Alberic de Vere, the founder of the family of the Veres, Earls of Oxford, had large estates in this and other counties, as also had Robert Malet, Peter de Valoines, Roger Bigod, Robert de Todeni, Hugh de Gurnai, Roger Pictavensis, and others. Few of these Earls held their estates for any length of time, and though in some cases large estates have been held together, both the tenures and owners have changed. Of these, the Earls of Oxford survived the longest, and what can be said of no other family, the De Veres flourished for 630 years after the Conquest, in great riches, honour, and power.

FROM WHITE'S "ESSEX."

William thought out two excellent plans by which to retain all the power of the realm in his own hands, and to prevent any baron making himself independent of the Crown. The first was, to make every landowner pay homage to (William) himself, and to hold his land directly from him, and thus to be his vassal and tenant-in-chief. The second was, not to allow any man to hold a large quantity of land together. If he gave any baron a great deal of land, he gave it him in many different counties, so that he could never be able to form one great concentrated power. Another purpose of his was to have all the Law Courts dependent on the Crown. Thus with the land in his own hands, and with all the administration of law in his own power, it is plain that the whole power of the country was gathered up and concentrated within himself. This, of course, was the very opposite of the old Saxon custom, but it was the feudal system carried to its logical extreme. The Englishman in Saxon times held his own land as his own right, chose his own aldermen, and the aldermen chose the king. Thus the Saxon custom grew and worked from below upwards. The new Norman custom worked from above downwards, and the king was all in all, while the landowner was only something as he held from the king. He made only four great earldoms—Chester, Shropshire, Durham, and Kent. The first two were made to keep down the Welsh, Durham to beat back the Scots, and Kent against invaders from the Continent. The earls of these earldoms had royal rights, and could appoint their own sheriffs; but