening in the year 1297, after the hour of Curfew, he, with two companions, one a Welshman, rioted through the narrow thoroughfares of the city with swords and bows and arrows. After a wayfarer had been slain by an arrow (not de Skurf's), a hue and cry was raised. The three worthies thereupon took to their heels, and as the Coroner's Inquest could find neither them nor any goods of theirs to confiscate, they may be said to have enjoyed their rag and got away with it.

It was not until some of the English Scarffes became Welsh Scarffes that they attained the dignity of a recorded family tree. The branch which they, like so many other Northerners, stretched into South Wales, seems to have formed an advantageous association with the family of Devereux, Earls of Essex; and in the latter part of the 16th century Rhys ap Ffylip Scarffe, or Ysgarf in its Welsh shape, occupied — probably as steward or agent to Robert, the second Earl — Lamphey Palace in Pembrokeshire, which for 300 years had been the residence of the Bishops of St. David's, a magnificent building of which the ruins are still beautiful. The first recorded member of this particular branch, Sir Trystan, wedded a Thimbleby of Yernams (now Irnham) Hall and Thimbleby, both in Lincolnshire. After the next three representatives had allied themselves with Maning, Verne (Verney or Vernon ?) and Lyttleton respectively, comes the marriage of Sir Richard Scarffe to a daughter of Sir John Egerton of Egerton Hall, Cheshire. Their heir, entered, rather questionably I think, as in the direct line of descent,

was " David Scarff o Vanaw, gent." —i.e., D.S. of the Isle of Man. He married Ann, daughter of Sir Richard Fletcher of Wirrall, founder of the Fletcher family of Bangor, in whose pedigree " Davydd Ysgarf o Vanaw " duly appears. No dates are given in either case, but David must have flourished towards the middle of the 16th century.

These Fletchers were a branch of the Lancashire and Cumberland family once influential in the Island, where they left their name on Ballafletcher , they failed eventually into the Cæsars, and they in the same way into the Bacons. The Bangor Fletchers intermarried with the Bithells, with " Chiaret " (Gerrard and Garrett), of Cheshire, and with the inevitable Stanleys, this time the Hooton stock, from which the Knowsley Stanleys were an offshoot. The Lancashire ap Ithells or Bithells came from North Wales ; Robert ap Ithell appears as Receiver for the Northern parishes in the first Manorial Roll. The Gerrards of Lancashire and Cheshire, who were related to the Standishes, Norrises, Radcliffes, etc., were also intimately connected with the Island, and members of the family filled the Governorship on five occasions in less than 50 years from 1592.

David Scarffe's son Philip (to adhere to English spellings) is described as " of Caermarthen," and it was Philip's youngest son Rhys Scarffe who occupied Lamphey. Rhys' son William married a Glamorgan woman, and their son John was living in 1608. Rhys's daughter Anne married the eminent London publisher

Humphrey Toye of Caermarthen, and her name appeared on his monument recently removed from the Caermarthen church of St. Peter. From wills quoted in the Transactions of the Caermarthenshire Antiquarian Society it is evident that the family removed from Lamphey to the Caermarthen neighbourhood, where Rhys Philip Scarffe and his widow are traceable down to 1626. After this the name appears to have died out.

The Scarffe descent is given in Lewys Dwnn's 16th century collection of Welsh pedigrees, which do not require more than a smattering of the language to understand them. " He entered on his Roll of Honour the names of those he considered sufficiently well-born to claim attention from the Kings-at-Arms." With his Scarffe pedigree may be compared one from a different source in Laws' Little England, which omits the earlier entries but is fuller in the later ones. The two are inconsistent in details, and neither is more infallible than similar compilations of that era ; but Dwnn's information was received from and signed by Rhys Scarffe himself. A third draft, coeval with Dwnn's, is

among the Additional MSS. in the British Museum, and a fourth is indexed in the Lansdowne MSS. there, but I know nothing further of it.

The Thimblebys settled in Harlech in 1576, and Sir Richard T., who removed thither "for the sake of the sport," like any modern golfer, is buried in the chapel of St. Mary Magdalen ; but the Scarffe-Thimbleby alliance must have been contracted in the second half of the 14th century, which probably implies that the Scarffes, like the Thimblebys, were then in Lincolnshire. The name of Philip, father of Rhys Scarffe of Lamphey, also turns up in the pedigree of Davies of Somerset, previously of Caermarthen, (Visitation of Somerset), in which his daughter marries Lewis Davies. Here he is curiously styled "alias Moore," but I think this should apply to his daughter, who appears to have been married before.

If David Scarffe were the next of kin, called in to supply the want of a male heir, it would imply that connexions had been maintained between the English and the Manx Scarffes after the latter had established themselves in the Island ; that is to say, for at least a century.

What became of the Caermarthen Scarffes is something of a mystery. They were prolific in sons, yet nothing further is heard of them after 1626. Indeed, the surviving MS. archives of the town do not mention any member of the family during their residence there. It survived for a while in Laugharne, but the name is now quite forgotten in South Wales.

For the Scarffe coat of arms, Dwnn gives : " Azure, a swan proper, a border engrailed or and argent, two bars azure." The swan is presumably argent. A Chetham Library MS. (in Laws' " Little England "), has more plausibly: " Sable, an eagle displayed argent, armed and crowned or." In the North of England and the Isle of Man the shag or cormorant, properly the green cormorant, is called a scarf ; for example, the Manx name of the Shag Rock near Port St. Mary is Creg ny Scarroo ; and it is possible that the ambiguous bird of the Scarffe coat was, in its original form, an allusion to this sense of the word, without at all implying that such is the true meaning of the surname. A fishing mark at Scarlet called Thie Scarroo probably embodies the surname, and may serve to identify the intack called Scarffes Croft in the Lord's Composition Book, prior to 1703. Fishermen are a conservative clan.