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Ludlow
from
Whitcliff
E·H·NEW

Tomorrow to fresh woods and pastures new

LUDLOW & STOKESAY

BY ALGERNON GISSING
WITH ILLUSTRATIONS
BY EDMUND H. NEW

LONDON: J. M. DENT & CO.
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PREFATORY NOTE

It does not come within the scope of these little books to indicate authorities; but, for a subject so full of interest as Ludlow and Stokesay, I may mention the following books for the benefit of those general readers who may wish to go more fully into the history of the neighbourhood. It is, of course, only a handful of books out of many.

"The History of Ludlow," by Thomas Wright, M.A., F.S.A. (1852).

"Ludlow: Town and Neighbourhood," by Oliver Baker (1889).

"The Council in the Marches of Wales," by Caroline A. J. Skeel, D.Lit. (1904).

"The Welsh Wars of Edward I.," by John E. Morris, M.A. (1901).

"The Gild Merchant," by Charles Gross (1890), for ancient burgess constitution and customs of Ludlow.

For Ludlow Castle also see Clark's "Mediæval and Military Architecture"; and for Stokesay, Turner's "Domestic Architecture."

A. G.

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Ludlow

CHAPTER I

THE GROWTH OF THE MARCHES

WHERE the Welsh mountains die away gradually to the rich vale of the upper Severn lie the counties of Hereford and Salop. It is a green and pastoral land of much variety, endeared by inexhaustible tenderness to its natives, and attractive to strangers by the force of numberless beauties and interests. The ancient town of Ludlow stands as a centre to these. To write briefly of such a spot is a difficult task, for the themes suggested are literally inexhaustible, as those who may be interested enough to follow out what must be my mere suggestions will readily find. Topography, when rationally regarded, is of the profoundest interest, and in reality the foundation stone of all worthy patriotism. But a march or borderland has necessarily so many peculiar interests as to raise it perhaps to the highest plane of topographical charm.

LUDLOW

Not everybody familiar with the banks of Severn knows, or at least remembers, that that fair river takes its rise in far-off Plinlimmon, side by side with the source of the Wye. This is but a stone's-throw from the waves of Cardigan Bay, and it is a fact worth noticing. Since every river sets off with the avowed intention of finding the sea, a fanciful moralist has here an allegory ready to his hand. From the long rambling journey of the Severn he may draw an obvious parable of the life of man in the similitude of a river. Plinlimmon sends forth other children. Severn and Wye have sisters, but they are truly "little sisters," timid and proper little things that take a demure view of their duty, and slip unnoticed to the sea. The chief one of these is called Ystwith, known to us only through man's settlement at her *aber* or mouth, Aberystwith. The whole of her course, with her best at winding, can stretch but to ten or twelve miles. Severn, with a laugh, sets off for her adventurous journey of over two hundred. Her glad, mad acceptance of life is better realised by the fact that, when all is done, the distance from source to mouth as the crow flies is not more than eighty miles. She has travelled in a semicircle, but what has she not seen and done? Valiant, full-hearted Sabrina!

This is what may come to you from the

luck of being born on one or other side of a mountain, though you draw your life from the same breast. A Severn or an Ystwith is your lot. Fate, we say, and shrug our shoulders. Be it so. But turn our moral from one of fate to one of purpose. Clearly it is not always best to go the shortest way to your end. Fill your day, says Severn; round your destiny. Though the sea must have you, put off the evil day, and take a wide circuit, gaining and scattering gladness. What joy would have been lost if Severn and Wye had slipped round the shoulder of the mountain, and modestly toddled their ten miles down to the sea.

Within the upper part of this semicircle of Severn, Shropshire and Herefordshire lie. In amongst their numberless hills many streamlets find a pathway to the main river. They trickle down the breezy slopes of bracken and broom and gorse, and thread the wooded hollows, and traverse the meadows, now rushing over the stones, now pausing in the reeds, the marigolds and water-lilies, but ever onward and making a world of wonder as they go. Two of these are called Teme and Corve, and it is where these two join that Ludlow stands. The Teme receives many streams to swell it into one of the principal western tributaries of Severn, and, for part of its course, seems to form a natural boundary-

line between the two counties I have named. But it is only for a mile or two here and there that it has been actually used as such. It is the case at Ludlow, the little loop of country immediately to the south of Ludford Bridge being part of the county of Hereford. In any survey of Ludlow, therefore, both these counties are prominently before the mind, so that although the town is territorially within the county of Salop, it is better to regard it merely as a town of the marches than as an appanage of any narrower territory. This is more particularly the case since so much of the history and interest of the place centres in the drama of this Welsh borderland as a whole. The story of it is indeed of the profoundest interest, and, before proceeding to our glimpse of Ludlow as a locality, I want to glance at this wider aspect of the scenery.

Looking back to the remotest historical times we here touch the principality of the Silurians, that fine old British race which, at any rate in the person of its heroic chieftain, Caractacus, awakens the enthusiasm of every schoolboy. We can all see the majestic figure raising the triumphal procession of the Emperor Claudius at Rome to such a height of dignity as to evoke the admiration of the conquering Romans ; but we do not always remember the clue that this same race possibly gives

us to an even remoter past, which carries us to the very dawn of human life in these islands. This Caractacus and his Silurians have been held to show traces of descent from that dark and long-skulled people that possessed our hills and forests before even the Celts had wandered to the land, and who, in what is called the Neolithic age, polished those beautiful stone axes, spear-heads, and other primitive tools and weapons, which we now see in our museums. This thought adds impressiveness to the many dark-eyed, black-haired faces that you see in the groups of market folk in Ludlow any Monday.

This picturesque stock developed into a fine race in Celtic times, and this landscape formed the scene of their immortal though ineffectual stand against the Roman. Those great earthworks on Malvern Hills are claimed as "the first line of defence thrown up by the Silurian chief against the advance of Ostorius, who had crossed the Severn to attack him with all the troops collected from the numerous stations that dot the surface of the Cotswolds"; whilst the camps at Whitborne, Croft-Ambrey, Thornbury, and Wapley (all only a few miles to the south-east of Ludlow), "seem to belong to a later campaign, when the line of the Malverns was abandoned, and Caractacus was forced to fall back upon his secondary range of

fortresses in the rear." But, as we know, all was hopeless. A chapter of British history was to be closed; and the last desperate struggle is held to have taken place by that hill on the banks of the Teme, called Coxwall Knoll, seven or eight miles due west of Ludlow, just beyond Leintwardine. It was from this spot that Caractacus fled. His wife and daughter and brothers were already captives to Ostorius. But even yet he did not utterly despair. Penetrating that wilderness of forest, the gallant chieftain sped to the far-off territory of the Brigantes (our present Yorkshire), whose queen, Cartismandua, was a relative of his own. But she, though sovereign of the most powerful British tribe, treacherously sided with the foe; and instead of finding furtherance of his heroic efforts, Caractacus was delivered, bound, to the victorious enemy and forthwith carried off to Rome.

With this, local resistance ended, and the district fell into the Roman province. It was then that the life of this region we now call Salop began to centre in the Wrekin; and in the name Uriconium, which became the principal Roman station of the Upper Severn, it is not difficult to see traces of this ancient appellation of the famous hill. By the time the legions withdrew from Britain (say A.D. 400) this Wrekin district formed part of a Welsh

principality of Powys, with Uriconium (our present Wroxeter) for its capital. But presently other foes have landed on the south coast, and, penetrating the Severn valley after conquering Bath and Gloucester, the West Saxons poured up the old Roman road to Uriconium, slew "Kyndylan the Fair," burned the town, and took up fresh farms in the surrounding country. These new colonists called themselves the Wroken-sæte, or settlers by the Wrekin; and Uriconium became Wroken-cester, a name worn down in time to Wroxeter.

But these West Saxons only occupied a small part of the land beside the Severn. After the fall of Uriconium the princes of Powys retreated to the forest region in the rear, and there, in a bend of the Severn where Shrewsbury now stands, they established their capital of Pengwern. It was Offa, the Mercian king, that was ultimately to drive them from their stronghold, conquer this district, and turn it into what it has ever since remained—a march or borderland. To mark out his new dominions, this king threw up the vast earthwork known still by the name of Offa's Dyke, which runs from Holywell, in Flintshire, to the Wye. But, of course, the native Welsh were not exterminated. They remained as tributary proprietors, and Offa's code regulated the relations of

the two races in the conquered territory. Not only did those Welsh remain, but in time they learned to speak the English tongue, and to consider themselves as Englishmen.

It is now that we come to the origin of the present name of the county and its county town. The greater part of Shropshire was still covered with woodland, and so the district came to be known by the English as the Scrob—that is to say, the Scrub or Bush. The inhabitants were known as Scrob-sæte, the Scrub-settlers, and the old capital of Pengwern became Scrobbes-byrig or Scrobbes-burh, the town or bury in the Scrub. Hence, in course of time, Shrewsbury. When, somewhat later, the shire was formed, in an analogous way its name arose—Scrob-scir, and so to Shropshire. The short form, Salop, is merely a Norman corruption of the native English Scrob. Just as they made Sarum or Saresbyrig into Salisbury, so did Scrob-scir become Salopes-sire. As Grant Allen says, "Our ordinary speech still bears traces of the distinction of tongues; for when we use the English form *shire* we say Shropshire, but when we use the Norman-French word *county* we say the county of Salop."

Both natives and visitors who wish to find the full charm of this beautiful scenery will no doubt take pleasure in tracing these

ancient footsteps in the grass, as well as in examining the more obvious relics of later life. In connection with this let them also pay heed to the names of the hills, rivers, and villages. Few remains of our ancestors are more interesting or more significant of long-forgotten facts of history. It is true, a curious beginner can find so little help in following such a subject. He may bring home from his rambles a handful of flowers or a pocketful of fossils from the quarries, and with some little perseverance soon name and understand them all by the aid of books or a museum, but the science of our local names has been strangely neglected. The subject is, to be sure, so intricate and inexhaustible that no one work could comprehend it. But for gaining a fascinating insight into general principles there is a book which everybody may have, and that is Isaac Taylor's *Words and Places*, and it may be fearlessly stated that even a slight acquaintance with such a book will keenly stimulate any reader desirous of regarding the picturesque past of his country with intelligence. A glance at the names round Ludlow, and indeed throughout Shropshire and Herefordshire generally, will afford abundant evidence of this history I have referred to. The name Ludlow itself offers difficulties which I am not learned enough to solve. The books confidently explain

it as composed of two Anglo-Saxon words, *leod* and *law*, signifying "the people's hill"; but, since the place was even in Domesday Book called simply *Luda*, this explanation ceases to satisfy. The latter half, *low* or *law*, is, of course, easy enough, and nobody who looks at the beautiful old town from the opposite height of Whitcliff will doubt the propriety of its being christened some *hill* or other, but why that of *Luda* or *Lude* I must not speculate. In addition to the evidence of Domesday there is that of ancient coins, of which some, even so far back as the later Anglo-Saxon kings, are preserved, showing that they were minted at Lude. I have not traced when the *low* was first added. It was at any rate well established by the time of Henry III., for that king, in 1272, grants licences to various merchants, not of Lude, but of Lodelowe or Ludelawe, to export wool.

No doubt such a favourable site will have been occupied from very early times. Britons, English, and Normans in succession have fortified themselves upon that prominent rock, with the river winding round its base. Though always rich and beautiful, the prospect they have had will have varied considerably. Leagues of our rich meadows must have been forest and scrub. The name of the neighbouring village of Bromfield (broom field) tells us

of the thickets of broom that in May must have turned those riverside pastures into a waving wilderness of gold. But, of course, the main outlines of the landscape were the same. Those beautiful hills still lay at full length all round the prospect; one here and there with his head, as it were,

Looking East to Titterstone

propped up from the elbow. Whitclift, Bringwood Chase, and the Vinnals cannot have much changed. The ridges of Long Mynd and Wenlock Edge, the rugged tops of Caer Caradoc, and the bold forehead of Titterstone would attract the sentinel's eye as they do ours, but with other purpose than the search of the picturesque.

Having reached the Norman times in our general glimpse, we touch the actual features of Ludlow as they engage us at the present day. Whatever his peculiar object of interest, nobody can be insensible to the appeal of that magnificent ruin still commanding the vale, and around which so much of the mediæval story of these Welsh marches inevitably gathers. We shall, of course, presently glance at the details of this great castle. I only mention it now to introduce the wholly new phase of life that the conquering Norman introduced. The conquest of England, as we know, did not mean the conquest of Wales. Though they passed up to Chester, Shrewsbury, Ludlow, and Hereford, the Norman kings did not undertake this latter conquest. Their hands were otherwise quite full. But they foresaw it and indicated its general lines. They took up the task which the English Harold before their arrival had begun. As Miss Skeel says in her valuable history of *The Council in the Marches of Wales*, "The conqueror was content to plant along the Welsh Border a line of castles for protection against invasion. In them were placed men who, with their Norman instinct for fighting and plunder, might be trusted to conquer Wales for their own profit. The task would be hard enough, he thought, to prevent them

from growing overpowerful as against himself."[1]

The three main bases were Chester, Shrewsbury, and Hereford. At these three points William placed three of his ablest and most trusted followers: Hugh of Avranches, his own nephew, in Chester; Roger of Montgomery in Shrewsbury; William Fitz-Osbern, the best soldier at Senlac, in Hereford. For a time the conquest went on apace under the earls and their followers. Castles were built, and near them in many cases grew up bourgs where Frank-born burgesses lived in enjoyment of certain privileges as tenants of some great lord. Then came a check. First the Welsh, by Viking aid, slew Hugh of Montgomery, Roger's second son, and regained Anglesey. His death left his elder brother, Robert of Bellême, the holder of immense possessions, and he it was who, in the first years of Henry I., tried to become independent of the Crown. But this was not in the purpose of the kings. He was crushed, with a consequence that at the same time Norman progress was checked throughout Central and North Wales.

[1] For an exhaustive account of this mediæval history I may refer the reader to the two books I have freely used, *The Welsh Wars of Edward I.*, by J. E. Morris, M.A., and the work by Miss C. A. J. Skeel, D.Lit., from which I have quoted.

Indeed, as we know, it was not until 1283, by the consistent energy of Edward I., that the conquest of Wales was completed. With this came the need of strictly organising the hitherto turbulent life of the border, and though it required centuries to achieve, it was this first Edward that laid the foundation of the work. The lords marchers, as these great territorial feudatories were called, were slow to relinquish their practice of settling all disputes by private war. But, at any rate, the machinery of law was instituted. By statute the Welsh shires were allotted to various justices, and the appointment of such officers as sheriffs, coroners, and bailiffs was ordained. But between the newly-conquered districts and the western shires of England lay the crescent-shaped march almost on the circumference of which Ludlow stood. The powerful lords who were established throughout this border tract had of necessity acquired extensive privileges which Edward I. had so strenuously assailed, but which for two centuries no other king had time and vigour to take in hand. Of the actual life of the border we get a vivid glimpse in the Statute of Rhuddlan (1284), whereby the sheriff is directed to inquire amongst other things "of mascherers that sell and buy stolen meat knowingly; of whittawers, that is, those that whiten hides of oxen and horses,

knowing the same to have been stolen, that they may not be known again; of redubbers of stolen cloths, that turn them into a new shape and change the old one, as making a coat or surcoat of a cloak and the like; of them that shear sheep by night in the folds, and that flay them and any other beasts; and of them that take and collect by night the ears of corn in autumn and carry them away."

The right of deciding all these local troubles was long contested between the lords marchers and the king. How uncertain the hold upon these lords was felt to be by the Crown is shown in a statute of 1354, by which it is enacted that they "shall be perpetually attending and annexed to the Crown of England, as they and their ancestors have been in all times past, and not to the Principality of Wales, in whose hands soever the same Principality be or hereafter shall come." To show the importance of these questions to the Crown it is only necessary to point out that the chief holders of these privileges, the Mortimers of Wigmore, came to be themselves heirs to the Crown of England, whilst the heiress of another great marcher family, Mary de Bohun, became the wife of Henry Bolingbroke, and ultimately queen.

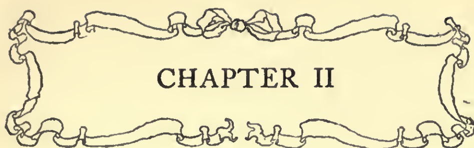
The great disorder of Wales and the border is reflected in the many laws

passed. The legislation of Henry IV. is particularly severe against the Welsh, forbidding them to become citizens or burgesses, or to purchase lands and tenements in any city, borough, or market town, or to hold any civic office. No Englishman was to be convicted by a Welshman; an English burgess marrying a Welshwoman was to lose his franchise; and no Welshman was to hold office under the king or be of the council of any English lord. The Welsh naturally retaliate. Sometimes by day and sometimes by night, it is said, they came within the counties adjoining the marches of Wales, and took distresses of horses, sheep, and cattle, driving them away to the seigniories where they dwelt, and retaining them "till gree be made at their will."

The blame for all this disorder was thrown largely on the lords of the marches, who were bidden to set "sufficient stuffing and ward in their castles and seigniories of Wales" to guard against its repetition. But they had various purposes to serve, and too keen an eye upon personal aggrandisement. What was needed, as Miss Skeel points out, was some authority which should ensure the due punishment of crimes and impartial justice even between men of differing race. It was this at which the kings

aimed, but no permanent improvement was made until the powers of the marcher lords passed to the Crown, as to a large extent they had by the reign of Henry VII. He it was who proved able to carry out really effectual repressive measures, whence virtually rose the well-known Council of the Marches from which so much of the early importance of Ludlow sprang. It had apparently been instituted before by Edward IV.; but, as is stated by an old writer, "the matter proceeded no farther, for the troubles and disquietness of his kingdom coming heavy upon him, and the shortness of his reign after his establishment not permitting, he was forced to leave that to others which himself thought once to bring about." It was during the reigns of Henry VIII. and Elizabeth that the Council reached its full development, but it continued into Stuart times, and was not finally abolished until the Revolution of 1689. But as this institution of the Council and the selection of Ludlow Castle as the principal official residence of its President brings us to the heyday of Ludlow Castle and town, this general survey may well end here. The more detailed story of Ludlow itself can be considered in connection with the existing structure of the place. It is this ancient atmosphere that gives the locality its principal charm, but since it is com-

bined also with a natural beauty which our industrial age has not greatly harmed, the appeal of the place is to all who know wherein the deepest interests and the most civilising recreations lie.



CHAPTER II

THE CASTLE

IN 1631 Richard Baxter (the great Puritan divine), then a lad about sixteen, ready to leave Wroxeter school, had been advised, he says in his autobiography, not to go immediately to college, but to become private attendant for a while to Mr. Thomas Wickstead, Chaplain to the Council of Wales, under whom he was told he would have every advantage. He accepted the suggestion, and for a year and a half young Baxter lived in Ludlow Castle. But exceptional seriousness was inherent in the boy even then, and the situation was not at all to his taste. As the divine himself afterwards remarks, Mr. Wickstead had nothing to teach him, unless it were to sneer at Puritans, and there was much tippling and other profanity in the castle and the town, crowded as they were with officials and their servants. All Shropshire was then, he had found, in a grievous condition spiritually, and had he remained in Ludlow the bad influence of the place might have obliterated the serious im-

pressions he had received from his good father's teaching and the perusal of Sibbes's "Bruised Reed." One youth, who was his intimate friend, and most zealously pious when he first knew him, did fall a victim and became a confirmed drunkard and scoffer. Had Baxter remained a little longer at the castle he might have been present at the curious spectacle of a stage-play in rebuke of riot, and, oddly enough, written by the great poet who stands for after time as one of the principal embodiments of Puritanism, John Milton. This was the masque known to us as "Comus," although, when first produced, it had no definite title.

In June of the very year in which Baxter went to Ludlow, the Earl of Bridgewater was nominated President of the Council, but did not take up his residence at Ludlow until more than two years after. It was during this interval that Baxter passed his time there, and much of the unseemly licence that shocked the serious boy may legitimately be attributed to the absence of authority. In 1633 it was resolved that the earl should go to his post. On the 12th May, that year, a Royal Letter of Instructions was issued defining his powers afresh, and regulating the arrangement of the Council, both judicial and executive. It was to consist of above eighty persons named,

many of them bishops and great state officers of England, whilst others were knights and gentlemen of Shropshire and other parts of the Welsh border. But of these eighty, four were nominated as salaried officers bound to residence and the regular duties of circuit judges. In all proceedings of the Council three were to be a quorum, of which, however, the President, Vice-president, or the Chief Justice of Chester was always to be one.

The new Lord President entered upon his official residence with unusual solemnity. "He was attended," says Oldys, "by a large concourse of the neighbouring nobility and gentry." And to add to the picturesqueness there is the story that Milton's "Comus" is based upon the actual adventures of the earl's household when lost in the Haye Woods as they travelled to the town. From Ludlow these woods lie to the south, and the back, as it were, of Bringwood Chase, that great bank of woodland that stretches westward from the velvet turf of Whitcliff. The place has the unfortunate local name of Sunny Gutter, and is a densely-wooded hollow in the steep hills, open only at one end. If the earl's household actually approached their destination from this side they could not have found a more impressive way of doing it. You have no great difficulty in getting lost

in these woods to-day, but if you bear upwards and can get out at the top, and escape the penalties of trespassing, you will have no reason to regret the experience. At the head of this defile, and towards its eastern side, is a cluster of fir trees on the hill-top, from which on any clear day is to be obtained a view that will not soon be forgotten. But you cannot see Ludlow. If you follow a delightfully vague track, however, by the hedgerow on the top of the ridge, you come in a few hundred yards to a gate into the upper wood, and by taking the left-hand path you will find a very wonderful way to the old border town. After about a mile of woodland a high road is reached which leads on to a bit of breezy common known as Whitcliff. You have already had many glimpses of the scene, but here the full landscape bursts upon you with the Lude-lawe just in front.

This was the position taken up by the Parliamentary forces under Sir William Brereton when he besieged the castle, which was holding out for the king. His intrenchments are still quite distinct in the green turf. Sir William took the place on 9th June 1646. It does not require any great amount of military skill to see the advantages of such a site for a siege of Ludlow. Slightly higher than the opposite hill on which the town

stands, there is but a narrow defile between, through which the Teme flows in a semicircle from the foot of the castle rock, at Dinham Bridge, to the ancient bridge at Ludford. From its green summit of softest turf Whitcliff drops with rugged abruptness to the river, leaving just space for a footpath along the water's edge. On the other side are orchards, without fence or hedge, sloping to the river from the town wall, and above, the clustered town with its magnificent church and castle. To the north spreads the vale of Corve, and all around the landscape is closed in by an amphitheatre of hills. This open summit of Whitcliff is the spot for dreaming of all that Ludlow and this wonderful prospect means. For many centuries this breezy site has been the property of the people of Ludlow, for it was given to them so long ago as the thirteenth century, by Jourdan de Ludford, as public ground.

When the Earl of Bridgewater came there, in 1633, the townsfolk were no doubt gathered in numbers to receive him. The presence of the Lord President, with all his retinue, meant additional prosperity for them, and we can hear the shouts and the church bells that would mingle with the placid tumble of the weir in the river below. No doubt, by Ludford Bridge the earl entered, and ascended the steep road

to the Broad Gate, under the archway of which he and his noble retinue gained access to the town. There were then five gates to the town, but this one alone now remains, though it is wholly transformed and all built over. Nevertheless, it gives a picturesque aspect to this approach. The street within, rising still upwards to the Cross, with the noble church behind, is still as full of old-world charm as any street in the kingdom. But, in this early seventeenth century, it must have been a wonder indeed. At the head, where all the streets meet, would not then have been the structure that we now call the Butter Cross, built many years later; but, no doubt, a still earlier and more picturesque Market Cross would at the time stand there. About half a century before (1587) the native poet, Thomas Churchyard, had broken into enthusiasm over his town—

> "But further speake, of shiere it is no neede,
> Save Ludloe now, a towne of noble fame:
> A goodly seate, where oft the councell lyes,
> Where monuments are found in auncient guyse:
> Where kings and queenes in pomp did long abyde,
> And where God pleasde that good Prince Arthur dyde.
>
> . . . .
>
> The towne doth stand most part upon an hill,
> Built well and fayre with streates both large and wide;
> The houses such, where straungers lodge at will,
> As long as there the councell lists abide,

> Both fine, and cleare the streates are all throughout,
> With condits cleere and wholesome water springs :
> And who that lists to walke the towne about,
> Shall finde therein some rare and pleasant things :
> But chiefly there the ayre so sweet you have,
> As in no place ye can no better crave."

Turning to the left at the Cross (at which point possibly the official burgesses gave greeting to the President), the cavalcade would advance directly to the castle and enter by the great gateway into the yard or outer court as we, too, may do to-day. This is now a large green enclosure, within great walls, and is browsed by sheep. The main buildings occupy the farther corner at the north-west, so that they, on the outside, surmount the rugged limestone rock which drops precipitously to the river, but which has afforded foothold for trees that have attained so huge a stature as now to hide the walls. There seems some little doubt as to the actual founding of this magnificent structure, but we traced the historical lines of its growth in the first chapter. It is said to have been built by Roger of Montgomery, that first Earl of Shrewsbury, and was forfeited to the Crown by the attainder of his aspiring son, Robert of Bellême. Inevitably a whole world of history and romance gathers about these ancient stones. For details of all this, I can only refer readers to the excellent books mentioned in the preface. All I can attempt is to give

glimpses of it in vignette, gathered from these books. Here we have before us the principal residence of all those turbulent Norman adventurers who plundered and fought with the Welsh and one another, and to which the various Lords President travelled with their retinue.

In earlier days, after the first attainder, Henry I. granted it to Fulk de Dinan, who was succeeded by his son, Joce de Dinan, between whom and Sir Hugh de Mortimer, of Wigmore, arose a feud of the true Border type. Sir Joce got possession of his enemy, and held him prisoner until he should pay a ransom of three thousand silver marks, as well as his plate, horses, and birds. The tower where Mortimer was confined still bears his name. After the death of Joce de Dinan the castle seems to have been in the hands of the Crown again, till the sixteenth year of King John, when it passed to the Lacy family. Walter de Lacy left as his heiresses two granddaughters: the one, Matilda or Maud, married Geoffrey de Genevile or Joinville. In the Calendar of Patent Rolls, of the Record Series, for the eighth year of King Edward I., 3rd April 1280, I find a grant to this Geoffrey, "in aid of his town of Ludelawe," of murage for five years from Easter—murage being the right to exact a toll on merchandise and the like, for the purpose

of keeping in repair the town wall. The grant is renewed at the necessary intervals, but it is interesting to note the change of phraseology. In 1294 it is to Peter de Genevile "for his town"; on 16th May 1299, however, it is a grant "at the instance of" the said Peter "to the bailiffs and good men of the town of Ludelawe." And so, henceforth; a sign of the slackening of feudal power.

The co-heiress of Matilda had married one John de Verdun. But the divided inheritance was ultimately reunited as the possession of Roger de Mortimer, Earl of March, the husband of Joan, great-granddaughter of Maud de Genevile. Henceforth Ludlow took the place of Wigmore as the seat of the Mortimers, and here it was that Roger, Earl of March, entertained Edward III. with tournaments and other diversions. Through the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries the fortunes of the Mortimers were of a varied kind, and Ludlow Castle shared them. At length Edmund Mortimer, aged six, became the ward of Henry, Prince of Wales, was taken prisoner by Owen Glendower, served in France, and died as Lord-Lieutenant of Ireland in the twenty-fourth year of his age. It was his cousin Richard, Duke of York, who became his heir, and who made Ludlow Castle his principal place of residence.

This is how Ludlow came to take a leading part in the Wars of the Roses, and to be the centre of the region from which the Yorkist armies were drawn. One of these was hopelessly dispersed at the so-called Rout of Ludford Bridge, and the town, being left a prey to the king's soldiers, was pillaged and burned. As a compensation for its losses Ludlow enjoyed special favour during the reign of the Yorkist kings, and it was from Edward IV. that it received a renewal and enlargement of its charter.

But we must turn from these historical memories to the actual building before us. Crossing the green Yard or Outer Court we come, as I have said, to the main castle in the north-west corner. It is guarded by a moat, spanned formerly by a drawbridge of course, but now by an overgrown stone bridge of three arches, built by that energetic President of Elizabethan times, Sir Henry Sydney, during his long residence here. He made many alterations in the old structure, as even the unlearned in military architecture can discern. The great square keep to the left is the original portion of the castle, and the portal, with the adjoining building, by which we come to the inner court, is plainly seen to be of a very different period. It resembles an Elizabethan manor-house, with its pointed gables and transom windows, and

The Keep

Ludlow Castle

forms another part of Sir Henry Sydney's additions. Within the inner court the whole impressiveness of the ancient building strikes us. Around a smaller green enclosure the grey walls rise, and in the midst of it, apart, stands the circular Norman chapel of St. Mary Magdalene. This is said to have been built by the Joce de Dinan already mentioned, in the reign of Henry I. or that of Stephen. It is not of striking beauty only, but of particular interest as one of the two earliest round churches in the kingdom. Behind it, occupying the north side of the court, stands the principal mass of buildings which contained the hall and the state apartments. Though the main outline is impressively complete, the interior is total ruin. Where Prince Arthur laughed, and where "Comus" was so brilliantly enacted lurk the enchanter's nightshade, nettles, and wild arum, whilst from crannies in the walls around stretch ivy and wallflower, crane's bill and pellitory. This, of course, is as an ancient castle should be. We can contemplate the majesty of age without being fretted by the impertinences of present-day life. But, through all the picturesqueness, what squalid horrors sleep amidst the stones of these feudal strongholds. It is as well to realise this as also to exult in the romantic picture. With regard to Ludlow they are abundantly recorded, and any reader wish-

ing to trace out the dark passages will have no difficulty in finding the clue. Though not, of course, in their lamentable fate, the two princes, children of Edward IV., who were murdered in the Tower, are associated with these walls. It was in 1472 that the king created his eldest son, who was an infant, Prince of Wales and Earl of the County Palatine of Chester, and sent him with his younger brother to the castle of Ludlow. They stayed here whilst their father lived, and the rooms which they are said to have occupied are in the east or right-hand corner of the main buildings. What happened to them when, on their father's death, they were taken to London we all know. But Richard Hunchback's time was short. After him Henry VII. sent his son Arthur, Prince of Wales, to live at Ludlow, and to hold there his Welsh Council. But he died whilst still a boy, and from that time may be dated the change from the "Prince's Council" to the "Council in the Marches of Wales," with its regular Lord President and other officials for carrying on its court of jurisdiction. The apartment which is called Prince Arthur's Room is at the west or left-hand extremity of the group of main buildings of the inner court. The Great Hall, or Council Room, immediately adjoins it. The ground still slopes upward to what was formerly the entrance to this

latter. The slope represents several steps of marble which were removed when the castle was dismantled and was quarried for whatever it contained of value.

In addition to its great architectural interest, and to that connected with it as the great Council Chamber, this hall claims the literary distinction of having afforded the first stage for the enactment of Milton's masque, known as "Comus," already referred to. It is amongst the very latest associations of the place, and arose, as I have said, out of the installation of the Earl of Bridgewater as Lord President of the Marches. We have glanced at the pageantry of the earl's approach to his official residence. There was abundance of stately ceremonial. His inaugural hospitalities stretched over the greater part of the year 1634. As Dr. Masson says, to the younger members of the family it seemed that the hospitalities would not be complete unless they included some poetical and musical entertainments. The well-known musician, Henry Lawes, was a member of the earl's household as musical teacher, and in all probability it was he that asked young Milton to write the libretto for the occasion. Lawes and his three young pupils (children of the earl) took prominent parts when it was produced on Michaelmas

night, 1634.[1] This ruined hall, of which even the floor no longer parts it from the cellar beneath, was brilliant enough that night, and on a sunny day in June you cannot do better than come with your Milton in your pocket and reconstruct the whole scene to your imagination whilst reading his stately verses on the grass to the jocular comment of the jackdaws that flit about the ruined battlements above.

Such was one of the lighter aspects of the life that proceeded within these walls. But by those Stuart times much of the need for its more serious side had vanished. It is deplorable to think that nearly all the records of the judicial proceedings of the Council at Ludlow and elsewhere have perished. They must have been numerous and invaluable for the detailed elucidation of the history of this border life. Often two or three hundred cases each term were brought before the Court. In the earlier days of the Council its Acts and Decrees were registered "in faire paper bookes of great volumes fully and at large like as in the Chancery." In the instructions from the Crown, safekeeping of the records is repeatedly urged, but with little effect, in spite of Sir Henry Sydney's provision of rooms under

[1] For full particulars see Dr. Masson's "Life of Milton," vol. i.

the Court-House for the express purpose. Nevertheless, large numbers survived down to 1642. Perhaps some were destroyed when Sir William Brereton took the Castle in 1646, but there is no mention of the fact. Probably, therefore, the bulk survived till 1689, when the Court was finally abolished, and no doubt perished in the wanton dismantling of the noble edifice, the reports of which so disturb our later historic instincts.

It is surprising, though, how gradual the actual destruction must have been. In 1708 forty rooms were entire. In 1774 "many of the royal apartments were entire, and the sword of state with the velvet hangings was preserved." In the museum at Ludlow is an ancient record or deed chest with three locks, which in the early part of the eighteenth century was filled with tapestry and armour, and conveyed from the castle into St. Lawrence's Church for safety; but in vain, for even there it was rifled of its contents. A description of the castle (also in the museum) says: "It is not to be wondered that this noble castle is in decay, when we consider that the inhabitants of the neighbourhood live upon the sale of the material."

Such is the sad record that explains the ruined condition of the place as we now behold it. But it is useless to lament

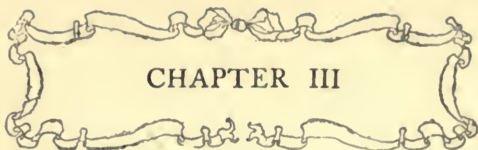
what has been. Compared with numberless relics of former life we have infinite cause of satisfaction in the ruins of Ludlow Castle. As I have said, it has at least been spared the processes of adaptation to a mode of life for which it

A Watch Tower

was never formed. It stands a magnificent memorial of a violent and pagan time, when the dignity of life was promoted by the sword rather than by the ledger, and when at least many secrets were imparted to unregenerate man which we might profitably give some of our later civilisation to recover. Volumes might be written upon the life that has been

enacted within these walls alone. In glancing at my few inadequate words, I regret especially that I could not have given a more distinct glimpse of the long life here of that most distinguished of all Lords President, Sir Henry Sydney. The family name is peculiarly endeared to students alike of letters and of history, and not only the notable public activity, but also the social worth of Sir Henry and his family (of which Sir Philip was one), would well repay a detailed scrutiny.

In mere picturesqueness Ludlow Castle cannot easily be surpassed. Whether to the lover of the past or the present, the place offers attractions which no partiality can exaggerate, and which the fuller revelation and examination of details can only deepen and intensify. To those who go to local story mainly for the purposes of intellectual recreation, historical interest and physical beauty of course strongly affect one another, and, where both are combined in a very marked degree, the highest point of topographical charm is reached.



THE BURGESSES

OUTSIDE those formidable castle walls grew up a life of everyday industry which, though in appearance less romantic, is possibly more full of human interest than the chivalrous pageant at which we have glanced. The growth and development of our various market-towns is a branch of historical inquiry which has only of late years begun to engage attention and still offers an unbounded field. Our old topographers fancied their duty done when they had laboriously tabulated the devolutions of the feudal manors, and constructed vast areas of more or less mythical genealogical trees. These compilations no longer satisfy us, and what we seek in local history is a sympathetic, as well as scientific, exposition of the growth of the whole community from the days of flint implements until now. It is, of course, only the increasing accessibility of our vast wealth of national records that begins to make such a conception possible. There is little doubt that we shall

presently get not only our historical materials sufficiently marshalled, but also our local intelligence so far educated as to enable every locality to set about writing its own history. The work is so vast that, unless it is undertaken in some such co-operative manner, assuredly it can never be begun.

Even a town like Ludlow, on which so much excellent work has been spent, shows us what there is yet to do. There is an infinite amount of interesting detail to be filled in before we can get anything like a true picture of the life of the place through all the centuries. A casual walk about the town cannot fail to stimulate the curiosity of any visitor, for the streets are full of the picturesque suggestions of far-off days. Though, as I said in a former page, the name Lude takes us back to a time before the Norman, I must not linger over that twilight period. Long before the crest of this limestone hill was girt with the fortified wall which we can still trace, it was used as a place of human settlement. A burial-place of some of the earliest inhabitants lay where the parish church now stands, for it is recorded that in 1199, when the church of that day had to be enlarged, the workmen removed a large mound of earth in which were found relics of interment. This was a barrow of some sort, but of

what period we have not sufficient details to decide. Perhaps Caractacus called here when gathering for his last rally on Coxwall Knoll, a few miles westward. Coins were minted here. Some primitive agricultural and industrial life must have gone on, but it is from the strong hand of the Norman that the real organisation of the mercantile life began.

I have mentioned that William the Conqueror established his cousin William Fitz-Osbern as Earl of Hereford. This mighty soldier was already Duke William's seneschal of Breteuil, in Normandy, and on his settlement in Hereford he introduced from thence the mercantile laws and customs that became ultimately known as "The Customs of Hereford." These were extended to Ludlow, Shrewsbury, and other towns which grew up over the Welsh border. Mercantile life was then as rigorously organised as all other branches, and merchants naturally settled in places where the shade of the feudal stronghold afforded a guarantee of their privileges being upheld. As most readers know, this led to the establishment of guilds, or close-companies into which all the trades and crafts were formed, and into which every craftsman had to be admitted before he could pursue his calling. The question of tariffs, protection, and the like were then rigorously

and summarily disposed of. Local jealousy was acute, and contests between baron and burgess, guild and borough, were perpetual. It must be remembered that the guild and the borough were distinct. The guildhall was not necessarily the town or moot hall. Influential guilds allowed the town authorities to use their hall for general municipal purposes; at first occasionally, then more and more frequently, until finally the hall became town property by purchase, gift, or prescriptive possession. Thus at Ludlow the later town hall appears originally to have belonged to a simple social-religious guild—that of the Palmers. So late as the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries the tailors, mercers, drapers, cappers, hatters, glovers, and skinners of Ludlow were united in an association which, after 1710, was called the Stitchmen. It appears to have had supervision over the whole trade of the town, and continued in existence until 1862. The officers of the society were then six men and two stewards. In the museum at Ludlow are the documents of the Guild of Hammermen, in the original seventeenth-century oak chests, which were presented some years ago by the oldest surviving member of the Guild, Mr. Thomas Cook.

But of the brotherhood of the Palmers'

Guild there are other important relics in the town. Their college, though plain and modernised, stands to the west of the churchyard, and Mr. Oliver Baker gives some interesting details observed by him during structural alterations some years ago, and which he ineffectually endeavoured to save from destruction. In illustration of the history of the fraternity Mr. Baker gives the following extract from Leland's "Itinerary": "This church (of Ludlow) hath been much advanced by a brotherhood, therein founded in the name of St. John the Evangelist. The original thereof was (as the people say there) in the time of King Edward the Confessor, and it is constantly affirmed there that the Pilgrims that brought the Ring from beyond the sea as a token from St. John the Evangelist to King Edward were the inhabitants of Ludlow. This Fraternity hath a Guardian chosen annually among the burgesses, and to this college belong nine or ten Priests, partly found by endowment of landes, partly by gathering the devotion of the people about there. And these Priests have a fair house at the west end of the Paroche Churche yard, and by it an hospital or almshouse for thirty poor folks for the most part and sometimes more, maintained partly by the Fraternity and partly by money given for obbits of men buried there in the church." Of the

legend of the Pilgrims and the Ring I will say more when we make our survey of the parish church. As a sample of the endowment of the priests I may give an extract from the Calendar of Patent Rolls for 27th May 1292, when a licence is granted for alienation in mortmain by Henry Pygyn of 53s. 4d. rent in Lodelowe to a chaplain celebrating divine service in the church of St. Lawrence, Ludelowe. But this fraternity touched the town on its social and religious side rather than its mercantile. The relationship with the burgesses, however, must have been more than nominal, not only through the annual Guardian chosen from the latter, but also from the fact previously referred to of the town authorities enjoying the use of the Guildhall of the Fraternity.

In the thirty-fifth year of Henry III. the burgesses of Ludelawe are complained of as selling merchandise in Montgomery against the latter's charter and buying things not permitted to be bought away. In 1273 are granted licences to export wool, twenty sacks apiece, to Thomas Eylich, merchant of Lodelowe, Thomas de Langeford, Philip de Wygemor, and Laurence Colet, also all merchants of the same place, and on the 8th June 1274, to Nicholas Alriche "to trade in wool or other goods as usual within the realm, and he is not to be molested by reason of the

late prohibition against the exportation of wool without the realm on condition that he do not take them without the realm or to the use of Flemings or others of the power of the Countess of Flanders during the present contention." I cannot multiply such extracts here, and only give them to afford vivid glimpses of the establishment of the town at that early date. We get interesting examples, too, of how the armies were recruited in those days, records like the following being not uncommon: "Pardon (by reason of his service in Scotland) to Richard le Leche of Ludelawe for robbery from the Abbot of Mirivall in the county of Warwick, also for many other robberies, and of his abjuration of the realm for the said robberies."

It is not surprising to find that a Guild of Fletchers (or Arrow-makers) flourished in so warlike a district as Ludlow. The north transept of the parish church is called the Fletchers' Chancel, and was the gift of that company. If visitors will look at the point of the gable of this part of the building, they will see an arrow there standing upright from its point. But tradition gives a better explanation of the mark. By the racecourse, some two miles away, is a hillock called "Robin Hood's Butt," and it is here that the famous archer stood to shoot at Ludlow church-tower. But he fell short of his mark for once, and the

arrow stuck in the gable of the north transept. *Ecce signum.*

In examining the burgess life of Ludlow it is unfortunate that the valuable body of town documents has never been even calendared, not to say printed at large, as so precious a collection demands, if it were only to save them from the chances of time. We are apt to think our historical documents fairly safe in what we rather too securely call these days of enlightenment, but that we may be over confident is proved, to go no further, by an examination of the volume, entitled "Shropshire Parish Documents," issued by the County Council. We here find that even yet a sub-committee of a Parish Council, deputed a year or two ago to put its papers in order, can report that it found a quantity of material for parish history (stretching over nearly a century previous to 1864) valueless, and "these we destroyed." The papers subsequent to this being preserved as, no doubt, of rateable importance. The dangers of such misjudgment would be very greatly reduced if, at least, every county authority would forthwith follow the admirable example of Shropshire, and issue a detailed report like this upon the documents surviving in all the parishes within its jurisdiction.

No place could offer better material for a full study of a mediæval town than Ludlow. The reconstruction of the life of

those various craftsmen, and their relationship to the inmates of the great castle, of the Carmelite Monastery by Corve Gate, of the Friary of St. Austin's outside Galdeford, the Hospital of St. John Baptist by Ludford Bridge, and their intercourse with the pilgrims who rested at Barnaby House, just below the Grammar School in Mill Street, not to mention a score of other matters, would fill a volume of wondrous interest. This may be called the indigenous story in contradistinction to the wider range that its association with the Council of the Marches brings it. But, of course, all was interwoven. We have already had glimpses of the effect of the castle upon the place. The association became yet more intimate from the fact that several members of the Council built themselves houses in the town. In the Elizabethan time we are told of the "fayre house by the gate, of the making of Justice Walter" (whose tomb is in the parish church); of the "fayre house that Maister Secretarie Foxe did bestowe great charges on"; of one Mr. Townesend, also, that "hath a fayre house at Saint Austin's, once a friarie."

In comparatively later times, 4th November 1616, we have a vivid picture of the town at a time of festival ready to our hand. This is preserved for us by Clive in his "History of Ludlow," and consists of a contemporary narrative by David Powel,

Broad Gate Ludlow

of the ceremonies that took place in "the creation of the high and mighty Charles, Prince of Wales and Earle of Chester, in his maiesties Palace of White-hall." The Lord President, Lord Eure, and three of his Councillors, were attending his Majesty in London, but at the local pageant were present the Chief-Justice of Chester, Sir Thomas Chamberlaine, with his colleagues Sir Thomas Cornewall, High Sheriff of Shropshire, and Mr. Thomas Harley, besides the solicitor and attorney attending the Council, and many gentlemen from the neighbourhood. The celebration began by affixing the arms, name, and style of the prince under the pulpit in St. Lawrence's Church, in the Castle Chapel, and in the Council-house ; also on the town gates and High Cross, and the principal posts and pillars of the market-place. About nine o'clock (early for November) a procession came up to the castle to escort the Justice and Council to church—the bailiffs, magistrates, and chief brethren, very richly clad and apparelled, with the officers and the church choir, and six of the free scholars bearing pennons of the prince's arms. Before them went the town waits ; and the procession was headed by two hundred soldiers with halberds, pikes, corslets, muskets, and calivers. On the castle green they met the Justice in his scarlet robes, and the other councillors, counsellors-at-law,

attorneys, clerks, officers of the castle, and other gentlemen. These were all very richly apparelled, and had "another company of waits and good consorts of musicke, as cornets, sagbuts, and other winde instruments playing and sounding all along the way before them." Hereupon the musketeers discharged a volley, "to the great admiration and much rejoicing of all the spectators"; and then the procession starts for the church, where another volley was discharged. Divine service is gone through, and "one M. Thomas Pierson, a grave reverent divine and worthy Preacher, made a very learned sermon of an houre and halfe long." As the company came out into the market-place they passed by a scaffold near the High Cross, from which the scholars in turn delivered verses composed for the occasion. Those in Latin were "principally invented and made by the painful industrie of that iudicious and laborious maister of Artes, Humfrey Herbert, Chiefe Schoole maister of His Maiestie's Free Schoole there, upon one daye's warning." The others in English were contributed by a worthy alderman of the town, Master Richard Fisher. After the scholars had received applause for their "gracious boldnesse in delivering their speeches," the procession passed to the court-house, where the Justice delivered an oration in praise of the prince. At the conclusion of

the speech "the Musick played, Drums were strucke, Flutes whistled, Trumpets sounded, people showted, and another piercing and Thundering Volley of shot was let flie, the eccho and report whereof resounded admirably to the great solace and comfort of all present."

This brought them to one o'clock, and the Justice and Council, with the knights, esquires, and best sort of gentlemen, went to dine in the castle. The bailiffs and burgesses went down to the town to spend the rest of the day "in all joyfull and ioviall manner." After the castle dinner the bailiffs again appeared with the choir, pennon-bearers, and waits, for evening service in the castle chapel. At its conclusion the scholars offered up their pennons to the Justice, who ordered them to be placed in the chapel as mementoes of the day. The bailiffs and their company then took leave of the Council, and next day they celebrated the deliverance of king, queen, prince, and parliament from "the Papists' treasonable and horrible conspiracie and unmatchable intended Practise of the Gunne-powder Treason." A sermon was preached by the chaplain in attendance on the Lord President and Council, "which Sermon being ended, every man returned to their homes, the Musicke, Ringing, and Bone-fires continuing, to the great comfort of all his

Maiestie's said loving and faithfull Subjects all the said day."

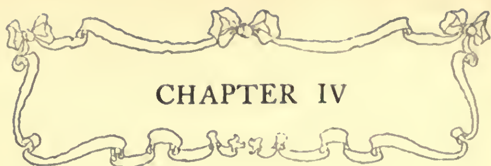
Miss Skeel gives some interesting extracts from the Borough MSS., further illustrating the connection of the Council with the town, but I can only find room for one or two graphic glimpses of malefactors. Orders came from the castle for the bailiffs to proceed to the castle lodge and receive prisoners who were to be set in the pillory or whipped in the market-place. Once the bailiffs were ordered to set in the stocks John Clenche "for stealinge of our pewter out of o^r Castle of Ludlowe." He was to be set in the stocks in the midst of the market-place, with one of his legs through the same, and a pewter dish about his neck hanging before him, and remain thus from eleven in the forenoon till one in the afternoon. Another order directs the bailiffs to whip out of the town as a rogue and vagabond a man who "alleadgng himself to be deafe, and upon pretence of suites in lawe before o^r said Councell, is fallen utterlie to neclect the honest course of lief whereby he hath bin and still is able to mayntayne himself, abusing also the late charitie here bestowed upon him and geving himself to nothing but ydlenes and lewd and evill speeches, to the evill example of others and utter rapine of himself if he be longer suffered in this disordered course."

These, then, are glimpses of the varying life that the ancient streets of Ludlow have witnessed before settling down to the more or less quiet routine of the present day. Of course, many circumstances of situation and history have imparted to it an exceptional measure of picturesqueness and interest, but, if varying slightly in degree, there is not a parish in the land that has not its individual charm, and, as I have said elsewhere on many occasions, there lies in this neglected material a great force to be turned to account in the task of reanimating our country districts. What more enjoyable (and withal edifying) recreation could be proposed for Ludlow on a wide scale than the organisation of an historic pageant such as Sherborne has so lately shown us? In the castle grounds is an ideal stage, and, unless I have failed utterly in the object of these few pages, it is not necessary to speak of the dramatic possibilities of its history. We need not undertake it with a view to attracting the whole world. The essential value will be as great if quite simply done, for the object is the living realisation of local story so that it may add the radiance of imagination to our life of the present day. It is surely no cynicism to say that it has sore need of the stimulus, and few will doubt that the mission lies with just such places as Ludlow. No local story is a private

possession, for the reason that it can never be separated from a wide sphere of action ; but certainly one of its best and strongest influences must lie in the promotion of genuine local attachments. Except as the effect of mere listless habit, such attachment grows weaker daily from the fact of our interest being sought in cosmopolitan sources. It is from this that the pernicious custom has grown up of regarding local things as petty and provincial. The scope of any interest is determined wholly by a point of view. If we can regard our own street and neighbour with a proper relation to the nation and to the universe at large, there is no possibility of our interests in those homely topics proving narrow or provincial, and assuredly we may have a consummate acquaintance with every feature of the globe without of necessity gaining any broad or enlightening opinions therefrom.

That I have exhausted my space in a retrospective survey of the town does not mean that it lacks present interests. It is full of such, whether we regard the actual life or the structural beauty of the place. The streets, as they stand, consist mainly of the quaint and delightful old houses and business places that the ancient burgesses built for themselves. Indeed, where there is apparent alteration, it is frequently but

superficial, being the result of plastering over the face and woodwork of some overhanging gable, and such as the revival of historic or æsthetic enterprise could even yet remove. It might almost be said that most of the houses have still their antique internal appointments in a wonderful state of preservation, and it is to be hoped that the more general diffusion of taste may prevent the danger of further needless destruction.



CHAPTER IV

RELIGIOUS LIFE

IN surveying ancient churches or monastic remains we generally regard them as objects of æsthetic or archæological interest instead of tangible fragments of actual life. This is to lose the real interest of the structures. Nobody would ignore the value of the artistic instinct, but when this is dissociated from what is too commonly called the literary sense, it becomes as injurious as any other too exclusive habit of mind. Religious edifices were just as much an outcome of the daily actual life of our forefathers as the Guildhall, the Butter Cross, or the beautiful domestic building which we now know as the "Feathers Hotel." It is unfortunate in topography that objects of interest have to be taken separately at all. To realise the full interest of a place we want, so to speak, its biography, an advancing account of its growth and structure in which all characteristics are duly blended to the formation of a congruous whole. This is especially needful to-day, when we have lost so much of the art of blending in

actual life. We think of our civic life, our commercial life, our religious life, as things almost dissociated and apart, instead of all essential stones in a single structure, or, to better our metaphor, as indispensable limbs of one body. We know very well that these various limbs in former days frequently had terrible quarrels, even as they do now, but the very contention only emphasised the union, whereas now we are very content to quarrel and finally part.

If I had had the art to do it, therefore, the religious life of old Ludlow would have found as appropriate a place in the chapter of the burgesses as in one to itself. The mention of the Palmers' Guild, indeed, might have helped me to the accomplishment, for this Fraternity here had a peculiarly unifying effect upon the life of the town. I quoted Leland's account of the "originall thereof," but we will now look more fully into the sources of the society. Most of us are familiar with the general character of a palmer, if only through the services of Sir Walter Scott. He was the *palmiger*, or palm-bearer, who had performed his pilgrimage to the Holy Sepulchre, and had returned or was returning home after the fulfilment of his vow. He obtained his name from the custom of carrying branches of the Oriental palm in token of his expedition. His first duty on arriving

at his destination was to repair to the church to return thanks to God and to offer the palm to the priest to be placed upon the altar. There is a pretty legend to account for the first association of the palmers with Ludlow, which is depicted in the glass of the east window of St. John's Chapel in the parish church. This Legend of the Ring tells how King Edward the Confessor, having no coin to relieve an old man who asked him alms, gave him a valuable ring. Some time afterwards the same ring was given to some pilgrims from Ludlow in the Holy Land by an old man, who told them he was John the Baptist, and who charged them to re-deliver it to King Edward as a token that his death would shortly come. The impressive mission was fulfilled, and no doubt the travellers returned home to Ludlow very devout and thoughtful men. Of the establishment of the consequent guild we have no historical account. The earliest existing document is said to go back to the reign of Henry III. or John, and this contains evidence of a guild still earlier than that. That it became influential and wealthy is obvious enough. The Guildhall of the town (entirely rebuilt) was, as already stated, the property of this brotherhood. It added St. John's Chapel to the parish church, and raised it to the collegiate dignity. The actual college of the Fra-

ternity stands on the west side of the churchyard. In addition to all this the Grammar School of the town is of the Guild's institution and endowment. It is significant of the altered current of life to notice that, although this company was not included in the Dissolution of Henry VIII., in the reign of Edward VI. it was surrendered to the Crown on condition of its being handed over to the corporation for the same charitable purposes as those for which it had always been maintained. The manuscripts relating to this transaction are among the town records, from which we learn that "all suche burgages, messuages, lands, tenements, wooddes, and all other hereditaments what soe ever" belonging to "the guylde or fraternitie of palmers of our Ladye in Ludlow," were granted to "the bayliffes, burgessis, and commonaltie," on condition that they "alwayes finde in the same towne, at their own charges, a free grammar schole, with a schoolmaster and an hussher for the erudicion of youth in the Latine tonge, and also xxxiij poore and impotent people, every one of them to have a chamber and iiijs. a week, and alsoe on honeste learned man to preache Goddes word, which shall be named the preacher of the towne of Ludlowe, and on honeste and discrete minister to assist the parson in the ministracion of the devine sacra-

mentes and service there, wich shall be called the assistant to the parson." Truly the good Palmers justified their pious existence, and they will remain amongst the most vivid of the figures with which we people these ancient streets.

The history of the parish church, which they did so much to magnify, has to be read in the structure as it stands. We have no record of the date of the original building. If there was one before the Normans, we do not know it. We have that interesting record which the old traveller, Leland, got from a document he found in the monastery at Cleobury Mortimer, and which a monk there copied for him, to the effect that in 1199 the people of Ludlow found it necessary to enlarge their church, and in doing so disturbed the barrow or tumulus to which reference has already been made. The site itself is a magnificent one, and the edifice well worthy of its position. It is situated in a line with the castle, to the eastward of the latter, and on the northern edge of the hill of rock upon which the whole town stands. At this north-west corner the hill offers a precipitous front, and what now affords us a situation of the utmost picturesqueness, naturally recommended itself to an earlier time, as a post of some strategic importance. If we take any of the narrow pathways between the houses

that conduct us from the streets into the cloistral calm of the churchyard and pass round to the terrace on the north side, the full effect of this is very impressive. Leaning on the parapet of the wall, which is the old town wall, and which drops here many feet, we get an unbroken prospect across the dales of Teme, Onny, and Corve, from the Welsh hills in the west, round Long Mynd, Wenlock Edge, and Caer Caradoc, to the bold Clee headland in the extreme east. The vale before us seems from here to offer an extensive and comparatively flat landscape, but if you traverse it you find how deceptive this appearance has been. The delightful old villages that are scattered amongst the woods and fields of its surface are hidden from one another by undulations and irregularities of all sorts, offering varieties of soil and situation which afford not only the charm of outline, but foster a multitude of birds and flowers not possible to uniformity. Turning our backs on all this we see the stately structure of the church in all its majesty. Differences of age in various parts of it will strike even the casual eye, but its gradual growth through several centuries is only to be traced by the architectural enthusiast. The outlines of this I will borrow freely from Mr. Baker. The main body he attributes to that Early English time, the actual date

of which Leland's record preserves for us. Of the Norman structure only the font and questionable bits of wall remain. The early part of the fourteenth century, when the Palmers' Guild obtained formal recognition, is the probable date of the decorated alterations and additions, namely, the north aisle, porch, portions of the chapels, the south transept, reredos, and parts of the stalls. The next alteration, late in the fourteenth century, would probably be the building of the north transept by the Fletchers, or arrow-makers, whose name is still connected with it, and whose badge, as already said, it bears on the gable. And when the town flourished so much through the favour of Edward IV., the tower was rebuilt, as we now see it (thoroughly restored, 1889-91), together with the nave and greater part of the building, including all the roofs. About this time, probably, the screen, stalls, vestry, and many windows were also added.

Such is the brief chronicle of dates. No doubt many, who none the less feel the impressiveness of the situation, will not trouble themselves much about them. They don't help greatly to the real understanding of the spot, and it is quite possible to engross oneself in such matters of fact without realising other aspects quite as, if not more, important. In many ways

a parish church is more solemn than a cathedral, and in walking round the quiet enclosure here, hemmed in by houses but for that wonderful outlook to the north, the simple dignity of the life suggested has a very profound effect. It is a pity that in the external appearance one has so much to regret. The west side, occupied by the Palmers' College and the ancient almshouse, a true "harbour of refuge," ought to, and might, have been as striking yet to the eye as they are to the imagination. But, unfortunately, both have in evil times been needlessly destroyed architecturally. When so many ancient relics linger unharmed in the streets, it is peculiarly sad that these should have suffered a meaningless transformation. They went back to a very distant day, and would have been a precious accompaniment to the noble church and to the beautiful old house that has fortunately survived on the east side of the square. Of a much more recent date, this latter, called the Reader's house, is one of the best features of domestic architecture in the town. The black woodwork of its face, elaborately carved from top to bottom, will scarcely escape any eye in search of the picturesque. Artists object to our moralising on such objects, but it is hard not to do so. When we see a very different class of architecture illus-

trating, and associated in character with, a very definite phase of life, it is hardly possible to escape the conclusion that there must have been some natural affinity, also, between the stability, the beauty, and the dignity of these ancient buildings and the human existence of their times. It was not in the effort only to realise a religious ideal that beauty and dignity were evolved. Every cottage and homestead, every market-cross and burgher's counting-house, was reared in so sublime a form that all our later aspirations find their best expression only in our attempts to copy them.

Whether tenable or not, we can be none the worse for taking such thoughts with us into the church from the peaceful quadrangle outside. The solemn interior fulfils all the outward promise. From its having been collegiate this church has much of the ornate detail of a cathedral, and will amply repay close examination. Aisles, transepts, chapels, and choir, all are full of historical and architectural interest which has been carefully and sympathetically shown by Mr. Oliver Baker. Perhaps one is rather disappointed in the tombs, there being none of very early date. The only pre-Reformation one consists of a group of five Gothic arches in a corner of the north aisle. Tradition appropriates this to Prince Arthur, the son of Henry VII., and whose association with Ludlow we noticed in our

survey of the castle. But in any case only a portion of his remains lay here, for we know that his body was embalmed and carried to Worcester, in the cathedral of which city his principal tomb now stands. All the other monuments of note are to various members of the Council and their

A Byway

ladies, and we look in vain for any memorial of the opulent merchants whose bones lie mouldering here. Mr. Baker explains the absence of early tombs by the probability of burials in the churches of the monastic bodies which were stationed by the town, and to which I shall presently refer. Of these, unfortunately, all visible remains have vanished.

In addition to these monuments, we get from the churchwardens' accounts further glimpses of the association of the Council with the parish church. These, it is true, refer chiefly to the upholstery part of worship, but this has its perennial importance, and possesses even now a distinct human interest. It was fitting that the Lord President, his lady, and retinue should be properly accommodated when they attended divine worship here, we accordingly find that in 1607 it was necessary to expend a sum of 17s. 5d. on "a walnut boorde to make the dext in my laddy Ewer's pew," for a plank to enlarge the pew door, for five yards of "fflanders bayes and Inckell to put abought my Ladyes seate," for "matting in the gentlewomen's pew," for a "mat and a tumpe for my ladyes pewe," and for a lock and key. Spelling in the old days was never a strong point, but it may be mentioned that in 1610, the wardens frankly state the case in these accounts thus, "It: for writing and castinge of these bokes wee beynge illyterate." In the same year 10s. was spent on the Lord President's pew for "Bayes, Incle, Tacks and Workemanshipp," as well as 4d. for a mat to lie under his seat in the high chancel. In 1619 was paid 16d. for "matts and tumps for my lord and the counsell pewes," and 8d. for "doees heare for stuffing the countise

pew." Such items might be multiplied, as well as disbursements to the bell-ringers for various causes, but these are enough as samples. Just one more of interest, however, at the time of the Restoration, when Griffith Edwards received 20s. for "newe Lyminge (limning) the King's Armes wch were washt out in the late warres."

Very much of various kinds was washed out in those same late wars as well as the King's Arms—the President and whole Council of the Marches for one thing, after Sir William Brereton, encamped up there on Whitcliff, had taken possession of castle and town for the Parliament. We know that the ceremonies of religion were radically interfered with, and no doubt Ludlow shared the experiences of other places. Pepys, in his Diary, gives us plain glimpses of this in his graphic way. For instance, on the 7th October 1660, he finds it worth noting: "After dinner to the Abbey, where I heard them read the church-service, but very ridiculously. A poor cold sermon of Dr. Lamb's, one of the prebends, in his habitt." And again on the 4th of the next month: "In the morn to our own church, where Mr. Mills did begin to nibble at the Common Prayer by saying 'Glory be to the Father, &c.,' after he had read the two psalms: but the people had been so little used to it that they could not tell what to answer.

. . . After dinner to Westminster, where I went to the Abbey, where the first time that ever I heard the organs in a cathedral." Though Pepys was then twenty-eight years of age. Presumably, Ludlow organs had also long been silent, although the church had from of old been furnished with so profane an addition to worship, for there is an interesting entry in the Leominster churchwardens' accounts for the year 1613, to this effect: "Item, paid to the organ player of Ludlow for his paines to come to see the organes, xvjd."

But, though we naturally associate the town life mainly with their stately parish church, there were several other houses of devotion which must have exercised their influence also on the place. The castle, as we have seen, had its own unrivalled Norman chapel. Just beside its walls, by Dinham Gate, was also another little chapel of Early English date, of which nothing, however, is known, but which still stands, though reduced to lay uses. There was the Hospital of St. John the Baptist by Ludford Bridge, the great flood of 1886 having swept away the last relic of their property which had till then lingered there in the shape of a ruined fulling mill. Leland says: "On the North syde of the brydge, in *ripa sinistra* Teme, a Church of St. John standing without Broad Gate, sometime a College

with a Dean and fellows, of one Jordan's foundation." And Tanner, in his *Notitia*, adds that this seems to be "the Hospital for a Prior, Warden or Master, which one Peter Undergod, in the latter end of the reign of John, built to the honour of the Trinity, St. Mary, and St. John the Baptist, valued at the Dissolution at £13, 3s. 3d. The Warden and brethren ought, as it is sayd, to discharge ye cure and say divine service in ye king's chapell of Saynt Peter within ye Castell of Ludlow." Nothing now actually remains but the name, St. John's Close, to remind us of this pious settlement. Nobody is likely to disregard the beauty of the situation where the river Teme passes smoothly under the ancient bridge between the two weirs, whose constant murmur forms so inseparable a part of the landscape. On one side the slope up to Broad Gate, the main south entrance to the town, and on the other the ancient gables of Ludford and the bank of trees that sweeps round by Whitcliff to complete the semicircle opposite the castle, and which holds the town hill almost like a shell its kernel. There is a path by the riverside, right round this curve from Ludford bridge, coming out at the bridge by Dinham just at the foot of the castle rock. If we take this way, and, after crossing the latter bridge, instead of climbing up to Dinham Gate, keep to the

low road by the flour mill, we pass right under the towering castle and rock, now hidden in trees, and can see for ourselves the natural defences on this side of the Lude-law. With castle and church crowning the precipice on our right, we join a lane called Linney, which leaves the town wall and strikes into the level meadows to the north. A few minutes will bring us to the site of the Carmelite monastery, of which there are virtually no remains. Its place is occupied by the Church of St. Leonard and its burial-ground, standing at the bottom of Corve Street, the broad highway into Corvedale from this northern face of the town. But even so late as Leland this monastery was "a fair and costly thing, without Corv-gate by the north." Ascending to this same Corve Gate, of which, however, no vestige remains, we are again in the town at the point where Old Street and Galdeford meet. If we turn down the latter, a gradual descent brings us to the old cattle market, now a disordered and untidy waste. Here stood the Priory of Austin Friars, of which the foundations were discovered when the cattle-market was made. That the house was established at any rate by 22nd February 1284 is shown by the following, which I find in the Calendar of Patent Rolls under that date: "Licence for the Prior and Augustinian Friars of Ludelawe

to enclose with a wall or hedge a lane running from a messuage late of John le Hore in a street called Olde Street to a street called Galdeford adjoining the area of the said prior and brethren in the suburb of Ludelawe." But prior and friars, with every vestige of their retreat, have gone, and, if truth be told, the scene of their devotions remains at the present day the most unattractive spot in the neighbourhood of Ludlow.

This conflict of past and present comes constantly to the mind in dealing with our beautiful places. It is a wide and vital question, going far beyond fastidious æstheticism from which it is generally presumed to rise. The unbridled riot of an industrial century has brought upon us such confusion, and so many grave problems of national economics and character, that it is advisable to attack the matter upon every opportunity that offers. One of the objects of this series of little books is to bring before the mind the beautiful corners of our land. It is not possible to look at these without seeing that, if interesting at all, they are also edifying, and that as an open and universal source of national education it is a public duty to preserve such beauty as is left to us, and upon every possible opportunity restore some of that which has been lost. One of the greatest charms, and a great part of

the value of Ludlow and its neighbourhood lies just in this, that it has hitherto received comparatively so little injury. It is surely the first obvious duty of its inhabitants now to see that it does not receive more. We talk daily of the need of reanimating our country places, socially and economically, but we may be quite sure that no lasting restoration can take place without the aid of attractiveness and beauty. If there is any lesson to be had from Ludlow it is this, whether we regard its civil, religious, or military existence. It may be said that beauty may be exaggerated through the hallowing of age. But age cannot hallow anything originally ignoble. Will the dilapidated relics of our industrial age be picturesque in ruin?

Stokesay
Castle from the N·E·

CHAPTER V

STOKESAY AND THE NEIGHBOURHOOD

IF we leave Ludlow by any of the five ancient gates, only one of which, as I have said, has any kind of representative to-day, the prospect before us is one of endless charm. Each road leads out into an unsullied country, consisting of every variety of lane and meadow, common and woodland, river and hill. Whatever our mood, whether for broom and gorse in the open, fern and foxglove in the deepest shade, reed and meadow-sweet and water-lily in river or pool, or even bilberry and heath on the wind-swept crag of the sky-line, all can be humoured, and humoured, moreover, in a short ramble of a single day. This wealth of diversity may seem an exaggeration, but no, the variety cannot be exaggerated. In this land the characters of many districts intermingle, and for lovers of the earth and sky the feast is literally endless. It is, of course, only to the permanent resident that any land will reveal itself, but even to the casual visitant this border district offers very much at every season of the year.

This variety makes it hopeless to attempt in small space any adequate description of its spirit. But we must escape out into the meadows for a breath of the real countryside before leaving the scene. Suppose we pass round the front of the castle, that is, the town approach, which was really the back, where formerly the deep moat ran. It is all long since filled up level with the road, and is now a public walk with a seat or two beneath the towering elms, which far out-top the huge castle wall. I always regret that they do so, regret indeed that any trees are there at all. Though a devoted lover of trees, I don't love them in the wrong place, and here they distinctly interfere with the castle. How finely those great grey walls would rise from a belt of plain green sward without bush or twig upon it, whilst still the pellitory, the blue bird's-eye speedwell, and the lovely little shining crane's-bill could nestle at its foot. Going round the walls to Dinham Gate, then, we drop quietly to the bridge, in view of the children clambering up amongst the gorse of the steep and rugged green face of Whitcliff opposite. The swifts are always wheeling and screaming over this bridge, just as the weir is always splashing by the flour-mill, and the boys are always paddling with a bit of string and a worm. At least so it seems. I suppose the swifts go after the

heat of July like other swifts; the weir roars in the winter flood; and even the boys find it too deep and cold to paddle. But still summer will return and they all will be there again as if they had never left.

Across the bridge we keep the road to the right between undulating fields, and after a couple of miles of birds and flowers, and the black and white cottages of Prior's Halton, we enter the gates of Oakley Park. Here we leave the encumbrance of hedges, and have nothing along the roadside but an unlimited margin of incomparable green turf dotted with majestic trees, very much in their proper places, amidst which the woodpecker dips from trunk to trunk and flings his laugh across the landscape. This lasts all the way to the village of Bromfield, a lovely spot buried in trees by the riverside, the water lingering here as if loth to go forward. In the dip by the bridge is an old mill (two, indeed, one on each side), and on a hillock just above it stands the Priory Church, presiding over its scattered cottages which are not to be seen from here. The place suffices to itself. But for the mill weir just below you can't tell which way the stream runs. All the scene is repose—the realm of the water-hens—with the outside world shut off. The river is the Teme, but through the glade, a little way down the water, the Onny comes in from

its journey through the country to the north-west. This is the direction we will take. After leaving the bridge we soon pass the Priory Gate-house, consisting of a massive antique stone archway, pointed at the top, and a solid buttress on either side, with a black and white timber storey built over it, altogether a beautiful object. But everything is beautiful here. The trees are wonderful on every hand, and between them, now that we have joined the Ludlow and Shrewsbury highway, we get glimpses, across the green pastures, of the landscape that looked flat from Ludlow churchyard and castle. At the end of the village where the road forks we take to the right, and soon see what we may expect in the vale of the Onny. But not until we pass the village of Onibury does a bit of its chief beauty strike us. From here for two or three miles the stream passes through a distinct valley, with a wooded hill on either side, and sloping meadows on its banks. The road is parallel to the stream, just above it, with the width of a field between. There the little river meanders, sometimes under trees, sometimes nibbling the open pasture and fringed with marsh marigolds. But all the spring flowers here will astonish even those accustomed to take note of such. So many of the roads and lanes round Ludlow are bordered by steep banks of wood, which are parted by no hedge or

fence, so that the woodland moss and ferns and flowers come to the very highway and mingle with the others which we usually associate with the roadside. Primroses in moss, with the great bright-coloured wood violet, the blossoms of wild strawberry (often nine inches high), ferns, bilberry, the wonderful golden-green wood-spurge, stitchwort, and bird's-eye, with a budding foxglove, the big wood-rush, and other things, all on a bank together, form a collection of delicate beauty not often found by the roadside. And as for the woods, the fields, and the river banks, they offer simply a paradise of wild flowers, not to speak of the numberless other natural beauties with which they abound.

If you care for these things you will get through the Ludlow lanes and fields but slowly. But when you do get through, you will find that they all lead you on to other and even wider interests and beauties beyond. If we keep on our way by the Onny for about a couple of miles we come to where the road crosses the stream (over an ugly iron bridge, by-the-bye, of open bars like the two ends of a bedstead), and just raised up on our left amidst the orchard trees is Stokesay. On its hillock, the place stands at the mouth of the valley we have traversed, and in front the land opens wide for a few miles. So here we will end; but, as we have come to a

place of exceptional interest, let us examine it in detail before retracing our steps.

Amidst those orchard trees, and raised above the willows and alders that line the river Onny, stand the church and manor-house of Stokesay. It cannot be called a village, for there is nothing but a church and farmhouse; but between them, and within the precincts of both, stands what is commonly but erroneously known as Stokesay Castle. When you have approached and walked round the moated place, you can see why the archæologists require you to call it a fortified mansion instead of a castle. Though obviously prepared for a siege, it has none of the stern solidity of a castle. But by whatever name we call it, none can fail to be impressed by the extraordinary beauty and interest of the structure. Though not now inhabited, it is in perfect preservation even to the roof; and it has suffered so little injury, and only such alterations as can be readily associated with their centuries, that it remains perhaps the best example of this especial kind of building that England can afford.

The necessary historical details I may take from the late Mr. Thomas Wright, the Ludlow historian, after a word of explanation as to the origin of the name. This was in the first place merely Stoke,

and meant simply *The Place.* Stoke or Stow in the names of places generally occurs in connection with other explanatory syllables, as Basingstoke, Padstow, and so on. Alone it literally signified a stake or the trunk of a tree, and was applied to a situation, often on a hill, protected by a stockade, or surrounded by stocks or piles. If the name of such a situation became established simply as Stoke or Stow, we may presume that it was a place of peculiar importance in its vicinity. Stokesay, at its valley mouth, certainly sustains such a supposition. Mr. Wright tells us that at the time of the Norman Conquest the manor of Stoke was held by Ældred, a freeman, under Edric Sylvaticus, a powerful Saxon thane, but that, on the said Edric joining in a revolt of the Welsh, he was deprived of his estate, which, with much other property, was conferred on Roger de Montgomery with the earldom of Shrewsbury. We had mention of this Roger in the early history of Ludlow. Mr. Wright translates the reference to Stoke in Domesday Book as follows: "The same Roger holdeth Stokes. Here are seven hides geldable. The arable land is sufficient for fourteen ox teams. In demesne are five teams, and sixteen among the male and female serfs; and there are twenty villeins with eight teams and nine female cottars. Here

is a mill yielding nine quarters of wheat yearly, and here is a miller and a keeper of bees." But, as with the Ludlow property, this manor of Stoke also came into the hands of the Lacys, and was by them bestowed on a branch of the family of Say, Lord of Clun and Richard's Castle. This name was then affixed to the simple Stoke; and, in 1156, when Theodoric de Say gave the advowson of the place to the abbey of Haughmond, it is for the first time called Stokesay. And so it has been ever since, although the family of Say soon ceased to be associated with the place.

It would be hard to find an ancient building more impressive, standing there unharmed amidst the hills since the thirteenth century. One can only pause in silence as the structure appears before you for the first time on passing through the gate from the churchyard. Its solitude and remoteness from all later incongruous life perfects the hallowing touch of time. Only the scent of hay and kine, the sights and sounds of husbandry, add their sentiment to the scene. Yes, there is the railroad near, but in our present life we cannot revile the railway when it does not really injure a site. It is too great a boon to us, and is, moreover, by now even old-fashioned.

Here, perhaps, as the train sweeps by, it affords a distinctly attractive com-

ment upon the ancient life we have come to contemplate. That we lament certain losses by no means signifies that we deprecate all change. As Bishop Blougram aptly reminds us :

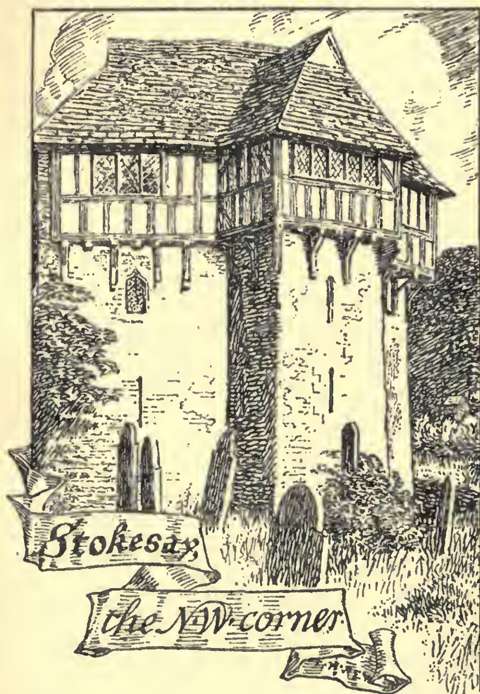
> "The common problem, yours, mine, every one's,
> Is—not to fancy what were fair in life
> Provided it could be,—but, finding first
> What may be, then find how to make it fair
> Up to our means : a very different thing !"

Unless our æsthetic impulses remain strictly a rational "criticism of life," they become mere pedantry and vapours. We may be as fastidious as we like, so long as we are so in a robust and progressive spirit. But why should progress be hideous, vulgar, noisy, and inane ?

Assuredly none of these qualities can ever have been applicable to the life represented here by Stokesay church and castle, nor happily have they got any permanent place there to-day. There would be noise and bustle enough when the drawbridge was hauled up and the siege began ; but, then, the uproar would certainly not be "signifying nothing." As we now peaceably approach, from the churchyard, the situation of this same drawbridge, we find its place taken by a solid pathway filled up in the moat. Here we stand before the gatehouse which is one of the later additions, a beautiful timber-gabled structure of Elizabethan times. By an arch-

way through it we gain access to the grassy courtyard of the place, and the full beauty of the ancient manor-house is before us. The mind wanders to other lands for any reminiscence of the impression that the sight affords. The grey steep roof is beautifully varied by the window gables of the great hall that occupies the central part of the building, and this is flanked at one end by the many-sided embattled tower rising a little higher than the main roof, and at the other by a timber storey raised on the grey stone loopholed walls, and hanging over the northern moat upon great oak brackets. This latter beautiful addition is seen to be of the same age as the Elizabethan gatehouse. It is the central hall, and onwards to the south tower that is the ancient portion; and it is by that wonderful old pointed doorway in the midst that Richard, Bishop of Hereford, with his great retinue of thirty-six horsemen, entered, in 1289, to the boisterous hospitality of Stokesay. For ten days they were entertained there, and then go on their way. No doubt they made mirth enough under those arched rafters that their smoke blackened. It is all there now, just as they revelled in it, and you need know nothing of architecture to see and enjoy the beauty of it. These rafters rise overhead like a network of branches supporting the high steep roof, and the

three tall windows on each side of the room are exquisite in their dignified simplicity. Whether architecturally inclined



or no, it is not likely that any visitor will fail to explore every cranny of the delightful old building, and as elsewhere, Mr. Oliver Baker in his book is a sympathetic

and careful conductor. As he justly says, a goodly volume would be required in which to deal adequately with the subject. The charm is greatly enhanced by the fact of the building being unoccupied and yet standing in admirable repair, whilst at the same time it is free from the dreary suggestion of the museum or the tricked-out show-place. Nothing but its own inherent dignity and beauty assail us, and out of every window is obtained a glimpse of purest sky and landscape, such as England alone can afford. From the battlements of the loopholed tower this landscape is about us in the full range of its surpassing variety and loveliness. Whilst we are upon it, I must not omit to mention the peculiar form of this tower. It is not the plain four-square of the peel or castle keep. From what I may call the front—that is, the south-west face—it has the appearance of twin towers joined, and each in shape an octagon. To compare the difference of effect arising from this, we may turn the eye to the squat little solid tower of the church, which terminates the buildings at the other or northern end.

Indeed, in thinking of Stokesay Castle, the quaint old church forms an inseparable part. Though rebuilt, it comes from Norman times, and the plain circular-headed doorway remains unharmed. After a survey of the ancient manor-house it is

good to come into the secluded quiet of this little church, and recover some of the many emotions and associations with which one's mind has been filled. That homely and deliciously quaint interior may well mingle for ever with the impressions that we wish to take away. One is thankful even for the old wooden gallery, so unusual nowadays is it, and so well it seems to go with the high dark oak pews, the fine old four-post bedstead pew with its arched openings by the chancel, and all the suggestions of flute, violin, and clarionet that the vision of an old-world choir calls up. The walls, too, are singularly quaint. On the old wash all round, in ancient character, are painted the Commandments, Creed, and hortatory texts, whilst gigantic figures, ghostly in their indistinctness, gradually loom upon you from the unoccupied spaces between. The Titanic bearded Moses there presiding over the Decalogue has for me personally quite a spectral significance, for his outlines dawned upon me so vaguely, that, for an instant, I had the fullest conviction of a supernatural apparition, and in that momentary impression my thrill was one of joy that at last I had seen a ghost. But, alas, an instant more and I knew the mistake. Still, the delusion remains part of the first impression of Stokesay, and that is one altogether of rare and imperishable enjoyment.

There with its orchards, green fields, and willow-lined river, the place lies in repose at the valley mouth. But really at the mouth of several valleys, for on no side are the hills more than a mile or two away, and they radiate from that hollow centre like the spokes of a wheel. But the hills immediately at hand are Stoke and Norton hills, on the west and east side respectively.

LAST GLIMPSE

They both rise steeply, with the greenest of fields below, and the upper halves wood-crowned. Buried in the trees on the summit of Norton hill are deep old entrenchments, and even if the wanderer be not historically disposed, he will be hard to please if the track through the fields and woods up to it do not afford ample compensation for the climb before going to a train, or retracing his steps to Ludlow. It

will supply not one but many fresh aspects of this borderland, every feature of which is beautiful. If he is wise, too, it will strengthen the appeal to feelings which spring from something more than "the æsthetic sense." This, let us remember, is the English landscape. Nestling amidst those hills and woods are the rural parishes which, not only politicians but our own eyes tell us, are being depopulated and disintegrated by that illusive summons to the towns. What are we going to make of them when they are utterly depopulated? Or if we mean to arrest such a fate, in what way do we mean to arrest it? By organising a highly artificial community on strictly sound and economic lines? Never. By planting agricultural labour-colonies of the industrially "unemployed"? God forbid. We must find another and a better way.

THE END

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