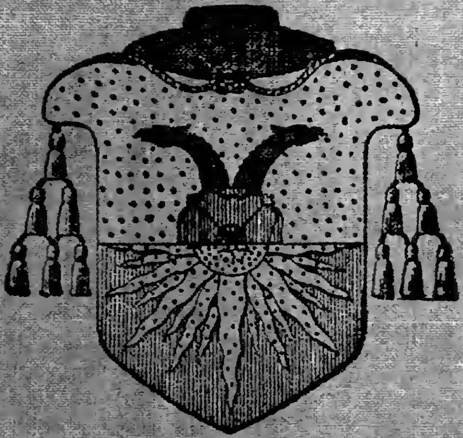

Some Ancient English Homes

BY

ELIZABETH HODGES

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Learning without thought is labour lost; thought without learning is perilous.
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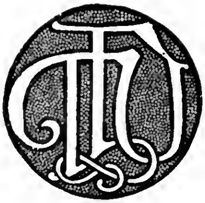
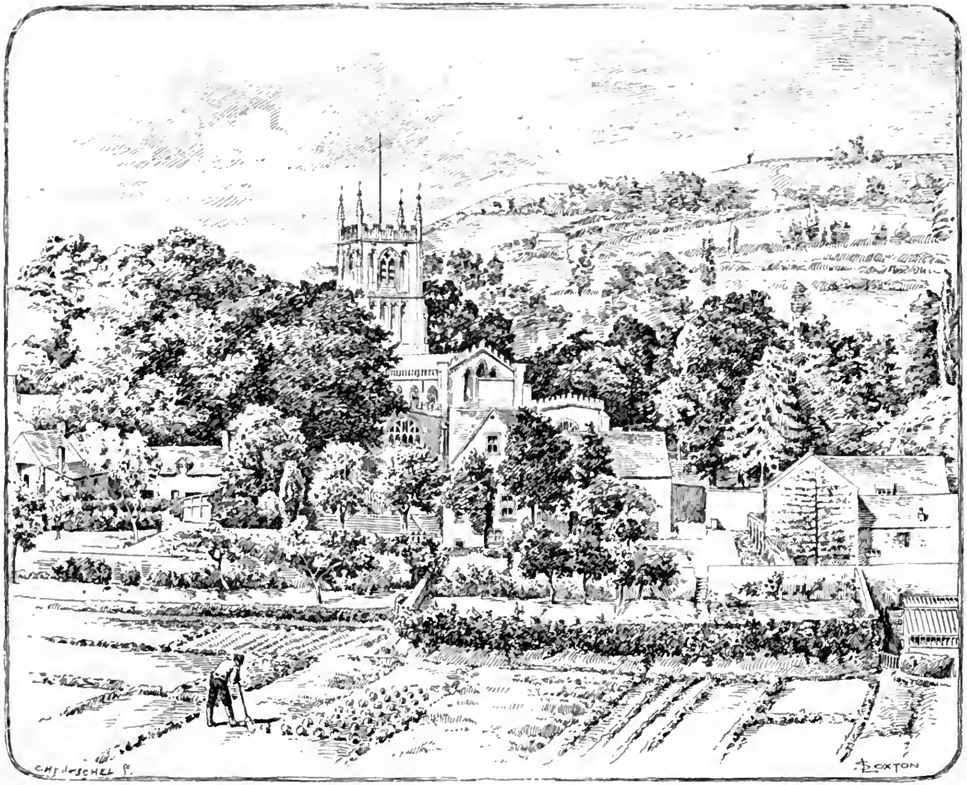
SOME ANCIENT ENGLISH HOMES




C.H.J. Herschel Sc.
A. Loxton

WOTTON-UNDER-EDGE, SHOWING LISLE HOUSE. [*Frontispiece.*

#7875

JMCurrie.
June, 1898.

SOME ANCIENT
ENGLISH HOMES

AND THEIR ASSOCIATIONS
PERSONAL, ARCHÆOLOGICAL & HISTORIC

By ELIZABETH HODGES

Illustrated by S. J. LOXTON

LONDON
T. FISHER UNWIN
PATERNOSTER SQUARE
1895

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" If aught mistaken bee, and seem to thee unsound,
With pen I pray amend, and not with tongue confound."

From " Lives of the Berkeleys."

PREFACE.

In these sketches of Some Ancient Gloucestershire and Warwickshire "Homes" I have purposely omitted such as are already familiar, and introduced the reader to a few of the many old houses which, although lying within sound of the railway whistle, and possessing no small amount of historic and personal interest, are still practically but little known.

While endeavouring rather to produce a readable and entertaining record than a text-book for the historian, the antiquary, or the archæologist, I have spared no pains to ensure accuracy, and to ascertain facts; and although authorities are not always cited, no statement has been made nor description given without the most careful and trustworthy verification.

The plan adopted has been to sketch briefly the history of each house through its various owners, from Saxon times onward; giving, by means of anecdotes, extracts from contemporary letters and records, glimpses of the family and social life of those early days.

The first five "Homes" were, during some of the most eventful years of their history, possessed by the noble families of Berkeley and Fitzhardinge; the interesting personal details concerning whom have been culled for the greater part from that unique and valuable work, Smyth's "Lives of the Berkeleys," which, under the editorship of Sir John Maclean, F.S.A., has lately been published by the Bristol and Gloucestershire Archæological Society. My thanks are due to them for kindly permitting these copious extracts, and also for the reproduction, from their "Transactions" of Mrs. Bagnall-Oakeley's beautiful sketches of the effigies in Berkeley Church. I have also gratefully to acknowledge the kind and valuable help of various members of that Society; of the Clifton Antiquarian Club; and many others. Particularly of the Right Hon. the Earl and Countess of Denbigh; Lady Cave, Cleeve Hill; Admiral Sir Frederick Richards, K.C.B.; Sir John Maclean, F.S.A.; J. Waldyve C. Willington, Esq., J.P., F.R.H.S.; Lieut.-Col. Bramble, F.S.A.; Alfred Hudd, Esq., F.S.A.; Francis F. Tuckett, Esq., F.R.G.S.; the Revs. Ch. Taylor, M.A., Edward Hasluck, M.A., Alfred Pontifex, M.A., A. S. Onslowe, M.A., T. P. Wadley, M.A.; T. D. Nicholson, Esq., M.D.; Francis C. Penrose, M.A.; Vincent Perkins, Esq.; John Latimer, Esq.; Mr. Norris Matthews; the late Mr. John Taylor; Miss Evans, Wyken House, Coventry; and Miss Garlick, Beverston Castle, to all of whom I am very considerably indebted.

ELIZABETH HODGES.

THE TRIANGLE, CLIFTON,
Bristol.

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SOME ANCIENT ENGLISH HOMES.

CHAPTER I.

WOTTON-UNDER-EDGE AND BRADLEY COURT.

FRINGING the lower slopes of the Cotswolds, or nestling in the sheltered valleys that break their somewhat bare and rugged outline, may be seen the gabled roofs and entwisted chimneys of many an ancient mansion, which, neglected or forgotten by the traveller as he rushes through the valley below to noisy seaport or busy city, will prove perfect mines of interest to those who care to search. But it must be a patient and loving search; for houses, like people, reveal their secrets only to those who care for them. And it is the "secrets" of these old houses, their intimate associations with the varied personalities of their sometime occupants, that give them real and lasting interest. The antiquary may describe, with archæological accuracy, how this arch is of "Anglo-Saxon" date; this moulding of "Norman" workmanship, the clustered pillars "Early English." He may go into archæological raptures over the groining of the roof, the elegant tracery of the windows; but unless he can tell us something of the men whose martial footsteps or jovial song made the roof ring; or of the women, watching from those traceried windows for the coming of lord or lover—who, perchance, came no more, or came borne on his shield from foray or battle—little emotion is excited within us, little impression registered on the tablet of our brain.

In the following pages I have endeavoured to clothe with something of human warmth and interest the stony skeletons of a few of these ancient mansions.

Among the earliest of them, and perhaps, because of its all but utter demolition, the most forgotten, is Wotton-under-Edge, which stood on the site of the present Lisle House.

Wotton-under-Edge was, in Leland's time, "a praty market town well occupied with clothiers, havyinge one faire long strete and well buyldyd in it; and it stondithe clyvinge toward the Rotes of an Hill." This description of its situation (really one of the prettiest in England) still applies; but the "market" has dwindled to vanishing-point, and the "clothiers" are almost non-existent, owing partly to the obstinate refusal of the inhabitants to have the railway brought within range.

The manor of Wotton, consisting of "fifteen hides and 1 yard of land," was part of the great lordship of Berkeley at the time of the general Survey; Roger de Berkeley being the then owner. Robert Fitzhardinge also possessed land at Combe and Huntingford, near to Wotton.

This Robert, founder of the Fitzhardinge family, was son of Harding, Præpositor, or Perfect, of Bristol, and grandson of Alnod, or Ednothus, a Saxon Thane Master of the Horse to Edward, Harold, and William. He was high in favour with Maud and Prince Henry, who when a boy studying in Bristol probably often visited at his house, and whom in the subsequent struggle for the crown he aided with men and money. Roger de Berkeley (grandson of the first Roger), on the contrary, refusing to take either side, or, according to Ricart, to pay his fee-farm rent, incurred the royal displeasure, and Henry, 1150–1, deprived him of the lordship of Berkeley and bestowed it upon Robert Fitzhardinge.

A deadly feud resulted, ultimately healed, however, by a double marriage (suggested, it is said, by the politic Henry)—Maurice, son of Fitzhardinge, wedding Alice, daughter of Roger; and Maurice's sister, Helena, mating with the heir of the Berkeleys.

Maurice, who took the title of Lord Berkeley, was married in great state in Bristol, at the grand new stone mansion which his father had then recently built on the banks of the Frome; Henry and Stephen, who had been spending their Christmas amicably together at Oxford, being present, together with a large gathering of lords and ladies.

Maurice's son Robert dying without issue, was succeeded by his brother Thomas 1st, who, about the year 1210, "built a faire house at Wotton, neere the church." Of this, the first house there, no trace, descriptive or otherwise, exists, except, perhaps, the foundations, which are said to be those of the original; but as all noblemen's mansions of that period were pretty much alike, we may gather from the few remains of others which still survive, that it consisted of the Great Hall, rising from floor to roof, which formed the living and reception room, also the sleeping place of the men; the Solar, in which the lord and lady slept, built at the end of the hall, either over the cellars or over the kitchen and buttery; and the Ladies' Bower, a room, or suite of rooms, for the ladies and their attendants. Surrounding this primitive mansion were the pleasaunce and kitchen gardens, stables, &c., with the indispensable dovecote and fishponds.

In his "faire house" at Wotton Lord Thomas often resided, and upon his death it became the jointure and favourite abode of his widow, Jone, daughter of Roger de Somery, who was therefore called "Domina de Wotton" (My Lady of Wotton). So great was her love for the place that she procured for herself and her heirs, from Henry III., 1215, a charter of free warren and a market and fair to be held therein; constituting it a borough or burgh. The manor at that time consisted of Nibley, Sinwell, Wotton, Combe, Wortley, and Bradley, Lady Jone naming the whole from her favourite hamlet of Wotton. The next year she agreed with the inhabitants that their "burgages" should consist of a third part of an acre (as at Tetbury), and that every burgess have "free pasturage for one horse and cow in three fields of the manor after Michaelmas day, at the rent of 12d. yearly." This deed, confirmed by her son, Lord Maurice, was the beginning of the "new town" of Wotton, the "old town," built mostly of wood, which lay behind, having been destroyed by fire in the reign of King John. A spot called "The Brands" still keeps the event in memory, and traces of the "town ditch" and foundations of buildings have been discovered by Mr. Vincent Perkins in the close adjoining his old Jacobean house in the High Street. "The Butts" is another site redolent of those early times, for here was the archery ground, possessed by every township, where youths and men practised with the weapons used to such purpose in many a deadly fight.

The Lady Jone looked well to the ways of her house, visiting her manors and overseeing all the accounts. She lived to a great age, and, as an antidote to its incidental infirmities, employed herself several hours a day in "sawing billets and sticks, for which purpose she yearly bought certain fine hand-saws, which commonly cost ijd. apeece." Were these the progenitors of the modern "fret-saws," and were the "billets and sticks" for the adornment of the old lady's "bower"?

Maurice 2nd, Lord Berkeley, married Isabel, niece of Henry III., and gave to her the manor of Wotton; through which connection it was subsequently claimed as Crown property by Mary and Elizabeth, the contention lasting, in one shape or another, until the 7th of James. Thomas 2nd, Lord Berkeley, succeeded his father, and with his two sons, Maurice and Thomas, and many other young scions of the Berkeley family, fought valiantly for their king, Edward I., in his wars with Scotland. When not engaged in actual warfare, these restless spirits joined the jousts and tournaments at Worcester, Kenilworth, and other places, which, although forbidden by Church and State, were held as often as once a month in this and the following reigns. They also devoted themselves with great ardour to the chase, often lying out whole nights in Michaelwood thickets to hunt the deer, goat, wild cat, fox, and badger. The fine in these times for "unlawfully killing of the deer" was £100!

A right notable man was this Thomas, Lord Berkeley, not more for the state in which he lived and his valour in war, than for his boldness in council. He was one of the 104 temporal barons who, when the Pope arrogantly commanded Edward to clear out of Scotland because the Scots had "transferred the kingdom to himself, and he could bestow it on whom he pleased," signed the letter (at the Lincoln Parliament, 1300) utterly repudiating the claim, and advising his Holiness to "meddle no more in that matter, which pertained not unto him!" At the battle of Bannockburn Lord Thomas and his son Thomas were taken prisoners. Maurice escaped, and, returning home, succeeded, with the help of the tenants, in raising the heavy ransom demanded, and they were set at liberty. It was this lord who added the ten crosses to his escutcheon, he being one of 60,000 men who, in the reign of Edward, vowed to go and fight in the Holy Land. Through advancing age and infirmities, however, he was never able to carry out his purpose, which, disquieting the consciences of his son and grandson, they, after his decease, paid Sir John Veel £100 to fulfil the vow.

The "standing houses" (usual residences) of the family in the thirteenth century were Berkeley, Wotton, Bradley, Awre, Portbury, and, in Lent, Wike, because of its nearness to the Severn. Here, in that season, Lord Thomas used to "feast" the abbots of Kingswood, Wotton, and Berkeley, making up by the quality and variety of the fish for their enforced abstinence from meat. It was the custom also for the abbots and neighbouring lords, Sudeley, D'Aubeny, and others, when travelling through the Berkeley domain, to use these standing houses as inns, and that whether their owners were at home or absent! Lord Berkeley himself used to "make progress from one manor and farm to another (scarcely two miles apart), staying a night or two at each, directing and overseeing, then back to his standing house."

Maurice, son and successor to Thomas, out-Solomoned Solomon in the matter of marriage, being a husband and father at such an early age that I forbear to state it, lest I be accused of romancing; nevertheless it is a fact, given on unquestionable authority. Rebelling against Edward II., he was committed to Wallingford Castle, where he died, 1326; his lands, including Wotton, then the dower house of his second wife, Isabel de Clare, being held by the Crown until restored to his son Thomas, third of that name.

Although Crown property only six years, everything had been permitted to go to ruin, and Lord Thomas spent large sums of money in renovating and restoring the various buildings. Besides considerably enlarging Berkeley and Beverston Castles, he expended, in 1345, £100, in addition to other sums, upon his house at Wotton; altering and extending it in accordance with the more convenient and imposing style then in vogue.

To the rooms already described, he added others connected by passages, and galleries, and towers in which the stairs were built—unless these were on the outside, as was often the case. The great hall, with its high windows, probably emblazoned with the arms of the owner, its walls covered with weapons, coats of mail, and trophies of the chase, was retained, but improved and beautified. The arched, or pointed, roof, and oaken screen and gallery he enriched with gilding and carved device; the "reredos," or circular hearth in the centre, with its open louvre above to carry off the smoke, was supplemented by a large fireplace, perhaps two, and the wall behind the daïs adorned with the costly Arras hangings just then introduced. In Berkeley Castle may still be seen a very handsome set worked with the arms of Jone, daughter of Sir Thomas Chedder, and mother of Viscount Lisle, which probably were so used, as they were taken from Wotton by Lord William Berkeley at the sacking of the mansion after the battle of Nibley Green.

With all the costly hangings and adornings, however, there was very little of what we call comfort in these old mansions; while the furniture was of the most meagre description, that of the hall consisting of long wooden tables and forms, the only chair frequently being one carved in stone or wood in the centre of the daïs. The private rooms boasted a few more, with some quaint stools, a chest for clothes, a table or two, and the bed, which, even in royal palaces, served also as a couch by day. It was often curtained, and covered with a rich quilt of silk or embroidery; indeed the beds, with their pillows and cushions, seem to have constituted the best and most abundant "furnishings" of all houses in those early times; even a small farmer, as is evidenced by an ancient inventory of goods, having a fair share of "sheets and bolsters." Kitchen and table necessaries—except table-cloths and napery, of which there was abundance—were few and primitive in the extreme, as were also accessories of the toilet; but carpets, which had been introduced by Eleanor of Castile, and were now used by the nobility, added a considerable item of warmth and comfort.

There are no traces of the Wotton house having been fortified to any extent; it was simply a baronial mansion, occupying with its pleasaunce, dovecote, stables, &c., a kind of long, broad terrace to the south-east of the church, enclosed within a high stone wall, and approached from the Cloud (old Welsh word for "bank"), on the townward side, through a massive gateway; the churchyard gate close adjoining is still called the "Keep Gate" or Portico. In the valley below the outer wall were extensive fishponds; and, scattered around, lay the little hamlet of Sinwell, a cluster of wooden huts, the interstices filled with wattle and daub, which at that time, and for long afterwards, were the usual abodes of the poorer people; chimneys and chambers, except in the mansions of the rich, being alike unknown. Brain, in his recent "History of Kingswood Chase," tells how, more than three hundred years afterwards, a certain John Tippet erected the first "chammer (chamber) house" ever seen in Kingswood.

Besides building extensively, Lord Thomas added many acres to his various deer parks; for in those days were no "Commons Preservation Associations;" the lord of the manor enclosing or parcelling off what land he chose "without asking leave of the clouted shoe or commoner." Indeed it is difficult for us, living under such different conditions, to realise the power of these ancient barons, the immense retinues they kept up, and the state in which they lived. Among the Berkeley manuscripts there still exist the "Orders" of Lady Jane, second wife of Lord Henry, 1601, for the regulation of her household; from the reception of guests to the most minute details. Her gentlemen ushers, who presided over all, were ordered to "see that the chimneys in the sitting-room and great chamber were in summer adorned with green boughs, the windows with sweet-smelling herbs and flowers, and the floors with green rushes"; detailed directions were also given as to their dress and behaviour when on duty in those rooms, or when attending their lord and lady as they took the air in park or garden; and not only were their own goings and comings regulated, but even their time to drink!

The records of receipt and expenditure were equally precise and particular. In those days the great lords farmed their own lands by means of reeves or bailiffs instead of letting them out to tenants; and as roads were bad and transport difficult, they moved their households from manor to manor to "eat up the stock," selling only the surplus. Each reeve or bailiff had to present every year an exact account of what had been bought, sold, consumed, given away, or that still remained on his particular farm or manor; even down to the "cheese-clouts" and "kitchen grease." The latter was accounted for by a Collector specially appointed—"so much sold (evidently it was not then the perquisite of the cook !) so much used for greasing the carts and waynes, so much in vessels for store."

The following account of some of the principal items for this Lord Thomas's household of three hundred persons, taken from Smyth's "Lives of the Berkeleys," will give an idea of his current expenses for a year, that of 1347 :—"Considerably more than 800 qrs. of wheat, besides other grain ; incredible numbers of sheep and cattle, not to count deer ; 300 kids, thousands of pigeons—Hame alone contributed nearly 2,000, and each manor and farm had a large dovecote, some more. Poultry 200 or more, with thousands of eggs, besides great store of honey, wax, apples, pears, and small nuts—from his copyholders at Hame 15 bushels of the latter per year. For clothing (the coarser cloth, fur, &c., being of home growth and manufacture) £1,309 14s. 6d., or £5,238 18s. at present value. The sum expended for hay, litter, &c., for 15,381 horses, at 1¼d. per day and night for one horse, £80 1s. 2½d."

Not content with enlarging and adorning his own houses, this Lord Thomas also founded many chantrys and chapels ; nine in all, including one at Wotton. Was it a salve to his conscience for acquiescence in, or at least cognisance of, the murder of his King? For it was in this lord's time that Edward II. was so barbarously murdered in Berkeley Castle. There is no doubt that Gourney and Maltravers had custody of the king at the time, and were therefore responsible for his death, and very little doubt but that they actually compassed it; Lord Thomas's first wife, Margaret, daughter of Roger Mortimer; called, presumably from her fierce disposition, the "She-wolf of Berkeley," and who, from her effigy in Bristol Cathedral, looks capable of anything, was also at the Castle. But where was Lord Berkeley? He asserted on oath that at the time he was lying sick and unconscious at his manor of Bradley, near to Wotton; and the plea being accepted by a jury of twelve knights, he was acquitted. But the accounts of his steward show that he did not arrive there until seven days afterwards; thus flatly contradicting the statement; and other evidence bears the same testimony. Neither was he in Scotland, as some assert, the young king having, in a document dated 3rd July of that year, 1327, given him a special discharge from service, "because he was intending other business of his whereof he hath charge—*i.e.*, to looke to his father, King Ed. II., secretly brought to the Castle of Berkeley, 5th April before" (see "Lives," vol. i).

Wherever Lord Thomas actually was, however, when the murder was committed, he was acquitted of complicity in the crime.

Besides being a great "church builder" and benefactor, as were so many of the Berkeleys (Smyth numbers one hundred churches and oratories of their building as extant in his time), Lord Thomas was a great patron of learning; especially in the person of the eloquent and erudite John Trevisa, of Crocadon, Cornwall, priest and vicar of Berkeley, whom he employed, 1397, to translate into English the whole of the Bible, both New and Old Testament. In addition to this great work, Trevisa translated the "Polichronicon" of Ralph Higedon, of Chester, and "laboured to adorn the English tongue and to remove the old harshness thereof." Also to improve the morals of the monkish fraternity, whose orders he roundly questioned; asserting, "We read that Christ instituted Apostles and Priests, but never ordained monks or begging fryars!"

Lord Thomas married, for his second wife, Katherine, widow of Sir Peter le Veele of Charfield, a lady of very different character from Margaret, and with whom he seems to have lived happily. She it was who founded the Free Grammer School in Wotton, one of the most ancient foundations of the kind in the kingdom.

Maurice 4th, succeeded his father, with whom he had fought in France under Edward III. and the Black Prince. At the battle of Poictiers, after fighting for two hours in the thickest of the fray, he was severely wounded; and being taken prisoner, was kept in durance until released four years afterwards (on the death of his father) by the payment of 6,000 marks. He eventually died from the effects of his wounds.

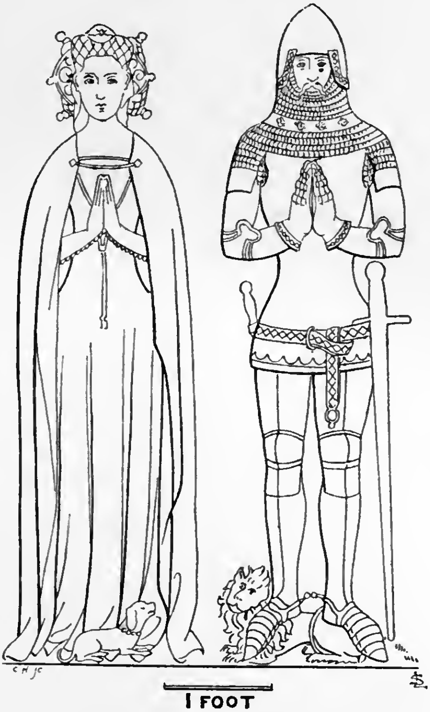
His son, Thomas 4th, was in many respects a striking character, and left his mark on the history of his time. He entertained the young King Richard II. with great splendour at Berkeley Castle, and was frequently employed by him in foreign wars and affairs of state; but, subsequently forsaking that vain and vacillating monarch, he became a devoted adherent of Henry of Lancaster, and was one of those sent to Richard in the Tower to compel him to sign the deed renouncing the crown; and by his seal of arms in Parliament, confirmed the throne to Henry IV. and his children. He sold his manor of Great Wenden, Essex (1404), "to furnish himself to sea, the king wanting money to set out his fleet." For this service he was made Lord High Admiral—adopting the mermaids as his supporters. The device was, however, borne by an earlier Berkeley; as in the Boroughbridge Roll, A.D. 1322, occurs a bearing of Berkeley—"*gules queyntee de la mermounde.*"

In 1402, Lord Thomas bought the advowson of Kingswood Abbey, and much property in different parts of England, including a "messuage and lands" at Bradley; but instead of farming all his lands himself, as had been the custom of his ancestors, he let many of his farms, &c., out to tenants for rent in money or kind.

More "sumptuous and magnificent" even than his grandfather, and still more devoted to the sports of the field, he kept hounds and greyhounds, not only at his mansions, but at most of his farms and granges. Cocks, also, for fighting; and several stables of great horses at

Berkeley and Wotton; and at Berkeley, "great store of tame pheasants." At the latter place he had, also, his barge, sumptuously furnished, wherein he took his pleasure on the Avon and Severn! But, although living in the style considered fitting for a great noble, indeed in almost royal state, he did not forget higher needs; for we read that, in 1380, Pope Urban (at this time *two* Popes claimed the Holy See, Clement VII. and Urban VI.!) gave leave by a special bull for Lord Berkeley and his wife to choose a confessor and have a portable altar in their house at Wotton, for mass and divine service. It is therefore probable that they built the small chapel within the grounds, the position of which, near to the "Keep Gate" can still be traced. It is asserted that "when some of the masonry was removed, in the present century, from the ruins of this chapel, the skeleton of a lady was discovered, a fan in her hand (why a *fan?*) built within the walls—on exposure to the air it crumbled into dust!" I cannot vouch for the "skeleton," but I can vouch for a suit of rusty armour discovered not so many years ago on the same spot.

When only fourteen, Lord Thomas married Margaret, a child of seven, daughter and heiress of Gerrard, Lord Lisle; who brought him much property. Gentle and amiable, she won his entire affection, and his grief for her death in 1392, twenty-three years after their marriage, was so excessive that he obtained the King's permission to assuage it by foreign travel; and, although only thirty-seven, never married again—an instance of conjugal devotion rare indeed in those times. He died in 1417, and was buried with his wife in Wotton Church, where a massive tomb of gray marble still



THE BERKELEY BRASSES, WOTTON CHURCH.

perpetuates their memory; their effigies, engraved in brass upon the slab, being, as is apparent from the reproduction given, among the best executed and preserved of any of these interesting monuments.

The only child of Lord Thomas being a daughter, Elizabeth, he had adopted his nephew James, and brought him up as his heir male; Elizabeth, married to the Earl of Warwick, inheriting the Lisle estates. At the time of Lord Thomas's death, James, then twenty-three, was in Dorsetshire, at the seat of Sir Humphry Stafford, whose daughter he had just married; and Elizabeth and her husband, being either at Wotton or Berkeley, declared themselves heirs to the whole estate, and, taking possession of all deeds relating to the property, made it exceedingly difficult for James to establish his claim. He, however, appealed, and the Earl was obliged to give up Berkeley and twelve manors, including Wotton; but shortly afterwards he again took forcible possession and ejected James; only to find himself again dispossessed. At length, after many free fights and legal squabbles, an agreement was entered into for the remainder of their lives; but James was so impoverished that he had actually to pawn the church vestments and altar cloths (belonging to the "portable altar" which was carried from house to house with the family) to Nicholas Poyntz for 22 marks, to fetch back his wife from London; whither she had gone on legal business. This was his second wife, Isabel de Mowbray, daughter of the Duke of Norfolk; through whom the Berkeleys inherited Caludon Castle, in Warwickshire, and many other fine properties. She was a lady of royal lineage, descended in a direct line from Edward I., and the mainstay and support of her husband and children during these troublous times.

Upon the death of the Earl of Warwick his three daughters and their powerful husbands reopened the family feud; one of them, Margaret, Countess of Shrewsbury, proving particularly unscrupulous and vindictive.

But James was not to be coerced or cajoled into parting with his property, and when the Countess's son, Lord Lisle, sent a man to serve upon him a subpœna to appear in Chancery, because he had again got possession of Wotton, James, instead of obeying, beat the messenger and compelled him to *eat* the subpœna, tape and parchment!

Margaret, however, ultimately succeeded in regaining Wotton; when James and his sons, arming their followers, made a sudden raid upon the place, and, obtaining temporary possession, cut down the principal timbers of the roof and gables, destroyed doors and windows, broke off and took away hinges, gutters, and conduits of lead, &c., and, according to the "bill for repairs" afterwards presented by the Countess, did an immense amount of damage. In revenge, Margaret and her son determined on a bold move; they bribed a servant of James, who had the keys of Berkeley Castle, to admit, early in the morning, Lord Lisle and his men, and they, seizing James and his four sons while they were in bed, forced them to sign over their possessions to them; then, carrying them to Bristol, made them witness the same before the mayor. This done, they were brought back to Berkeley and detained prisoners for eleven weeks. Shortly afterwards, the Lady Isabel was also seized, while transacting her husband's business at Gloucester, and thrown into prison, where she died; or, as the Berkeleys asserted, was murdered by order of the vindictive Countess. A few years subsequently James married again (from motives of policy, for he was nearly seventy), Jone, daughter of his old enemy the Earl of Shrewsbury, but did not long survive.

William 1st, his eldest son, an astute, ambitious, unscrupulous man, succeeded, in whom the old Countess and her grandson, Viscount Lisle, at last found their match. The latter, a young man of twenty-one, lately married to Margaret, daughter of the Earl of Pembroke, had been left by the Countess in possession of Wotton; but, not content with that, he plotted with a faithless retainer to obtain Berkeley as well. The plot, however, being betrayed to Lord William, Lisle threw off all disguise and wrote an insulting letter, challenging him to fight it out. To this challenge Lord Berkeley promptly returned answer:—

"Thomas Talbot, otherwise called Viscount Lisle, not long continued in that name, but a new found thing, brought out of strange countrys (Viscount was a foreign title, lately introduced) . . . where thou requirest me of knighthood that I should appoint a day, and mete thee in the mydway between My

Manor of Wotton and My Castle of Berkeley, there to try betwixt God and our two hands all our Quarrels, and Title of right. . . . For thou art in a false Quarrel and I in a true Defence and Title. . . . Fail not to-morrow to be at Nibley Greene at eight or nyne of the Clock, and I will not fail to mete thee. . . ."

After despatching this epistle, Lord William sent messengers with all haste to summon his retainers from Berkeley, Thornbury (the latter under his brother Maurice), and the rough miners of Dean Forest. Nor was Bristol itself unrepresented, two of its most prominent citizens, Philip Mead and John Shipward, contributing a contingent of zealous Yorkists, delighted at the prospect of a brush with the Lancastrian Lisles; so that by nightfall one thousand men were gathered in Michaelwood Chace, near to Nibley.

As the sun arose on that fateful March morning, 1469, Lord Lisle and his followers (a much less formidable host than that assembled to oppose them) were seen coming down the hill from Nibley Church. Lord Berkeley's men kept within cover of the wood until they were quite near, then let fly a shower of arrows, and, rushing out, smote them hip and thigh.

"A roaring flood, from Michaelwood
  Down, down—a thousand men! we bent
Our fierce array; and, from mid-way,
  In one thick whistling torrent sent
On them did pour our arrow's shower,
  Breaking their ranks; and, in we went!

Some with knives, and some with scythes.
The cry for 'Quarter!' did begin;
But not a word seemed to be heard,
Or heeded, 'mid that thronged din:
They were a stripe of corn, full ripe,
For Death to put his syckle in."[1]

The Lisleists, although outnumbered, fought valiantly, until a brawny miner, called Black Will, marking how their leader, in the heat of excitement and passion, was fighting with his vizor up, drew his bow, and the arrow striking Lord Lisle in the face, penetrated to the brain; when Will, to make still more sure, despatched him with his dagger. This was the signal for a general rout, the victorious Berkeleys pursuing their flying foe to the very gate of Wotton, which they sacked.

Lady Lisle escaped with her life, but shortly afterwards gave birth to a dead son; in whom ended the younger line of the powerful family of Talbot—fitting retribution, so thought the Berkeleys, for the crime of the old Countess in compassing the imprisonment and death of the "princely Lady Isabel."

From no mention being made of Lord Lisle's funeral or place of sepulture, it is believed that his body was interred with a "special man of his company" who was known to have been buried on the south side of Nibley Church, "under a great stone tomb;" removed about 1834, the upper slab now forming a step into the churchyard! Near by were also buried the one hundred and fifty men who fell in the battle; as is proved by a recent curious discovery. During the restoration of Nibley Church, 1864, it was found necessary to "under pin" the wall of the south aisle; when, in digging down, the workmen came upon a large pit or grave containing a number of skeletons, quite perfect, the skulls and teeth being exceptionally well preserved. From their number, the disposition of the bodies, and their situation, on the south side of the church (the south aisle had been built subsequent to 1469, enclosing the grave), there is little doubt that they were the remains of those who fell at Nibley Green. The bones, several cartloads of them, were carefully collected and re-interred in another part of the churchyard.

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[1] "Battle of Nibley Green, and Other Poems," by J. B. Kington, 1847.

Nothing could afford a more striking illustration of the distracted state of the country during the Wars of the Roses than the fact that a sanguinary battle like this should have been fought and one of the prime movers therein escape almost scot-free Sir Maurice Berkeley was outlawed for a short time, but only a fine was exacted from Lord William.

By the failure of the male heir of the Lisles, the property devolved upon Lord Dudley, Duke of Northumberland, a descendant of Edward Grey, Lord Lisle; but it was ultimately settled that Lord Berkeley should have peaceable possession of Wotton by paying the widowed Marchioness £100 yearly. He, however, never resided there; having in his rage so defaced and ruined the house that it was no longer habitable. After his death, it suffered further destruction, his widow, Anne, removing the massive lead roof of the great hall to the kitchen at Berkeley (where it still remains) in preparation for the visit of Henry VII., who, with his queen, was coming to view the various estates, including Wotton, which Lord William, in return for empty honours and to spite his brother Maurice, had bequeathed to him.

On the death of Edward VI., the alienated property reverted to the Berkeleys; Queen Mary confirming it to Lord Henry; but in 1573, Elizabeth, incited by Leicester, and ignoring Henry's right, claimed Wotton, and other manors, as Crown property (through the attainder of the Duke of Northumberland); and judgment being pronounced in her favour, she, in fulfilment of a private promise given to Leicester under her hand and seal (preserved in the Berkeley Archives), promptly made over Wotton and Symondshall to her favourite, and his brother, the Earl of Warwick.

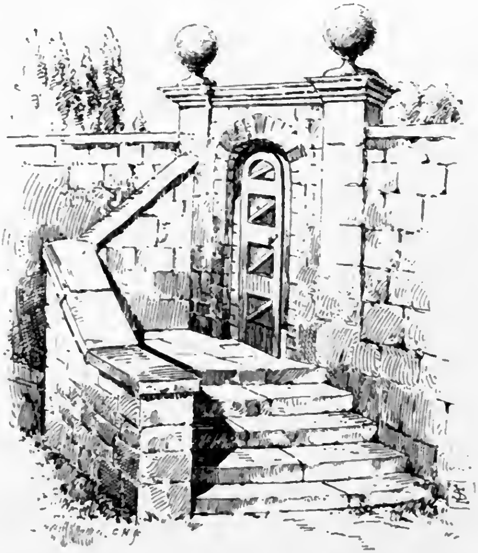
In the summer of the same year, Leicester, "with a great company of attendants and country people," came to take possession, staying several days; during which, among other sports, he "played a match at Stoball," on Wotton Hill.

Lord Henry, meanwhile, was in London, begging for the remission of the heavy "rates and arrearages," with which he had been charged; his haughty wife even going on her knees to the Queen to further his suit. Her prayers and protestations, however, evoked from Elizabeth, with whom she was no favourite, only the cold and astute rejoinder, "Noe, noe, my Lady Berkeley, wee know you will never love us for the death of your brother," the Duke of Norfolk, beheaded two years before.

After still more prolonged and weary litigation, the whole question was, in the 7th James, submitted to arbitration ; when the property was awarded to Lord Henry, on his paying a large sum to Warwick and Lord Lisle. This proved such a drain upon his already diminished resources that, unable to rebuild the "princely mansion of Wotton," which, as Smyth quaintly says, "had been for 280 years the Queen of houses to this noble family," he sold the site to John Staunton, vicar. The old chronicler goes on to tell how Staunton built himself a house therein (on the ruins of the former), and how he had shown to him, Smyth, "many signs in gilded bricks, stones, and pieces of timber digged by him out of the rubbish, which witnessed to its perished excellency."

Staunton's house (Lisle House), with its pointed gables, and ball-crowned gate entrance, still stands ; and, until some ten or twelve years ago, the vaults and underground passages of the ancient mansion were visible, but they were then filled in or bricked up, and all that can now be distinguished is the general outline of the site ; a small tower (converted into a summer-house) on the remaining rampart wall enclosing the garden ; and the traces, in the surrounding stone-work, of the chapel and the principal gateway on the Cloud.

One fishpond still remains, the others—as they had degenerated into wildernesses, " harbouring fevers and foxes"—have been filled up, and, together with the " Court Orchard," let out in allotments.



ENTRANCE TO CHURCHYARD FROM LISLE HOUSE.

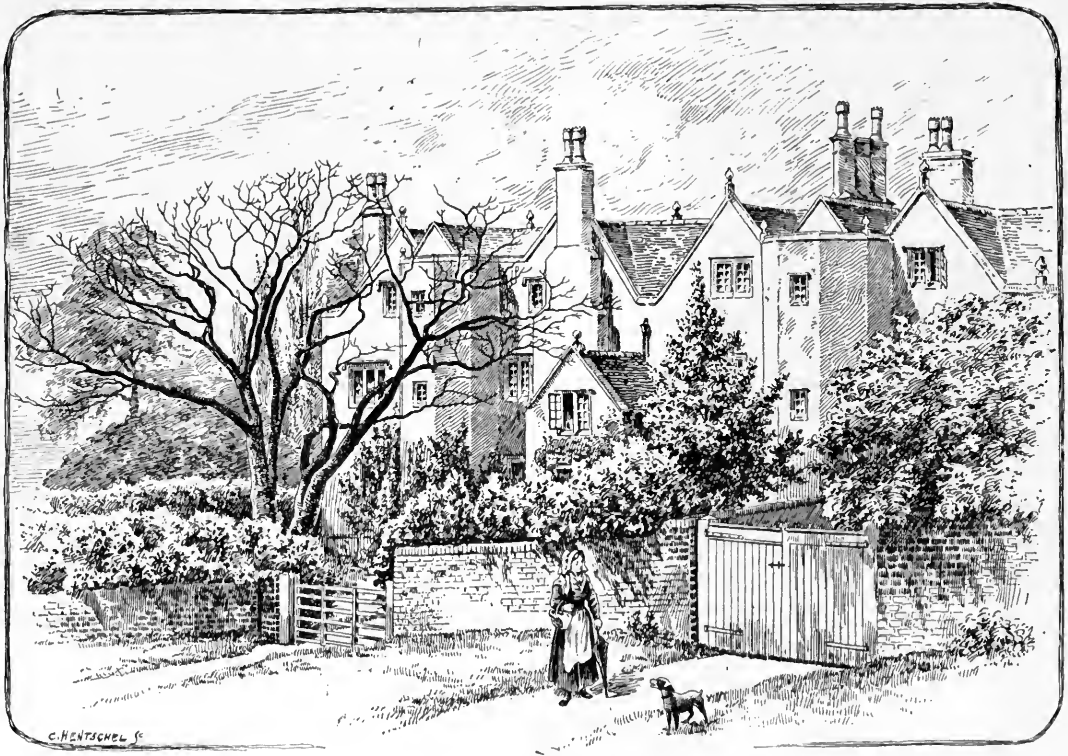
The ancient church of Wotton is of very considerable interest, and might well deserve a chapter to itself. Its general style is Perpendicular, with clerestoried nave of six bays, elegant Decorated tower, and fine south porch, over which is a priest's chamber. The chantries, or chapels, were dedicated respectively to the Virgin Mary, All Saints, St. Nicholas, and St. Katherine ; the latter having been founded by Lady Katherine Berkeley "to be used by the boys of the Grammar School for masses for all the Berkeleys, living or dead." One of these chapels, in which was a hagioscope, or squint, giving a view of the High Altar, was at the east end of the south aisle, and may have belonged to Lisle House which it closely adjoined. The squint and remains of door into the south aisle are still preserved. On the west wall of the church were paintings of various saints, among them a gigantic and grotesque figure of St. Christopher carrying the Christ-child across the river. Fosbroke in his "History of Gloucestershire," 1801, refers to this picture as having been "recently discovered," and gives an engraving : no vestiges of any of the paintings now remain.

Coming to more modern times, the most interesting addition to the Church is, undoubtedly, the organ, inscribed, "THE GIFT OF HIS MOST SACRED MAJESTY KING GEORGE, 1726." It is one of the only two existing instruments by the celebrated Schneider, the other being that in Westminster Abbey, and cost originally 1,500 guineas. It was presented to the Church of St. Martins-in-the-Fields, in 1726, by George I., as a parting gift on resigning his three months' office of churchwarden ; and the custodians of the church sold it in 1800 to the Rev. Dr. Tattersall, vicar of Wotton, for the sum of £200! Why they parted with this fine old instrument, which Handel was engaged to open, and with which he was so delighted as to regularly attend the church, and often to play the voluntaries himself, it is difficult to conceive.

During the repairing of the church in 1883, the organ was thoroughly renovated and enlarged, and placed where it now stands in the east end of the south aisle.

Bradley Court.—The small hamlet of Bradley, half a mile west of Wotton, belonged, in the time of Richard I., to one "Hugh de Bradley"; afterwards to the Berkeleys, who held it till the 7th James (several younger sons making it their home), when it was sold to the Oldsworths, and by them to Thomas Dawes of Wotton, who, amassing a fortune in the cloth trade, "left off because he had enough"—wise man!—and retired to spend an honoured age at Bradley Court.

This pleasant mansion must not be confounded with the old Berkeley one; that was situated some little distance behind, on the old road, and not a vestige of it remains. No record of the building of the present house appears to exist, but from its style of architecture, and the fact that Atkyns, who was contemporary with Thomas Dawes, writing in 1712, styles it an "ancient seat," it was most probably erected when the


C. HENTSCHEL Sc

BRADLEY COURT

property changed hands early in James I. Atkyns has an excellent engraving of the house and grounds, which, although somewhat altered to suit modern requirements, remain in structure and extent, substantially the same. The newel staircases in the quaint little turrets still conduct to the upper rooms, some of which retain their small diamond-paned windows; panelling abounds; while numberless cupboards and closets point to the time when "chests of drawers" and "hanging wardrobes" were alike unknown.

Pleasant gardens partially surround the house; that on the east, where is a stone summer-house built by the worthy clothier, being still laid out in the trim parterres of the eighteenth century. Two fine avenues of elms extend from the grounds in the respective directions of Kingswood and Tortworth; while on the opposite side of the road from the house, stands a ruinous stone dovecote, as old as the mansion itself, with nesting-places for a thousand pigeons!

Since Thomas Dawes's time, the old Court has passed through many hands; it now belongs to a collateral branch of the Hale family, its tenant being A. H. Chanter, Esq., solicitor, of Wotton.

CHAPTER II.

BEVERSTON CASTLE.

Leaving the "praty market town" of Wotton nestling among its wooded hills, a steep winding road leads up the western slope of the Cotswolds to a broad plateau extending for some miles along the summit, from which, especially on a fine October day, a glorious view is obtained. Of autumn-tinted woods, grey rocks, and golden cornfields, with here and there a gleam of brook or river, stretching away mile beyond mile to the Severn, speeding in silver silence to lose itself in the wider Channel, just observable on the horizon.

On the south-western decline of this plateau, some twenty-two miles from Gloucester and one and a half from quaint old Tetbury, stand the picturesque ruins of the little-known mediæval castle of Beverston.

Like Wotton-under-Edge, Beverston formed part of the great lordship of Berkeley, which was forcibly seized by Earl Godwin; and it is in connection with him that we get the earliest mention of it. An old Saxon chronicle of 1051 states that Godwin and his sons, Sweyn and Harold, in one of their many conspiracies against Edward and his Norman favourites, gathered their forces together here. They seem to have encamped at Uley Bury, and occupied Beverston as their headquarters. No mention is made of a castle, but, as the position commanded the rich valley of "Stroodwater" and the highway from Cirencester to the ford at Aust; and as, moreover, the ancient Saxon name signifies "stone tower," it is most probable that a small fortress existed here from very early times. For this rising, and other turbulent acts, Godwin and Sweyn were outlawed and their estates confiscated; which accounts for the entry in Doomsday, "In Berchelai, King Edward had 5 hides; in Beverstone, 10 hides"—about 1,200 acres.

On the forfeiture of lands by Roger de Berkeley, already described, Beverston became the property of Robert Fitzhardinge; reverting however, by the female side, to the ancient line on the marriage of Alice de Berkeley with Maurice Fitzhardinge, who took the name of Berkeley.

Maurice bestowed the manor upon his third son, Robert, called Lord de Ware, from his great manor of Ware, in Somerset. He was a baron and peer of the realm, equal in wealth and position to his brother, Lord Berkeley. His son Maurice, who took the name of Gaunt from his mother, Alice de Gaunt, was one of the most powerful barons who coerced King John.

Taking part with Louis of France upon his invasion of the kingdom, his estates were confiscated, and he was thrown into prison, but was shortly ransomed by the surrender of his manors of Bingley and Leeds in Yorkshire, and restored. In the ninth year of Henry III., however, he again fell under temporary displeasure for "fortifying his castle of Beverston without a license; but upon confession and submission" was restored to favour, living the rest of his days a loyal subject.

From this, the earliest mention of a building at Beverston, it would appear that whatever the kind of edifice which originally stood there, Maurice de Gaunt was the first to convert it into a fortified residence (A.D. 1225). Indeed, he must have erected an entirely new structure, for the lower parts of the castle (still standing) are all of this date ; massive Norman piers and groining in perfect condition, with external walls many feet thick ; while in 1873 the base of a circular tower of solid rubble masonry, 24 feet in diameter, was discovered in the rectory garden near by. Many parts of the church also belong to the same period (see Blunt's "History of Dursley and its Neighbourhood").

It was this Maurice de Gaunt, not Robert de Ware nor Robert de Gourney, as has been erroneously stated, who founded the Gaunt Hospital in Bristol on the site now occupied by the Red Maids and Merchant Venturers' Schools. He also, in conjunction with Matthew de Gourney, founded the Dominican Priory (Black Friars) in Rosemary Street, parts of which may still be seen incorporated (such are the changes wrought by time !) in the Quaker Meeting House, and the new Board Schools. Maurice was not buried here, as has been affirmed by some historians, the "Sir Maurice de Berkeley, of Beverston," entombed with "his wife Joanna" in the choir of the monastery church, belonged to a later time, 1466. Sir Maurice Berkeley de Gaunt was buried, 1230, in St. Mark's Church, Bristol, now the Mayor's Chapel, which was erected some years after the hospital by his nephew and heir, Robert de Gourney, who also largely endowed it.

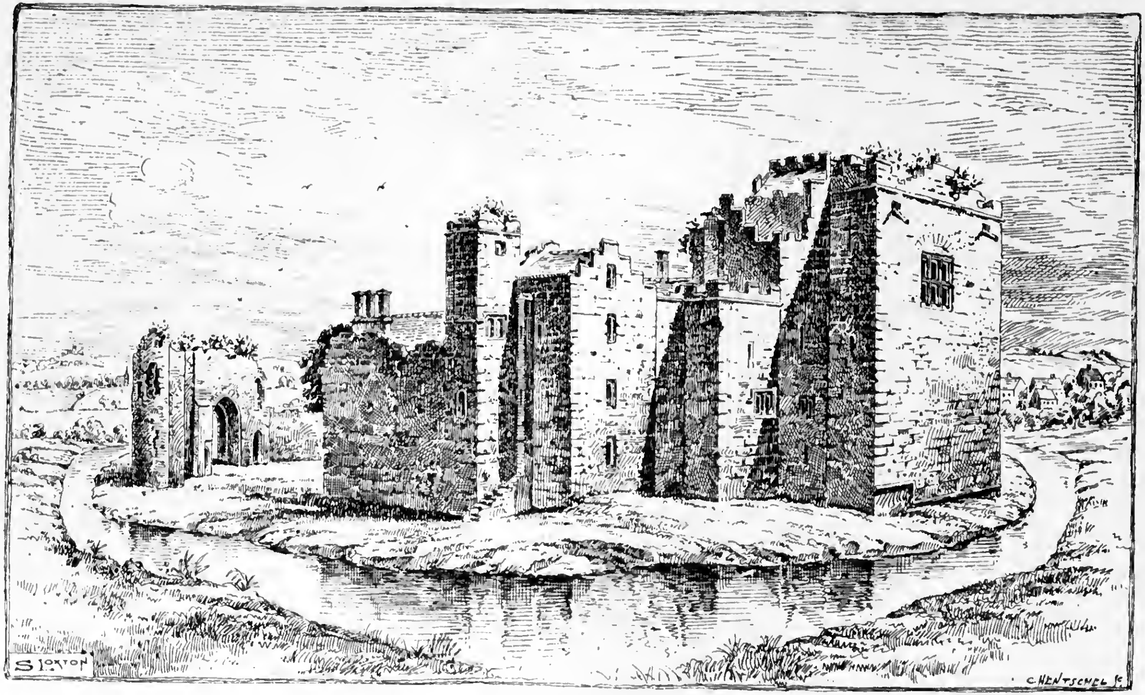
This Robert de Gourney, possessing the vast estates of his uncle and mother, and of his wife, Havisia de Long Campo, was even more wealthy than his predecessors, and most probably considerably enriched the Dominican Monastery ; for, according to an old register, his heart was buried there. His body, however, would seem to have been interred in St. Mark's (unless he died abroad), as the effigies of uncle and nephew lie side by side in the Gaunt Chapel.

Robert was succeeded by his son Anselm, and he by his son John; who dying in 1291 without male issue, the property passed to his daughter Elizabeth, married to John ap Adam. To him Beverston was indebted for the weekly market and three days' fair anciently held there, he having obtained a charter from the king. This put an end to a long-continued squabble with the Berkeleys as to the right of tolls, &c. ; Maurice, Lord Berkeley, who was overbearing and exacting to a degree, claiming jurisdiction not only in such manors as composed his barony, but in every part of the Hundred of Berkeley.

Blunt suggests that "A relic of the old grievance still exists in the custom which requires the constable of Beverston" (this ancient castle also had its constabulary) "to go on his knees in the Court Leet of Berkeley, and in that posture take his corporal oath that he will seek the welfare and prosperity of the Lord of the Manor and Hundred of Berkeley, a ceremony performed amidst much laughter, and not without reluctance on the part of Beverstone."

John ap Adam was succeeded by his son Thomas, whose misfortunes and domestic infelicity resulted, strangely enough, in the return of Beverston to the Fitzhardinge Berkeleys. "Sir Thomas," to quote Smyth's "Lives," "had married Margery, between whom was so little love that in the 5th Edward III. he complained in Chancery that Thomas de Gourney, son and heir of Hugh de Gourney (of Harptree, a cousin of the regicide), and others, had stolen her away from him at Beverston, and with her divers of his goods and chattels, and thereupon had a commission out of that court to enquire thereof. During which discontent he (by fines and distraint) sold to Thomas, 3rd Lord Berkeley, the Castle and Manor of Beverston."

What a picture these few terse words convey: The loveless home; the false friend; the faithless, selfish wife, deserting the sinking ship, yet taking care to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C. HENTSCHEL Sc.

BEVERSTON CASTLE, A.D. 1732.

carry her possessions with her; and the weak or desperate husband seeking redress in the courts of law, while the noble castle and wide domains which had come down to him through many generations, passed into the possession of his powerful neighbour. Verily, life in the Middle Ages had, too, its seamy side!

In 1349 Lord Thomas, having completed the renovation of his mansions of Wotton and Berkeley, began to "re-edify" Beverston, extending and enlarging the ancient structure, but retaining its lower and more perfect portions.

Judging from the traces that remain and the various parts still standing, the castle as rebuilt must have been a fine and imposing structure. It was quadrangular in form, with a massive square tower and several smaller ones; connected, on the west side at least, by a curtain, which contained a chapel, oratory, galleries, and various other rooms. A large banqueting hall occupied nearly the whole of the south side; the entrance to the court-yard being by a gateway or barbican built over the moat, and defended by two towers, which "advanced their eastern extremities considerably before the gate, something in the shape of the letter D."

Leland asserts, on the authority of William, Marquis of Berkeley, great-grandson of Lord Thomas, that "the castle was rebuilt with the ransome of prisoners taken at Poictiers." But this is hardly consistent with the fact that Lord Thomas's own son Maurice, captured at the same battle, remained a prisoner in France until his father's death five years afterwards, "because the ransome demanded (6,000 nobles) could not be raised." Unless, indeed, his detention was owing to some unrecorded quarrel between the two which rendered the father indifferent to providing the ransom—a not improbable surmise in the light of the handsome provision made for his young step-brother John.

Lord Thomas, like his descendant and namesake, the 5th Thomas, was a great sheep breeder. Soon after becoming possessed of Beverston he, according to Smyth, "bought out divers freeholders' lands that lay intermingled with his own, and stocked them with sheep, shearing in one year in that manor alone 5,775 for the Stroud water woollen factories." He used to frequent the fairs of Gloucester and Tetbury, buying seed, &c., and transacting the ordinary business of a farmer. He also reared vast numbers of pigeons; part of one of his great pigeon-houses was, until recently, standing near to the castle; an ancient Beverstonian asserting that he well remembers the periodical thinning out of its feathered tenants. Beverston, indeed, appears to have been a favourite residence of Lord Thomas, especially after he had settled it upon his second wife, Katherine, and her children.

At his death their son John (born at Wotton) succeeded, as also to Kingsweston and other estates, and became the progenitor of the Berkeleys of Beverston. He was knighted by Richard II., but soon soiled his spurs, being the next year, together with his cousin, Lord Thomas Berkeley, indicted before the justices of the Forest of Dean for "unlawfully killing of the King's deere." He married, 1st, Elizabeth, daughter of Sir John Betteshorn, who brought him much property, including Bistherne, near Ringwood in Hants; 2nd, Ellinor, daughter of Sir Robert Ashton; and 3rd, Margaret, widow of Sir Thomas Breouse, of Tetbury, both of whom were well dowered, but had no children. Dying in a good old age, John was succeeded, in 1428, by his son Maurice, whose inherited estates considerably exceeded those of James, the then Lord Berkeley. This Sir Maurice shared with St. George the honour of having "killed a dragon," the tradition being preserved in a document at Berkeley Castle, written prior to 1618.

"Sir Moris Berkeley," so runs the account, "sonne of Sir John Berkeley, of Beverstone, being a man of great strength and courage in his tyme, there was bread in Hampshire, neare Bistherne, a devouring Dragon, who, doing much mischief upon men and cattell and could not be destroyed but spoiled many in the attempting it, making his den neere unto a Beacon (Burley Beacon, 5 miles from Bistherne). This Sir Moris Berkeley armed himself, and, encountering with it, at length overcame and killed it, but died himself soon after. In memory whereof his children and posterity to this present do beare for their crest a Dragon standing before a burning Beacon."

Absurd and fabulous as the story sounds in our modern ears, it must rest on some foundation of fact (though what "devouring" beast answered to the name of dragon let antiquaries decide), for various corroborative traces exist to this day: The alleged scene of the fight is still called "Dragon Fields"; an ancient inn bears the sign of the "Green Dragon"; while over the front of Bistherne House in a carving of the Berkeley and Betteshorn arms dated 1652, the Beacon and Dragon may be seen. The Beacon is also the crest of the Marquis of Northampton, who is descended from a great-granddaughter of Sir Maurice; and the supporters of the Northampton arms are Dragons.

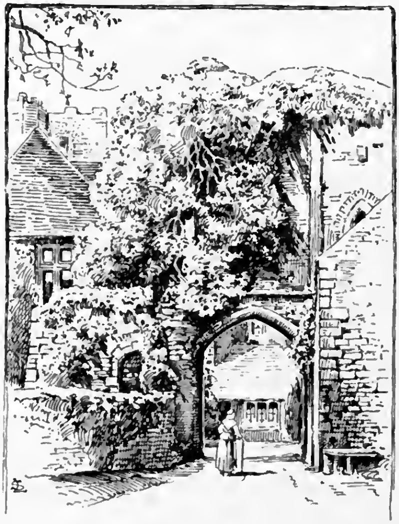
This Sir Maurice de Berkeley is he who, "with his wife Joanna and Sir Wm. Daubeney, Kt.," were interred in the choir of the Dominican chapel, Rosemary Street, Bristol; three stone coffins discovered in 1814 beneath that part of the building, having in all probability contained their remains.

From Sir Maurice the estates descended without a break through several generations (save that they were confiscated for a short time by Richard III.) until the accession of Sir John Berkeley, married to Francis Poyntz, whom Fosbroke describes as a "dissipated man of talents, of great consideration in the House of Commons"! and who squandered all his vast property, with the exception of the castle and manor of Beverston. These his son John, finding himself too impoverished to retain, sold in 1597, to Sir John Poyntz; and, in the hope of retrieving his fortunes, emigrated to Virginia, where he was massacred by the Indians. Thus tragically ended the ancient line of the Berkeleys of Beverston!

Sir John Poyntz did not long possess the manor, selling it shortly to Henry Fleetwood, Master of the Court of Wards, a great "estate monger," who disposed of it to Sir Thomas Earstfield; but, repurchasing it, finally sold it to Sir Michael Hicks, ancestor of the present Sir Michael Hicks-Beach. In this family it remained until 1842, when it was sold to Robert Holford, Esq., J.P., of the neighbouring manor of Weston Birt. His son, Captain George Lindsay Holford, Equerry to H.R.H. the Prince of Wales, is the present owner.

Until and during the early half of the seventeenth century Beverston continued to be the occasional residence of the various owners; but it never regained its ancient grandeur, and, suffering partial demolition from fire and decay, the most habitable part was at length converted into a dwelling-house and let with the farm; the parish register testifying to the births, deaths, and marriages or many who so occupied it. Side by side with these peaceful records, however, the ancient register contains, in the burials of "several souldiers of the Castle," traces of more stirring times—times when Beverston was a royal fortress and sustained a siege.

In the early days of the struggle between Charles and his Parliament, Gloucester, although held by the latter under Colonel Massey, was surrounded by Royalist garrisons — Sudeley, Berkeley, Newnham, Lydney, Wotton, Tetbury, and Beverston. The first attempt on the castle is thus described in the "Bibliotheca Gloucestrensis": "Beverstone, being newly garrisoned and commanding the rich clothiers of Stroodwater, was much desired by Colonel Massey, and he determined to attempt its capture. Bringing up his men, he surrounded it, planting his guns within pistol shot of the gate (*i.e.*, the outer gate of the Barbican, which crossed the moat), and firing several times.



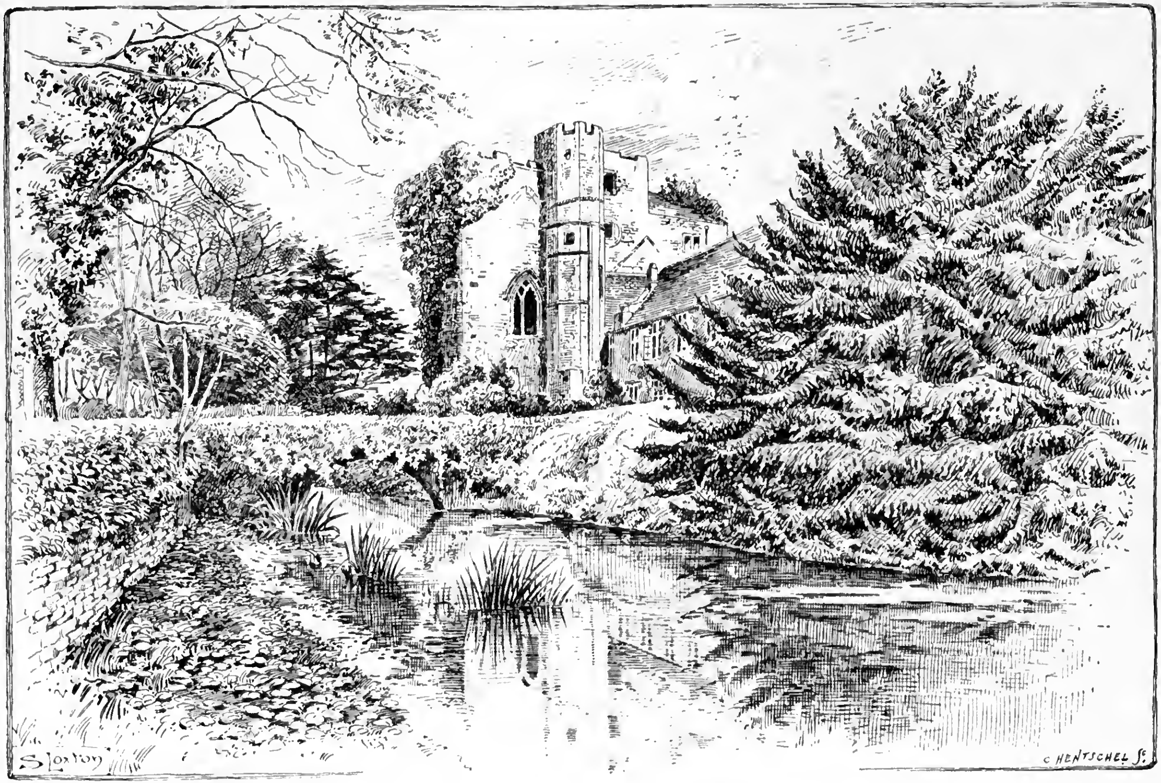
THE BARBICAN, BEVERSTON CASTLE.

Fifty of his musketeers ran up at noon-day and fixed a petard, which, however, failed in execution. Driven from the gate by grenades thrown from within, they nevertheless ran up again, and in full shot of the enemy brought away the petard (evidently " petards "—metal cylinders filled with gunpowder—were scarce in the Gloucester garrison); but the gate being securely barricaded, and night coming on, and no secure retreat for so small a party being near, the city also needing them to garrison it, they retreated."

The plucky little band, however, seemed resolved not to return without doing some execution; so, late though it was, they made a detour through Wotton, and falling upon the enemy's soldiers stationed there, put them to flight.

In May, 1644, Colonel Massey made another and successful attempt to capture Beverston. The castle was then held by Colonel Oglethorpe, who appears to have been more "gallant in love" than in war; for, having stolen from the castle one night on a courting expedition to one of the neighbouring houses, he was pounced upon by some Parliamentarian scouts and taken prisoner, together with six troopers. Were the troopers love-making too, or did the valiant colonel take them as an escort, or a guard? Anyway, they were all captured and carried to Gloucester; and Massey, hearing thereof, hurried from Ross, where he then was, and eliciting from some of the troopers that the castle was left poorly garrisoned, and under the command of a raw lieutenant, determined to lose no time in gaining possession of it.

Despatches from London detained him until two o'clock in the morning, when he set out again for Ross; where, mustering his troops, he sent the horse through Gloucester to rendezvous on the morrow three miles from Beverston, and with his foot crossed the Severn at Frampton. Having joined forces, they marched to Beverston, where they first surprised and captured sixty horses feeding under the walls, their guard of six troopers fleeing to give the alarm. Massey then surrounded the castle and summoned it to surrender, promising fair quarter. The terms were agreed to without attempt at defence or parley, both officers and common soldiers marching out without arms, ammunition, or baggage; the only question which the verdant lieutenant seems to have asked being, what place they intended to attempt next, that he might avoid it, and not run the risk of another capture! Thus through the foolish dalliance of one officer and the incapacity of another, this important castle was taken "without loss or danger to its assailants." How long Beverston remained in the hands of the Parliamentarians is not stated; but, like so many other stately buildings, it fared badly at their hands, the fire which destroyed a great part of it, including the farm-house, being caused by them. The house was soon replaced by another, which also was burnt down, 1691, the structure at present standing being built on its site about two hundred years ago.

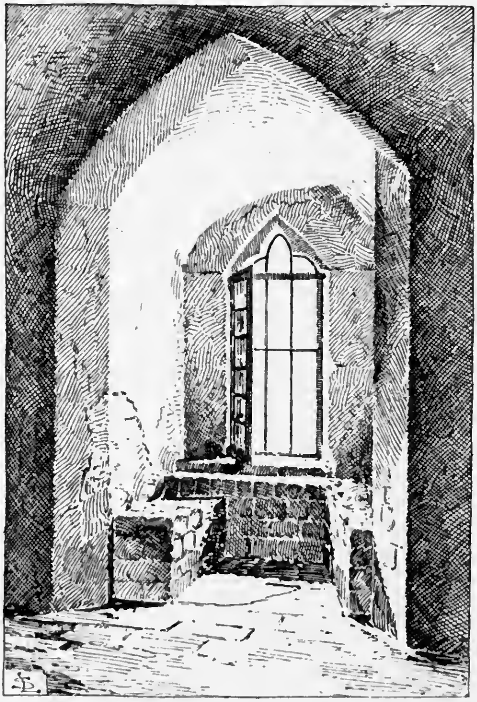

S. Loxton
C. HENTSCHEL Sc.

BEVERSTON CASTLE, AS AT PRESENT.

Probably three successive "houses" were burnt *out*, rather than burnt *down*, as the original one was built *within* the old banqueting hall, and the walls of the present structure are said also to largely consist of those of the ancient hall. Some idea of the size of the latter, which was indeed a notable feature of the castle, may be gathered from the fact that the house built within it contains ample room for a good-sized family!

The Rev. Dr. Blunt, late rector of Beverston, writing in 1877, thus describes the parts of the ancient building which time and accident had so far spared, and which, with few exceptions, may be seen at the present time: "The western face of the castle still remains; a large square tower, 34 feet by 30 feet, at the south end; a smaller one, 24 feet square, set angularly at the north end, and a curtain between; the whole side 123 feet long. The great tower, 60 feet high, consists of three storeys; the lower formed an entry and guard-room, the latter lighted by a beautiful ogee-headed window; the ascent, by a newel staircase in an octagonal turret (very insecurely attached, now strengthened by an enormous chain) leads to a large room, 33 feet by 25, which appears to have been made into a chapel early in the fifteenth century." "It has," to quote Parker's "Domestic Architecture," vols. iii. and iv., a "good groined vault with ribs and bosses, and a Gothic window, the latter in a separate division forming the sacrarium, with piscina and two sedilia, having crocketed ogee canopy, finial, pinnacles, and shafts; the piscina has a basin perfect."

The floor above the chapel is occupied by another



WINDOW OF GUARD-ROOM, BEVERSTON CASTLE.

large chamber, having fireplace and closet, with window of Elizabethan date, shown in illustration (page 51), which is taken from Buck's engraving of 1732. This, the earliest view extant, although not correct, is valuable as giving a north wall which no longer exists, and the portion of the moat now filled in.

North of this tower, in the curtain, and almost on a level with the room just mentioned, is a smaller and older chapel, or oratory, with, originally, a circular window ; beyond it is another room, and another larger one beyond that, with passage, guarderobes, &c. In the oratory also is a piscina, and, more curious still, double squints on each side ; so that, while accommodating only a dozen people, more than a hundred could see and hear from the chambers adjoining. The curtain, although lower than the tower, has also three storeys, the middle one being occupied almost entirely by a noble gallery (now partitioned off and used as a store-room for farm produce) with a stone chimney-piece of eighteenth century date ; the windows are much earlier. The newel staircase, superseded in part by one of Elizabethan construction, led from this gallery, and from the banqueting hall which joined on to the tower, to the oratory ; a straight stone staircase, built in the thickness of the wall at the north end of the gallery conducting to the basement rooms. These, as has been stated, were the work of Maurice de Gaunt ; the portions beneath the gallery being now used as a dairy and brew-house.

Here, also, is the "dismal dungeon," which seems, and not without reason, to have made such an impression upon ancient chroniclers. Bigland locates it under the north tower, but it is really situated beneath the south end of the curtain ; the entrance (still covered by a trap-door), through which prisoners were let down, being on the west side of the oratory. In later times a doorway was made in what is now the dairy ; so that the visitor, descending four steep steps, may stand in the small square space, lighted by a narrow slit, high in the outer wall, and looking up to the trap-door far above, may try to imagine the sensations of the unfortunate captives as they were lowered to their dismal prison.

The upper floors of the north tower fell in some time ago, and nothing remains but the roof, which is modern, and the vaulting of the basement chamber, now used as a coal-cellar. The ancient roofs of the castle have long since disappeared, their places being supplied by others, mostly of tiles, which appear to have been dropped down upon the various chambers in promiscuous fashion, without the least regard to usage or uniformity, just to "keep the wet out." For instance, the roof of the curtain is placed *immediately over the gallery*, its ridge forming the "floor" of the room above ; so that if the visitor wishes to inspect the interior of that room—and the well-preserved Tudor fireplace it contains would make it worth while—he must climb through the doorway from the passage and scramble, cat-like, along the tiles. Mounting to the top of the tower, north of the octagon, the said visitor will find himself upon another "roof," of boards ; the octagon itself being roofed with lead !

Both, however, afford delightful resting-places from whence to view the surrounding country, and form a favourite resort of the inmates and guests of the pleasant old homestead, nestling in its bower of greenery far down below.

The present tenant of the castle is Mr. James Garlick, a typical Gloucestershire farmer, with his hearty greeting and genial hospitality.

Besides the base of the circular tower, discovered in 1873, in the rectory garden (the ancient rectory stood where the school-house now stands), "there were found," says Blunt, "under the lawn, opposite the west face of the great tower and 37 feet distant, some large chamfered stones of a gateway, relics which seem to show that the castle formerly extended much farther." Probably not the castle itself, but the various farm buildings, workshops, and other offices, always to be found grouped round a mediæval castle. Indeed, two barns of handsome fourteenth century work, still exist within the outer area; one known as the "Pilgrims' Barn."

The remains of tower and gateway doubtless formed part of the fortified wall, which, with the outer moat, some 100 yards of which may still be traced bordering the present tennis-lawn, guarded the outer court. The inner court must have been small, the whole area of the castle within the moat being only some 2,235 square yards.

The old church, which closely adjoins the castle, is interesting, some parts of it dating back to the days of Maurice de Gaunt. Perhaps even to still earlier times, as in 1170 the "living of Beverston" was held by Maurice's uncle, Henry, fifth son of Robert Fitzhardinge, one of the greatest pluralists of that or any other age. Besides being Treasurer of Normandy and Archdeacon of Exeter, he was rector of all the parishes in the Hundred of Berkeley! Most probably his only connection with most of them consisted in pocketing the fees, the duties being relegated to curates—a time-honoured custom by no means obsolete. In 1280 the advowson was made over to the Abbey of Gloucester, and, at the suppression, was transferred to the Crown.

The remains of Maurice de Gaunt's structure still existing are the transitional Norman pillars and doorway beneath the porch; the remainder is fourteenth century (and later), Lord Berkeley having almost rebuilt the church when he built the castle—the windows in chapel and chancel are exactly alike. The walls were formerly adorned with paintings, one of St. Christopher, similar to that at Wotton; others of the Resurrection, Last Judgment, &c.; they are now hidden beneath a thick coat of Roman cement.

The parish registers, which date back to 1565, contain many interesting entries, chief among them being those that relate to the families of "Shakespeare" and "Hathaway." They were contemporary residents in the neighbourhood, and from this circumstance and many corroborative ones which are worth detailing, are believed to have been relatives of the poet and his wife. In the register for 1619 (four years after William Shakespeare's death) there is an entry of the baptism of "Edward Shakespurre, the sonne of John Shakespurre and Margery, his wife." The churchwarden's register of Dursley, near by, shows that one, "John Shakespeare, a mason, lived in Dursley in 1704, and down to 1739:" Thomas Shakespeare had a "seat place" assigned to him in 1739; while a "Betty Shakespeare," having evidently fallen upon evil days, received "poors' money" from 1747 to 1754. Some of the family still exist in the adjoining parish of Newington Bagpath, and claim kindred with the poet; while a pathway in the woods near Dursley is known as "Shakespeare's Walk." The name of Hathaway frequently appears in the Beverston registers, and is still borne by farmers in the neighbourhood.

Further proof of Shakespeare's connection with the place is to be found in his works themselves, several passages being evidently written by one familiar with the scenery. As, for instance, the following from Richard II., act iii., scene 3, "The Wilds of Gloucestershire," in which Bolingbroke, on his way from Ravenspurg to Berkeley, asks Northumberland—

"How far is it, my lord, to Berkeley, now?
North. I am a stranger here in Gloucestershire.
These high, wild hills and rough, uneven ways
Draw out our way and make it wearisome,
But I bethink me that a weary way

From Ravenspurg to Cotswold will be found
In Ross and Willoughby, wanting your company."

Enter to them Harry Percy, whom Northumberland addresses—

"How far is it to Berkeley, and what stir
Keeps good old York there with his men of war?
Hotspur. There stands the castle, by yon tuft of trees."

This is almost exactly descriptive of the scene as still beheld from the vicinity of Dursley; and no less correct are the poet's allusions to the inhabitants. In the second part of "Henry V.," act v., scene 1, "Gloucestershire," Davey says to Justice Shallow—

"I beseech you, sir,
To countenance Wm. Visor, of Woncot, against
Clement Perkis on the Hill." King Hy. IV. pt 2. Act V. Sc i.

"Woncot," as Blunt points out, "is the common provincial rendering of 'Woodmancote,' 'Visor' the undoubted ancestor of an ancient Dursley family of Vizards; while on Stinchcombe Hill, generally called 'The Hill,' is the site of a house once occupied by the family of Purchase or Perkis."

I am aware that there are other "Woncots" claiming to be the village referred to, notably the one near Stratford; but the preponderance of evidence appears to be decidedly in favour of the Gloucestershire one; and that Shakespeare was well acquainted with the neighbourhood admits of little doubt. Whether, as has been suggested, he spent among friends there the unaccounted-for interval between his removal from Warwickshire and his appearance in London, I leave for more experienced Shakespearian scholars to determine.

CHAPTER III.

RODWAY MANOR, MANGOTSFIELD.

EXCEPT to the geologist, the deep cutting of Pennant stone in which, some five miles north-east of Bristol lies Mangotsfield station, has little of interest. But leave the station, and, climbing the winding road on the left to the stretch of furzy heath that clothes Rodway Hill, look straight ahead.

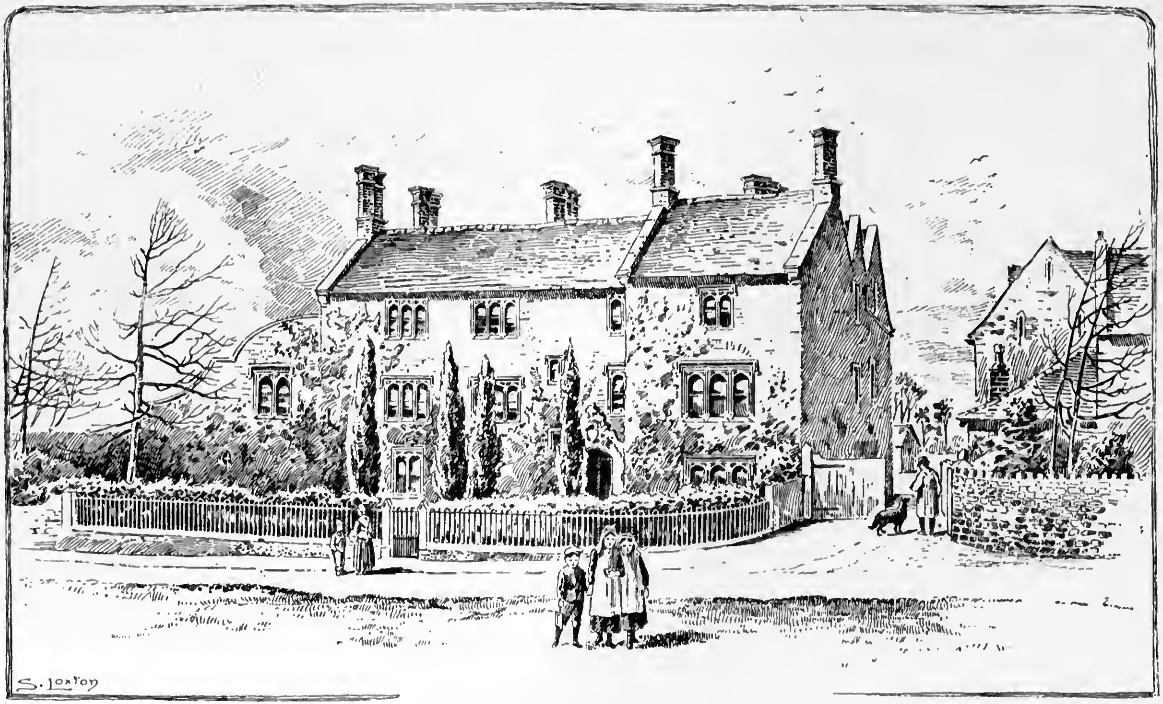
On the further edge of the common, with its low, square windows facing the mid-day sun, stands an old stone house, which to those who know the signs, and take delight in these ancient dwelling-places of our land, promises sufficient interest to convince the sceptic and well repay the toilsome climb. Nor is the interest lessened when diligent inquiry into its chequered history shows it to have been connected with names well known in local, some in national, history ; although it is not connected, as tradition and Braine's " History of Kingswood " would have us believe, with the unfortunate Anne Boleyne.

Originally, as that same history states, Mangotsfield formed three distinct manors—Rudgway, since Elizabeth in the possession of the Smyths of Long Ashton; Rodeway Hill; and Mangotsfield proper, in very early times belonging respectively to the De Putots and the Blounts of Bitton. In 1231 William de Putot, or Pycot, Sheriff of Gloucester, Warden of the Sea Coasts, &c., died, seized of Rodway Manor, where he had evidently resided, as it is stated that he "built a chapel in his house at Mangotsfield and had a special grant of a free chantry in it"; also that he "planted a vineyard" there, 14th Henry III. David le Blount married his daughter and heiress, thus becoming possessed of the manor, in addition to his own share of half of the Manor of Bitton, the two estates being for generations subsequently held together. After the succession of several heirs, the property came to Edward Blount, who married Margaret, daughter of Sir John Seymour. Their arms are still impaled over the church porch.

An ancient Berkeley MS. in the Herald's College says that, "the Blounts built the house on Rodway Hill, as, until then, there had been only one house in common to both manors"; but, from the fact that there is no trace or tradition of any manorial residence, other than Rodway, having ever existed on the estate, it is most probable that the Blounts rebuilt De Putot's house, or built anew on that site. Be this as it may, the oldest parts of the present structure are sufficiently venerable, for we read of its having been "much repaired" in 1520, by its then owner, Sir Thomas Berkeley! The Blounts retained possession of Mangotsfield until 1477, when Sir Edward Blount, a descendant of the Edward who married Margaret Seymour, died, and his daughter and heiress married Lord Hussey, of Sleaford; whose son, Sir William, aliened the manors of Mangotsfield and Bitton to Robert Dormer, of the old baronial family of that name, who in his turn sold them to (Lord) Maurice Berkeley, 1520. To these various transfers Camden thus bears witness: "At Mangotsfield was an old manor place sometime belonging to the Blounts, since to Hussey, then by purchase or exchange to the Berkeleys." The ancient badges of the latter family—mermaid and lion rampant—still adorn the building, silently testifying to their former occupation. With the Berkeleys it remained until 1612, Sir Thomas Berkeley, brother and successor to Maurice, making it his home, as also did his son Maurice.

In order to explain why Lord Maurice bought Mangotsfield and Bitton, with other lands adjoining, and why he and his successors lived at Yate and Mangotsfield instead of in their ancestral home near by, it will be necessary to go back to the latter part of the fourteenth century, when William, Marquis of Berkeley, reigned at Berkeley Castle, and over many fair lands and manors beside.

Having no children to survive him, his estates



RODWAY MANOR, MANGOTSFIELD.

would, in the natural course of things, have passed to his brother Maurice, the fifth of that name; but Maurice, so runs the story, had given mortal offence to the lordly old autocrat by marrying Isabel, the widowed daughter of Philip Mead, a wealthy alderman (several times mayor) of Bristol. Isabel was an excellent and capable lady, who made a devoted wife, and, moreover, brought her lord much property; but although of a good old family, there was no real "blue" blood in her veins, and therefore she was no fitting match, so thought the Marquis, for a Berkeley. To mark his displeasure, he left Berkeley Castle and "much land" to his royal master, Henry VII., and his heirs male; failing whom it was to revert to the Berkeleys; by which time the plebeian strain would have become so attenuated as not to materially affect his lordship's noble line! Doubtless there was some truth in the story, but a far more cogent reason for this unjust and wanton alienation of the family property lay in the overweening pride and personal ambition of Lord William. He willed away his estates to the king in order to secure honours and title equal to those possessed by his ancient enemies Salisbury and Warwick.

And little it all availed him, for he died unmourned and in debt, having borrowed 300 nobles of his secretary, William Moore, in addition to "70 shillings wages" which were owing. In his will he left directions that these amounts should be paid before other sums; and his disinherited successor (a man of a very different calibre) paid them accordingly.

Upon his death, then (1491), when Maurice would otherwise have succeeded to the title and estates, he found himself, although not exactly "lord of a barren heritage," for he had property in his own right, besides that which his wife brought him—still, cut off from much which before had gone with the title, and deprived of the castled home of his ancestors. A deprivation all the more unjust when it is remembered that he helped Lord William in the battle of Nibley Green; by which he not only risked his life, but became outlawed for several years. He did not, however, sit down quietly under the loss, but by numerous suits at law, and persistent assertions of his claims, succeeded in gaining possession of several of the alienated estates, Lord William, in his haste to dispose of them, having neglected to examine their titles.

"Lord" Maurice, as he was styled by courtesy, made his home at Thornbury, where a considerable part of his property lay, employing such time as he could spare from the law courts in looking after his estates and in educating and training his children (three sons and a daughter); in which latter occupation the Lady Isabel ably shared, to judge by the characters they developed and the strong family affection which appears to have existed between them. Indeed, of Maurice and his wife it is chronicled that, "the longer they lived the more they loved."

Lord Maurice died 1506, and was buried, as was his wife, in the church of the Augustine Friars, London, in the neighbourhood of which, as well as in other parts of the City, the Berkeleys owned considerable property. He was succeeded by his son Maurice, a kindly-natured man, with a strong sense of justice, and of considerable business faculty, judging from the ability with which he carried on the various suits commenced by his father for the recovery of the property. He also, when at home, looked well to the ways of his household; himself auditing and checking his steward's accounts every Saturday—books still in Berkeley Castle. Not content, however, with endeavouring to recover the lost estates, he determined meanwhile to possess himself of others, and re-establish the prestige of the family in their native county, for which he seems to have had a great love. He accordingly sold several of his more distant manors, among them that of Wing, in Bucks, and with the money purchased Bitton, Mangotsfield, Hannem, Aylington, and part of Henbury near to Yate. The latter manor he was at the time holding on a short lease; now, however, he took a new and much longer lease from Lord Daubeny, to whom the property had just been granted, and in 1518 began to build a "faire house" there, where he resided when in England or not attending on the "king's person." Mangotsfield Lord Maurice assigned to Sir Thomas Berkeley, his brother and heir (he having no son to inherit), giving him materials from Yate to repair and adorn the old house of Rodway for his residence.

This Sir Thomas, who, on the death of Maurice in 1523, succeeded to the estates, distinguished himself at the battle of Flodden, and for his services was knighted on the field by the Earl of Surrey. His first wife was Alienor, the widowed daughter of Sir Marmaduke Constable, of Yorkshire, and for some years he resided at Hovingdon, in that county, where two sons and two daughters were born to him. Returning to Gloucestershire, of which he was made High Sheriff, he took up his abode at Mangotsfield, where, except for periodical migrations to Yate, after his accession to the property on the death of Lord Maurice, he continued to reside. The Yate house was occupied by the widowed Katherine until her death two years after her husband. And if any one is curious as to the inner furnishing of these ancient mansions, he can be gratified ; for, in compliance with Lord Maurice's will, the furniture at Yate was equally divided between his widow and his successor, in trust for the latter's son, Thomas. The following list of Thomas's share, which was brought to Mangotsfield, is preserved in the Berkeley archives : "A trussing bed (probably a bedstead which could be "trussed" or folded up and used as a packing-case), and tester of cloth of gold ; divers pieces of arras, embroidered with gold ; divers cushions of gold, embroidered with ramping lyons of silver ; a shaving basin of silver weighing three score ounces ; candlesticks with their prickets and snuffers of silver, of thirty ounces ; two great flagons of silver ; two potts of silver parcell guilt ; a silver chafing dish ; two great salts of silver, with covers double guilt ; two goblets of silver, with covers parcell guilt ; a great goblet of silver, double guilt, with an hind upon the cover ; and three flatt bowles with covers parcell guilt, &c." A goodly list, supplemented by a few other valuables, presumably for the more personal use of the younger Thomas and his lady ; to wit : "A chain of gold, with a cross, containing 324 links, and a hook of gold ; a gown of russet velvet, furred with martens ; one rich coat of tinsel, one plagard (query 'placket,' woman's pocket), and forestocks of cloth of gold raysed ; and a roll of parchment of his father's pedigree" !

Notwithstanding Sir Thomas's exploits on the field of battle, his tastes seem to have been more peaceful than warlike ; for upon settling down again in Gloucestershire he devoted himself almost entirely to a country life. Besides repairing and embellishing his house at Rodway, he rebuilt the mill in the valley below, and by diverting Bitton brook, made Charnell's Pool, to secure a constant supply of water. But his chief delight seems to have been in his farm, more especially his sheep. A veritable "Cotswold shepherd," he looked after his flocks himself, causing them to summer in one place and winter in another, according to where he could obtain the best and cheapest pasturage. Once he had taken them as far afield as the "Warthe"—Slimbridge Wharf, a piece of rich pasture land near the Avon, then part of the Crown property—and had erected a comfortable sheep-cote; but upon finding that the land was reserved for those only who lived near to it, he at once took down the cote and removed his flock. He kept a book in his own handwriting of all receipts and payments, and sold his own wool, "usually for 12s. and 8d. the todd." So that we may picture him, with his tall figure, erect and spare, moving among the wool staplers and cloth merchants of the neighbouring town of Thornbury (then a populous market town, with extensive woollen mills), exhibiting his samples and making his bargains with as keen a zest as the veriest yeoman present, yet with a fairness and a courtesy which marked him for the honourable, high-born gentleman he was.

Like his brother, he personally supervised the expenditure of his household, which was on a scale at once careful and generous—witness his charge to his steward, a charge worthy to be written in letters of gold by every head of a household. "Let nothing," he says, "be spent which may honestly be spared, and nothing spared which may honestly be spent." After he became a baron and great "housekeeper" at Yate, he observed the same order, keeping with his own hand all receipts.

But Sir Thomas had other beside mere personal matters claiming his attention. For some years, as has been said, he was High Sheriff of the County, and upon the death of his younger brother, James, he obtained of the king the Constableship of Berkeley Castle, and Rangership of Kingswood Forest, with the Severn fishing, &c., these having been previously held by James. An upright, honest, kindly man was this sixth Thomas, Baron Berkeley; courteous and gentle, yet hating meanness and duplicity, he was honoured and respected throughout the county. Devout also, according to the religious fashion of those times; for early in his married life we find him and his wife, Alienor, "going on pilgrimage to visit divers shrines," where they gave sums of money for masses for souls and remission of sins, particulars of which were duly set forth in deeds, like any other business transaction. By one of these deeds Sir Thomas covenanted to pay the "Fryars Mynors of Gloucester" £4 a year for so many prayers, masses, &c., for souls, for himself and relatives, to be said four days a week. On the back of this deed written by a different hand and at a later date, is the following quaint endorsement: "If the clergy could sell and make perfect sale of the remission of sins, with assurance of the life to come for money, they would soon have more coin than the King; and £4 was too little for all those prayers; but casual ware is sold cheap. God pardon us all!"

Lord Thomas's wife, Alienor, died two years after his accession, and was buried with great state in St. Augustine's Abbey, now the cathedral church of

Bristol. He subsequently married Cicely, the widow of Sir R. Rowdon, but did not long survive, and "as he had lived like a noble, honest lord, so he died like a saint." Early in 1532 he made his will, and set his house in order; but the final summons did not come until the following January. On the 11th of that month he "took to his chamber in his house at Mangotsfield, revised his will and ordered his tomb and funeral; then, summoning around him the Abbots of Bristol and Kingswood, the Dean of Westbury, and Doctors and Priors of the Black Friars, Bristol, in the midst of their prayers and blessings, he closed up his eyes from further sight of the transactions of this life," and departed, January 22, 1533.

In compliance with the peculiar directions in his will, his body was first buried in Mangotsfield Church, beneath the spot in the chancel where he used to kneel; then, within three months, was removed to St. Augustine's Abbey, where the account says: "He lyeth under a fair tombe with his first wife, Alienor, upon which he appointed £40 to be bestowed, which was accordingly done." No trace of this tomb is now to be found, but it was probably placed in the chapel erected by his brother, Lord Maurice. Among his bequests are £8 a year for ten years to his godson, Thos. Harcourt, priest, to sing and pray for his soul; a like sum to buy vestments for the church, and 100 marks towards building the high altar at St. Augustine's. And yet not even a memory of him, or of the still greater benefactor, Maurice, now lingers around the spot! The Berkeley tombs shown in the cathedral are all of an earlier date. He left £10 for amendment of Mangotsfield roads, and £20 towards repairing Keynsham bridge in a neighbouring parish, while his armour and Parliamentary robes went to his eldest son. Mangotsfield itself, together with other property, he seems to have bequeathed to his second son, Maurice, but, as will be seen, the latter did not benefit much by the bequest.

His widow, Cicely, removed to Bristol, where she died and was buried, it is said, in Temple Church. From her long residence in the city she was called "My Lady Cicely, of Bristol."

Thomas, the son and successor of Thomas, Baron Berkeley, had been educated by his uncle, Sir Maurice, at St. Omar, near Calais, and from his learning and ability was called "The Lawyer." His first wife was Mary, daughter of Lord Hastings, who brought him a modest portion, but neither lands nor family, and died six weeks after his father. In the following month, April, he married Anne Savage (some write Saville), of Frodsham, Cheshire; of whom Stowe and others say, that "on 25th of January, 1533, she bore the train of Anne Boleyne at her secret marriage with Henry VIII., and was herself shortly afterwards married to Lord Berkeley, which marriage seems to have been contrived by the king and queen, or one of them." A statement not at all improbable, although no particulars are given as to where or how the marriage was brought about, for the Lady Anne had been Anne Boleyne's principal attendant for years; and that Henry shared his wife's goodwill to her is evident from his standing sponsor to her infant son, Henry, Lord Berkeley.

Although succeeding to considerable landed property, Lord Thomas seems to have had little ready money. His income during the eight years of his first marriage was under £100; £50 having been kept back for the first three years towards the rebuilding of Rodway. He died at Stone in Kent in the autumn of the following year; the widowed Lady Anne returning from Stone, with her nine-months'-old baby, to Bristol, where she resided for a short time at "St. Augustine's Green," now "College Green." From thence she went to Yate; where, on the 26th of November following, she gave birth to a son, Lord Henry, to whom were ultimately restored the estates and honours of Berkeley.

Lady Anne was a managing, capable woman of great force of character, but haughty and overbearing to a degree. As may be imagined, such a woman would scarcely prove a peacemaker in the family. Nor did she; for, hardly had she entered it when she stirred up her husband to dispute his brother's title to Mangotsfield, although he, Lord Thomas, had himself approved of the will, as, also, had the executors. The contention was that only the house at Rodway, with the park and conigre (rabbit-warren) had been left to Maurice, the manor being Lord Thomas's; the latter asserting in support of his claim, that his father "builded upon Mangotsfield house with the goods, knots, trayles, carved work, and other ornaments, fetched from his house at Yate, which his uncle, Lord Maurice, gave him, value 200 marks, a sign that he whose goods had adorned it would have it." That besides, he had kept back £50 of his, Thomas's, marriage portion for three years towards the building of it—a proof he meant him to have it. Also that it adjoined the manor of Bitton, and that the two had always gone together; also that the new mill which his father had "builded from the ground," and Charnell's pool, with the fish therein, which his brother had destroyed, were his because Charnell's hill was part of Bitton, and Bitton brook had been diverted to make the pool.

Where the truth lay between them it is impossible now to tell; especially as, in spite of the old lord's care concerning his will, all does not seem to have been quite in order. Cicely, his second wife (whose stepdaughter, Frances Rowdon, Maurice had married) acknowledging that she had kept the Seal of Arms and Signet five days after her lord's death, and herself sealed two parts of the said will! For whichever Mangotsfield was intended, however, Anne seems ultimately to have got possession of it, leaving Maurice the "house, park, and conigre." Fortunately for him he had married an heiress, or he would have fared badly, as Lady Anne subsequently contrived to despoil him of the other parts of his inheritance. Not that he submitted patiently to being thus fleeced : there was war to the knife between them all the days of his life.

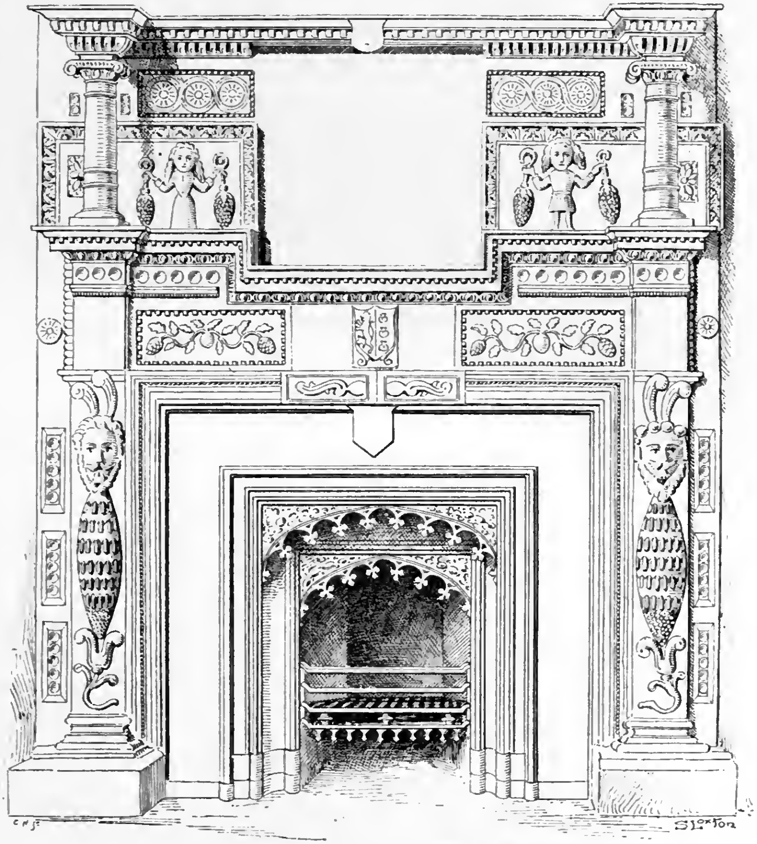
Anne's first move was to incite some of the Berkeleys' (descendants of the younger branches) to take possession of the mill and Charnell's pool, that great bone of contention ; which they did ; but Maurice had them indicted and fined. On the death of her husband, Anne made one of these Berkeley's her receiver, surveyor, &c., which naturally incensed Maurice ; and in retaliation he, in conjunction with Sir Nicholas Poyntz, who had married his sister Jone, and who seems to have had no greater liking for his disputatious sister-in-law than had Maurice—Giles Poyntz, his brother, and their various friends and followers, made several raids upon the deer park at Yate, of which more anon.

In the following spring, hostilities seemed to have been again renewed ; the battle this time returning to the much-contested mill and pool ; the former being demolished, and the wall of the latter pulled down. Anne promptly instituted a suit in Star Chamber ; but upon sending her man to serve the process, he was soundly thrashed, which caused a new suit. Sir Nicholas Poyntz, who seems to have been the leading spirit in this raid, alleged in his defence that Charnell's pool belonged as much to him as to Anne ; Lord Thomas having stopped the watercourse between Barton (his manor) and Bitton, and overflowed an acre of his ground to make it! And at last Anne, unable to circumvent them, fled for succour to her old master, Henry VIII. It was some years after he had beheaded his wife, but he seems to have still regarded her former maid of honour with favour; for he granted her a commission under the great seal, and *made her one of the Commissioners!* Whereupon she came to Gloucester, impanelled a jury, heard evidence, and (naturally) found Sir Nicholas, Maurice, and their followers guilty of riot and disorder, and fined them. For which exploit the common people used to call her "Justice of the Peace!" There was no real "peace," however, until Maurice and Poyntz died—Poyntz in 1556, Maurice about a year before. He was buried in Temple Church, although no record of his interment exists, the registers not dating back so far by some ten years, neither is any reason assigned for his burial there (unless it was in order to be near his stepmother, who had always stood his friend); the whole of the parish, however, from Temple ditch to the bed of the river, once belonged to his ancestors, and was presented by them to the Knights Templars.

Anne survived many years, living either in London, or, which she much preferred, at Yate, Mangotsfield, or Callowden, now Caludon, in Warwickshire; for she loved country life, and, rising early, winter and summer, would make the round of her gardens, stables, poultry yard, &c., personally directing and supervising—a marked contrast to her son's wife, Lady Katherine, daughter of the Earl of Surrey; a beautiful but haughty and extravagant damsel, who hated the country except for its sports, and lived mostly for pleasure, and of whom her mother-in-law would often avow, "This gay girle will beggar my son Henry!" a prophecy which came perilously near proving true. When in London Anne lived at the great house of the Bishop of Bangor in Shoe Lane (a very different locality then from now) which she held on lease.

In 1612, the 9th of James, Henry, Lord Berkeley, grandson of Thomas, impoverished by his gay life and numerous lawsuits, dismembered Mangotsfield, which, at Maurice's death, had reverted to him, and sold the manor of Rodway to Philip Langley, Esq. (he had married Katherine, a descendant of the Berkeley's), and Mary his mother, and their heirs, for £2,225. A large sum in those days, but even so early Mangotsfield yielded a rich store of stone and minerals. In 1663 it was again sold to John Meredith, who repaired and restored the house, and planted a large vineyard on sheltered slopes to the south-west.

Atykins, in his history, ridicules the idea of vineyards having existed in Gloucestershire, saying the climate was too cold to admit of grapes ripening in the open, and that the term "vineyard" simply signified a "pear or apple orchard!" Which is sheer nonsense. Many old writers testify to the extensive cultivation of the vine, and to the excellency of the



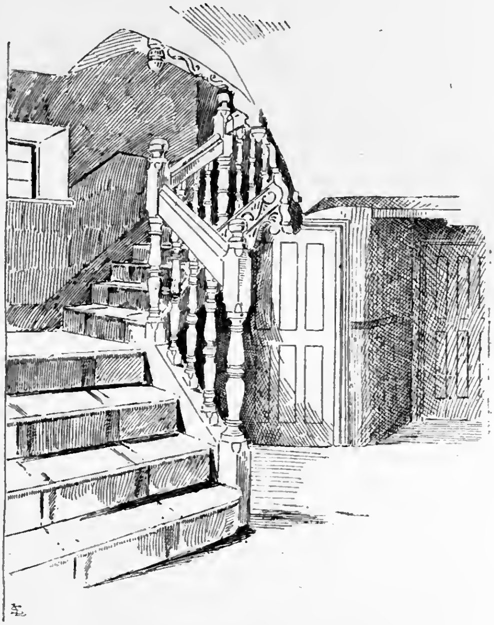
CARVED MANTELPIECE, RODWAY MANOR.

wine produced, Speed making special mention of the Gloucestershire vineyards. Even at this date grapes, in favourable situations, ripen well in the open. Covering the whole front of the house where the present writer was born, in the north-east corner of the county, was a vine which bore delicious grapes; also one near to Banbury, in Oxfordshire; and several in Warwickshire. While who has not heard of the Marquis of Bute's vineyard at Castle Coch, near Cardiff, from which wine has been made regularly in favourable seasons for several years past? Jubilee year produced a "vintage" of 3,600 bottles of high quality, while the exceptionally hot season of 1893 yielded a far greater crop, 12,000 bottles being made, value £3 a dozen.—See *Gardener's Magazine*, September 20, 1894.

How the Mangotsfield vineyard answered is not known, and no traces of it remain, except the sunny-terraced slopes now covered with grass, and still called "The Vineyard." Its owner was one of the Merediths, of Rocks, Marshfield (an ancestor, John, once held that living). He married Elizabeth Basset; their joint arms—lion rampant, collared and chained, for Meredith, three escallop shells, ancient charge of the younger branch, for Basset—("*Roll of Caerlaveroch*") being quartered upon a shield in the centre of a handsome carved mantelpiece in one of the rooms at Rodway. The Meredith family seems to have been of considerable standing, judging from several monumental inscriptions in Mangotsfield Church, the small side chancel of which is claimed as their special burying-place, although tradition also ascribes it to the Blounts; while a stone tomb therein, with recumbent effigy, is said to represent one of the Berkeleys, most probably Sir Thomas, whose body rested there previous to its removal to Bristol.

From John Meredith, Rodway Manor descended to his son and grandson, the latter (William) selling it to Charles Bragg, Esq., who at that time also owned and lived at Cleeve Hill, now the residence of Lady Cave. He in his turn sold it to Edward Colston, great grandson of a certain Alex. Read, who took the name of Colston. In 1779 the property was left as a jointure to the widow of Francis Colston, from whom it passed to Lord Middleton and Alec. Colston, who had married two sisters, co-heiresses of estates in Gloucestershire, and who re-sold it in the present century to Daniel Cave, Esq., who had also become possessed of Cleeve Hill. From him it descended to his son, the Right Hon. Sir Stephen Cave, G.C.B., Judge Advocate and Paymaster General; and upon his death, in 1880, passed to Charles D. Cave, Esq., of the Old Bank, Bristol, with whom it still remains. The present tenant of the manor is Mrs. H. Young.

The house, which is of three storeys, with a small wing at the east end, is so excellently kept that, except for the low square-cornered Tudor windows, with their armorial badges, and the shield of arms above the porch, there is little to denote its age; but within the signs are more conspicuous. The first object which strikes the eye upon entering is a good specimen of the staircase of the period, winding up to the top storey, its carved rails and balustrades black and polished with



STAIRCASE, RODWAY MANOR.

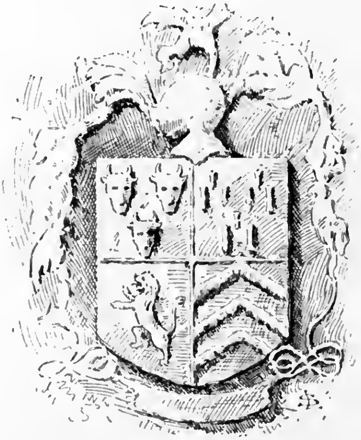
age. Beyond the staircase the floor slopes down to a long, low room, with deep embrasured window, and a buttery hatch (still used when required), communicating with the larder and kitchen. A hall runs to the back of the house, from which open other rooms through old-fashioned doorways cut in walls 3 or 4 feet thick. The east wing is occupied by the drawing-room; in which, reaching from floor to ceiling, is the carved mantelpiece bearing, among other devices, the Meredith and Basset arms. Upstairs are long passages, with cupboards and closets in the massive walls, and rooms leading out of each other after the bewildering and uncomfortable fashion of the time, whose doors, windows, and fireplaces all speak of the distant past, the most ancient door having its panels hollowed out instead of let in.

Leaving the house by the back hall, with a glance up at the mermaid and lion ornamenting the ancient windows, we turn to the left into a small orchard from which a flight of broad stone steps conducts to a long, grassy terrace, with low battlemented walls, which commands a wide sweep of country: Kingswood, Lansdown, Bath, Kelston Round Hill, &c., on one side, and on the other, Downend, and away to the Welsh hills. Immediately beneath, in the valley, lie the "Vineyard," and "Charnells," the burying-place of those who fell in that ancient battle where Mane, the Saxon general, defeated the Britons, and which is commemorated in the local rhyme:—

> "By Charnocks Mane got his field,
> And shed his blood on Rode-away Hill;
> They rode, some say, to Stand-fast gate,
> And fought their way to Bridge o' Yate."

The finding of some bones and an ancient stone coffin on the spot seem to verify the story. Part of the hill was once a stone quarry, but this has since been planted with trees, and along the foot of it a brook runs through the valley to the famous "Charnell's pool." An arched passage, now boarded up on the outer side, leads beneath the terrace to the narrow belt of firs which separates it from the common. Some portions of the walls, judging from the thick, gnarled stems of the ivy which covers them, must be very ancient. The appearance of the building upon this side, with the existence of a venerable buttress of immense strength also suggest age, and seem to intimate that the house was once of greater extent, and probably communicated directly with the terrace.

Tradition has endeavoured to associate this old house with three of the Queens of Henry VIII.; viz., Anne Boleyne, Jane Seymour, and Catherine Parr—though why, it would be difficult to tell. The latter lived some time at Sudely, in the neighbourhood, with her third husband, Lord Somerset; died, and was buried in St. Mary's Chapel there; and Jane Seymour was related to the Margaret who married Edmund Blount, but there is nothing to show that either she or Catherine had any personal acquaintance with the place. Anne Boleyne, it is true, accompanied Henry VIII. when he came to Thornbury Castle; where, because of the plague raging in Bristol, they were obliged to stay, instead of in the city, as designed. But although the royal couple may have honoured Anne's former maid of honour, Lady Berkeley, with a visit at Yate Court (no record of any such event exists), the evidence is all against their having visited Rodway Manor; Maurice, its then owner, being at deadly feud with his sister-in-law, who was moving heaven and earth to dispossess him of his inheritance. Moreover, the house itself would not have accommodated the royal party, as never, in its palmiest days, could it have ranked with the neighbouring mansions of Thornbury and Yate.



SHIELD OF ARMS OVER PORCH AT RODWAY MANOR.

Queen Anne's connection with the place seems to rest on the assumption that the armorial bearings above the porch are those of the Boleynes; but this is an entirely erroneous idea, the "three bulls' heads," which has given rise to it, being (according to the College of Heralds) the charge of an old Somersetshire family of

Bull. The other charges on the shield are common to so many houses that it is impossible, at this distance of time, and when successive coats of paint have hidden the original tinctures, to pronounce authoritatively upon them ; except that they are not the Boleyne arms. Those were "*a chevron gules between three bulls' heads*" ; or "*a lion passant between three bulls' heads, crest, bull's head*" ; while the Rodway escutcheon bears four charges. On the first "3 bulls' heads, caboshed" ; second, "10 billets" ; third, "lion rampant" ; fourth, "3 chevrons" ; crest, "an esquire's helmet" ; the whole encircled by foliage, motto defaced.

Still, although it is impossible to decide to whom the coat as a whole belonged, the various charges (with the exception of the "bulls' heads") were borne by families who, at various times, owned, or were connected with, the old house. The "lion rampant" was the charge of both Meredith and Berkeley ; the "3 chevrons" of the De Clares, who intermarried with the Berkeleys ; while the "10 billets" are still the arms of the Dormer family. The "bulls' heads," alas ! have, so far, eluded all attempts at association.

To dispel, by the hard logic of fact, romantic and time-honoured fiction, is not a pleasant task ; but the writer of "history" has no choice.

CHAPTER IV.

YATE COURT.

THIS ancient pile of crumbling ruins, sleeping peacefully beneath its mantle of ivy in the fair vale of Gloucester, although perhaps better known locally than Beverston Castle, is still a *terra incognita* to the majority, even of those interested in such relics.

The reason of this is twofold—It lies remote from road or rail, Yate, three miles away, being the nearest station; and it possesses neither the historic nor the architectural interest which have made the fame of its stately neighbours, Thornbury and Berkeley. Once, and once only, did the Court actually figure in history—it was garrisoned by the Parliament in the Civil War. Even then, however, the glory of a siege was denied to it, for the Governor of Gloucester (Colonel Massey), fearing that Prince Rupert might swoop down from Cirencester in one of the sudden raids which he made more than once that winter, and exterminate the little force before succour could arrive, resolved on their recall. He accordingly marched to Kingscote, between Wotton and Beverston, with three hundred horse dragoons, intending to send a party to bring them off; but hearing that the Royalists were assembled in some force at Sodbury to the assistance of Colonel Gerrard against Yate House (an old house still standing on the road to Wickwar), he dropped quietly down thither the same night. His sudden appearance so scared the guard posted at the entrance of the little town that they took to their heels, leaving the invaders to march in; this they did, "one by one because of the baracadoes," straight up to the main guard of forty-five horse; who, being surprised in their turn, also took flight, their comrades in quarters escaping (such of them as were able) through the back streets of the town! Securing their prisoners, the victorious troopers marched on to Yate and brought off the forlorn garrison. Not, however, before they had set fire to the "faire house" which had sheltered them, and reduced it to ruins, lest it should serve as a refuge for their enemies.

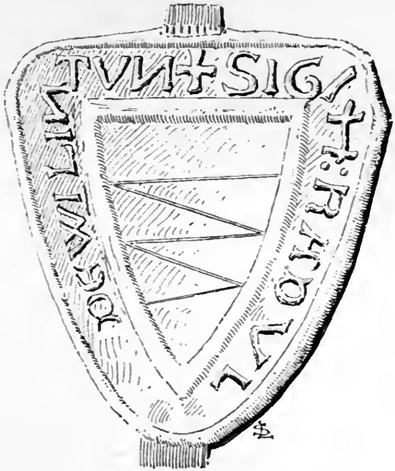
If, however, the records of the old Court itself were more peaceful than warlike, those of some of its ancient owners were by no means so.

The first possessor of whom we have any historic notice was Sir Ralph de Willington. He came of an ancient Derbyshire family—John de Willington, at or immediately after the Conqueror, settling at Willington near to Repton. Nicholas de Willington, his son, was contemporaneous with Robert, Abbot of Burton, in Stephen's reign (see *Stafford Assize Rolls*, Henry III.).

From Dugdale's "Monasticon" (vol. ii. p. 280), it appears that he and his son Nicholas were liberal benefactors to the convent of Repton, bestowing upon it the manor and church of Willington. No witness to their liberality, in carved stone or monumental effigy, now, however, exists at Repton, for the following reason: In 1540 the site of Repingdon (Repton Abbey) was granted to Thomas Thacker, Esq., who purchased most of the furniture and stock; of whom Fuller relates in his "Church History" that, "being alarmed by the news that Queen Mary had set up the abbeys again (and fearing how large a reach such a precedent might have) upon a Sunday (belike the better the day the better the deed), he called together the carpenters and masons of that county and plucked down in one day (church work is a cripple in going up, but rides post in coming down) a most beautiful church belonging thereunto, saying he would destroy the nest for fear the birds should build there again."

In the eighteenth century the Thacker family having become much reduced, their only daughter and heiress bequeathed the estate to Sir Robert Burdett. The remains of the priory were afterwards converted into the schoolroom and offices of Repton School, the mansion being occupied by the head-master.

But to return to the De Willingtons. Nicholas de Willington was succeeded by his brother Ralph, who served under Richard Cœur de Lion and was present at the siege of Acre. Returning from the Holy Land, he settled at Sandhurst, Gloucestershire; building Willington Court there, and, in conjunction with his wife, Olympia, founded St. Mary's Chapel, now the Lady Chapel, Gloucester. In the 9th John he purchased the manor of Yate of Robert d'Everseide and



1230.

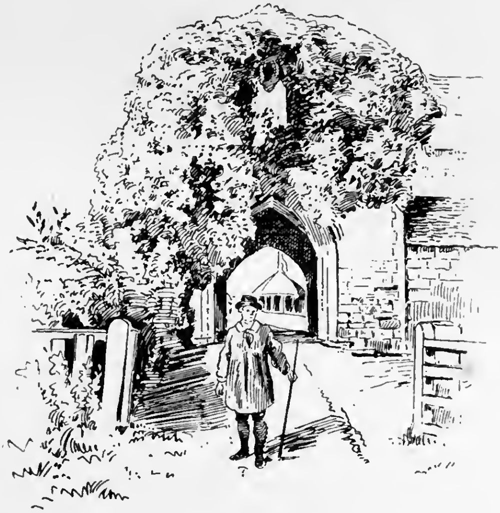
SEAL OF SIR RALPH DE WILLINGTON.

made it one of his residences; obtaining, in 1218, the grant of a weekly market there—from which it is evident the place must then have been of some population. In the 8th of Henry III. he was Governor of Bristol Castle, having charge of the Princess Eleanor, sister of the unfortunate Arthur of Brittany, she having been imprisoned in that fortress and Corfe Castle for forty weary years, lest she should intrigue for the crown—to which she had a far better right than had either of the kings who kept her in confinement. She died at Bristol, 1240, and was first buried in St. James Church; but a few months afterwards Henry III. ordered her body to be removed to Amesbury, some eight miles from Bristol.

Sir Ralph was also Warden of the Forest and Chase of Rainham, and Governor of Devizes Castle in Wilts. He died about 1237 and was succeeded by his son Ralph, who married Joane, daughter and heiress of Sir William Champernowne of Umberleigh, Devon. Their son, another Ralph, styled by Risdon "a worthy warrior," whose marriage with the heiress of Sir Richard de Lonen, brought him large estates in Devon and Wilts, was Sheriff of the former county and Governor of the castles of Exeter and Berkeley. The latter castle had been seized by King John because the then Lord Berkeley (Robert) refused to accompany him in his French wars. His successor, Lord Thomas, was forced not only to see his neighbour, Sir Ralph, installed as keeper of his hereditary castle, but also to contribute liberally to his support while there. Henry III. ultimately restored Berkeley to its rightful owner.

Sir Ralph was succeeded by his son John, who, in the 11th of Edward I. had several grants of manors, and, in 1299, "licence to crenulate his manor house at Yate" (Parker's "Domes. Arch.," vol. iv. p. 404). Remains of this building still exist in the massive gateway of the court. In 1311 he also received a grant of free warren in the manor of Yate.

Little enjoyment, however, could he have had of his hunting or architecture; for, accompanying Edward II. on his disastrous expedition into Scotland, he, and his brother Sir Henry (banneret), were taken prisoners. They were ultimately released, but soon afterwards joining Lancaster's rebellion against the Dispensers, their lands were forfeited to the Crown, Sir Henry losing not only lands but life, his sentence being that he should be "drawn for his treason and hanged for his homicides;" which sentence was executed at Bristol, 1322. From the king's point of view he


GATEWAY OF JOHN DE WILLINGTON, YATE COURT.

fully deserved his fate, having, in that same year, attacked Gloucester, burned Bridgnorth, and fought the Royal troops at Burton-on-Trent, and at Borobridge, in which latter battle he was taken prisoner. Drayton, in his "Baron's Wars," thus refers to him—

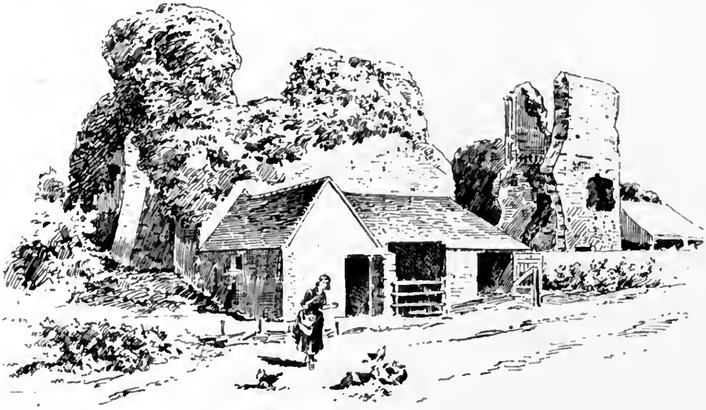
> "Nor, Wylington, will I applaud thy spirit.
>
> . . . . .
>
> Your bayes must be your well-deserved blame,
> For your ill-actions quench my sacred flame."

John, meanwhile, who had also engaged in several battles and in the burning of Bridgnorth, had obtained pardon and release by submitting to a fine of £3,000 and to a perpetual rent-charge. On the accession of Edward III., however, he was restored to favour, and in the 3rd of that reign was made a baron for helping to rescue the king from a sudden onslaught of the Scots.

He was succeeded, says Sir Bernard Burke, by his son Ralph, who, serving the king faithfully in France and Scotland, was also summoned to Parliament, February 25, 1342. He married Alienor, daughter of John, 1st Lord Mohun, of Dunster, Somerset; but dying without issue, as did also his uncle and successor, Reginald, the estates passed to Henry, son of the Henry who was executed, and who had married Margaret de Freville, co-heiress of the Marmions of Tamworth. On the death of Henry's son and successor, John, 1397, the main line became extinct in the male descent. The two sisters of John, Elizabeth and Margaret, upon whom the property devolved, married into the families of Worth and Beaumont, whence, through heiresses, descend the Bassets (present owners of Umberleigh), as also the Baronet families of Chichester, and the Marquis of Donegal. A younger branch of the family, after remaining in Gloucestershire for three or four descents, settled in Warwickshire, at Barcheston and Hurley Hall, whose history will be given under the latter head.

On the division of the property between the two heiresses, the Gloucestershire estates, including Yate Court and Manor, fell to Elizabeth Beaumont. Soon afterwards, however, they passed, by the influence of Sir Giles Daubeney, to John Basset, Esq., who, in return, left a considerable portion, including Yate, to Sir Giles ; and it was from his son, Lord Daubeney, that Lord Maurice, the second of the "disinherited" Berkeleys, obtained the manor and park on a lease.

In the 9th Henry VIII. he began to build his house, incorporating with it the best portions of the ancient mansion of John de Willington, and retaining the enclosing moat. The house, we are told, was built of "wood from Kingswood forest and stone from Haslebury quar," and it took three years in building. Like so many of these old moated mansions, it was built round an oval courtyard (of rather more than an acre in extent), and contained the usual living rooms, facing inwards on the north and west, with offices, stables, bakery, &c. A strong wall stood within the moat, further defended by the portcullised gateway on the south, and a high, square tower on the north-east, probably occupied by the men-at-arms. Without the moat, on the gateway side, were the farmyard, the orchard, gardens, &c., stretching round to the west; while on the east were some large fishponds, now beds of hosier and reed. As no traces of a second wall or moat appear, it is probable that the outer buildings were enclosed by a high wooden palisade.



REMAINS OF SQUARE TOWER, YATE COURT.

Here Lord Maurice, when not engaged elsewhere, principally resided in considerable state and hospitality, being for some time High Sheriff of the county, Ranger of Pucklechurch Park, &c. Here also, in 1519, the magnificent but unfortunate Edward, Duke of Buckingham, who at that time was building his castle of Thornbury, paid him a visit, although there was no great love on either side, as is evidenced by some strong language between them recorded in the Berkeley Chronicles.

Lord Maurice was held in great honour by the neighbouring abbots, who never granted a lease to their tenants without consulting him, and "always on his visits received him with procession, and censing and other rights as became a founder." But, although a great lord, he, like his ancestors, kept a personal eye upon all his accounts, checking the weekly books of his bailiffs and household stewards, &c., every Saturday. From these books, still kept in Berkeley Castle, can be seen, by the extra charges, when visitors were staying at the Court—the Duke of Buckingham's visit, for instance, being duly chronicled.

Maurice married Katherine, daughter of Sir William Berkeley, of Stoke Gifford, but had no family, and tiring of the comparative monotony of country life, he, with his "wife's liking," accepted the governorship of the town of Calais, offered him by Henry VIII. This was not his first visit to France; he had gone there some years before in attendance upon Henry's sister, the Princess Mary. At Calais he remained until his death, in 1523, and was buried in St. Nicholas Church in that town. He left a large sum of money towards the building of the church and monastery of St. Augustine's, Bristol, and intended to have been buried in the chapel he had erected there, but his death abroad prevented it. Yate was also the usual "standing house" of Lady Berkeley during her lord's absence, and when he died at Calais she continued to reside there until her own death two years afterwards, being interred in the north chancel of Yate Church; that pertaining to the lords of Yate, as the south chancel did to those of Stanshawe.

The next Lord Berkeley was Thomas 5th, of Mangotsfield, who was also a great housekeeper at Yate, his two daughters being married from there with much state: Miriell, the eldest, 1527, to Robert Throckmorton, Esq., of Warwickshire; her marriage portion being 750 marks, with lands in Warwickshire and Worcestershire, and her wedding hose and shoes costing 22d.! She was a lady of small stature, lived long and virtuously, had five children, but lived to see 220 direct descendants. Jone, the younger daughter, was married the year following on "Midsomer-day at her father's house at Yate" to Sir Nicholas Poyntz; the agreement being that if he died before the ceremony, she was to marry his brother, Giles Poyntz; their clothes and wedding expenses to be equally shared by the respective fathers. They had nine children, the youngest of whom, Frances, married Sir John Berkeley, the last of the Berkeleys of Beverston.

Lord Maurice had left the lease of Yate, eighty years after his wife's death, to Lord Thomas's son Thomas, dividing the plate and goods contained therein equally between them. Young Thomas, however, never seems to have had a separate establishment there. He had married a comparatively poor wife, and ready money was scarce in the family at that time. His second wife, the renowned "Lady Anne," who figures so forcibly in these chronicles, was a quick-witted brunette, of middle height and comely appearance; clever, capable, fruitful in resource, with a masculine spirit and imperious will, yet capable of sincere friendship and passionate affection. Indeed, to her children she was culpably indulgent, never permitting them out of her sight, nor insisting upon their education, so that they grew up almost destitute of even the rudiments of knowledge. This foolish spoiling had doubtless not a little to do with the unhappy married life of her daughter Elizabeth, one of the "fairest ladies of King Edward's Court," who separated from her husband, the Earl of Ormond, about a year after their marriage, because "they could not agree." Anne was, and continued till her death, a staunch Roman Catholic, on which account she became high in favour with Queen Mary.

Lord Thomas, on his accession, finding himself burdened with his own debts and heavy payments under his father's will, determined, like an honest man, not to keep up the great house at Yate, but to live simply and retrench. He therefore bargained with the Countess of Wilshyre, whose husband had succeeded Lord Maurice Berkeley as "Controller of the town and marches of Calais," to lodge at Stone Place, in Kent; himself, his wife, baby daughter Elizabeth (named probably after the little Princess Elizabeth), two gentlemen, and six men, at "25s. 4d. a week for all!" And so in June, 1534, he set out from Yate to London, and from thence to Stone, arriving September 15th. A few days afterwards he was taken ill from eating too much fruit; and although his wife, who was passionately attached to him, despatched a messenger to London in all haste for a skilful physician, he died on the 22nd, aged twenty-nine, having been lord scarcely two years.

He was buried at Stone, simply and unostentatiously, as he had lived, judging from the following account of the funeral expenses:—

"For making of his chest, 12d. (Coffins in those days were often literally "chests," furnished with lock and key!)

"For half-hundred of boards, 14d.

"For 4 bushells of bran to lay within his chest, 12d.

"For winding sheet, 20d."

This lord also obtained a grant of the Constableship of Berkeley Castle and Rangership of Kingswood Forest, the latter of which was held by Sir Nicholas Poyntz during the minority of Lord Henry Berkeley, Henry purchasing it from him in the reign of Mary.

In the November following her husband's death, Lady Anne, as we have seen, came back to Yate to become the mother of a son, Lord Henry, and it was while still confined to her chamber that her brother-in-law, Maurice Berkeley of Mangotsfield, made the raid on her deer-park referred to in the last chapter. One winter's night Sir Maurice and his friends, Nicholas and Giles Poyntz, with their servants, in revenge for Anne's raid on Charnell's mill and pool, broke into the park at Yate, and, having chased and slain the deer, approached the house, with the intention, it is said, of setting fire to a large hayrick standing within a high pale at the stable end adjoining the house, in the hope (so greatly had Lady Anne made herself hated) that the fire might "catch the house and burn the lady with her weirish boy in the midst of it. 'And then, Maurice,' quoth Giles Poyntz, 'thou shalt be heire, and wee have an end of all our suites!'" Fortunately for Anne, however, some poachers happened to be in the park the same night, also bent upon "slaying of the deer," who getting wind of Maurice's company, took them for other poachers, and not desiring to come into contact with those whom they thought might be better armed than themselves, sought refuge under the hayrick. Standing thus, close crouched, they overheard the plan for firing the rick, and fearing to be burned or informed against, they fled; while Maurice's party, taking them for Anne's servants, and fearing, in their turn, to be discovered and taken, fled also in another direction! But the "poachers peached," and Anne instituted a suit in Star Chamber, which resulted in the marauders being convicted and fined.

This story, while suggesting the site of the principal sleeping apartments, suggests also the query, Did the moat exist all round at that date, or was it filled in, as at present, on the gateway side where the farmyard was? If not, one could hardly understand a fire spreading across water of such a width with sufficient force to burn strong stone buildings.

It must have been somewhere about this time that the legal skirmish took place between Anne and the Dean of Westbury, detailed by that ecclesiastic in a pitiful letter to Lord Cromwell. The Dean relates how upon a certain Michaelmas Day he was riding towards Gloucester, to "serve his Majestie at the Quarter Cessions," when he found at the "Church Howse in the parish of Yate, where the Lady Anne Berkeley dwelleth, divers evyle disposed persons, to the number of xiiij, playing at the unlawful and forbidden game of tennes at Divine service tyme in the mornynge, who at his comynge toward them avoided and fledde away." Not so quickly, however, but that he contrived to ascertain some of their names, intending at the "Cessions" to have them punished. But he reckoned without his host, for upon, at length, reaching Gloucester, he found the Lady Anne had arrived before him, and availing herself of the commission granted by her royal master, had empanelled a common jury of her servants and retainers. Upon discovering this, the Dean discreetly decided to defer the matter until the coming of the justices of the assize ; which countercheck so angered Anne that she set upon him with "many slanderous and opprobrious words in the presence of divers gentlemen," wishing the tennis players had "beaten him, and that it should have been done if she had known of his coming," further threatening that she would "sytte upon his skyrts." Which threat she promptly carried out by causing the Dean, his friends and servants, to be wrongfully indicted, for that he and Sir Nicholas Poyntz had ordered a certain Sir William Norton, one of her priests (the clergy were called "Sir" instead of "Reverend" in those days) to be attached for keeping certain prohibited books supporting the claims of Rome; but whom she had so managed to shield that, in spite of undeniable evidence, no conviction could be obtained. All this the Dean set forth in pitiful terms (see Ellis's "Original Letters"); but whether he obtained redress or no does not appear.

Our old chronicler, Smyth, had no sympathy with the rigid Sabbatarian notions which were coming into vogue. He says, "I like well to walk in somertime on Sundaies after evening prayers with my wife to Hodley Green, and there to behold my neighbours children and servants with mine owne to runne at barley-breakes, dance in the ring, and such like sports, a laudable recreation which hath no oppugners save way-ward dispositions and men of too sterne a judgement."

Lady Anne and her children seem to have spent much of their time at Yate, and it was from there that her beautiful daughter, Elizabeth, set out for Bristol on her way to Ireland to join her husband, the Earl of

Ormond. It was to Yate that Queen Mary sent, commanding Lord Henry, then only nineteen, to arm five hundred of his trusty followers, and bring them to her assistance in the rebellion of Sir Thomas Wyatt. The young lord promptly gathered his retainers from far and near, pledging his family plate to furnish the necessary equipment. But ere they had well set out on their journey, tidings came that they would not be needed, for that Wyatt, seeing his cause desperate, had given himself up in the streets of London to Sir Maurice Berkeley—probably Sir Maurice Berkeley of Bruton, who was standard-bearer to Henry VIII., Edward VI., and Elizabeth.

When scarce twenty, Lord Henry married Katherine Howard, the sixteen-year-old daughter of the Earl of Surrey, a beautiful damsel, as fond of show and gaiety as Henry himself. The first part of their married life they spent in one long round of amusements, going up and down between Yate, Mangotsfield, Caludon, and London, hawking as they went, "making eight days at least, and as many back again, and seldom attended by less than 150 livery servants." A goodly show, clothed in summer in tawny liveries, with the lion rampant in white embroidered upon the left sleeve, and in winter in coats of white frieze, lined with crimson taffeta. But all this cost money, and at the end of four years Lord Henry, having outrun his purse, found himself obliged to do as his parents had done under like circumstances—go into lodgings and retrench. Accordingly the young couple, with a few retainers, went to stay at Rising, in Norfolk, with Katherine's mother, the Countess of Surrey, paying 10s. per week for themselves, 4s. for their gentlemen, and 3s. for the yeomen. By and by, however—whether tiring of country life, or of wife, or of mother-in-law, does not transpire—Lord Henry returned to London alone, and lived for some time with his own mother in Shoe Lane, where he beguiled the time with "cards, dice, tenys, bowles, and hawking and hunting in Gray's Inne fields, Islington, and Heygate."

Having thus "had his fling," he rejoined his wife, and they seem to have resumed their old life; for the next twenty years were spent (in the intervals of legal business, of which, like his ancestor, he had more than enough) in moving about between their various seats, and enjoying any sport that was to be had. Henry was passionately fond of the chase, both of hunting and hawking, two particularly valuable "haggard falcons," "Stella" and "Kate," being unsurpassed by any in England. In pursuit of his favourite pastimes he often risked life and limb, and on two occasions owed his preservation entirely to the cleverness and sagacity of his horse, a fine gelding named "Brinsley." Galloping full speed through Kingswood Chase after a stag, he would have gone headlong into an old coalpit, hidden by fern and brake, but his horse caught sight of it, and in an instant threw himself down on his side, his rider knowing nothing of the danger until he found himself on the ground! The other escape was exactly similar, except that the scene was a deep pool, hidden by bracken, in the Chase of Caludon. "Brinsley" was a great favourite (as well he might be), remarkable for strength and swiftness; he once made the journey from Callowdon to London and back in forty-two hours, including the night's rest there. Lady Katherine fully shared her husband's love of the chase; she was herself an excellent shot with the longbow, and kept several merlins in her own chamber—to the serious detriment of her gowns, which Lord Henry had frequently to replenish.

Greater part of the first half of their married life was spent at Yate. Here he kept his buckhounds—and his Christmas festivities, at least in the 2nd Elizabeth, entertaining his guests (although only the gentlemen and rurality of the country) "with much port and solemnity"; and on Twelfth Day with such extraordinary "guilded dishes and vanities of the cookes art;" not to mention "a whole boar enclosed in a pale workmanly guilt by a cooke from Bristol," which excited Smyth's wonder as to "how it could have been brought to table." With all this cooking going on, and whole boars to roast, a fireplace as large as those (4½ yards wide) in the kitchen of Dudley Castle must have been required; in addition to the half-dozen "ovens" discovered on the east side of the courtyard during some alterations a few years ago.

It was at Yate, too, in the spring of that same year that Lord Henry, through his ardent love of sport, and taking foolish counsel, marred his otherwise handsome face. Starting a hare while walking in the park, he so overheated himself in the pursuit that his nose began bleeding violently; and, listening to ill advice, he "clapt his whole face into a basin of cold water, which brought on a flush and fulness of the nose which nothing could remedy, although he sent for the best physicians from London," finally going up thither himself to have the advice of the "whole college"!

Thanks to his hardy, outdoor life, Henry, although tall and slender, as were all the Berkeleys, had a strong constitution, and, in spite of youthful spoiling and love of amusement, possessed many pleasing qualities, being open and frank, sparing of speech, generous, and forgiving.

Three of the children of Lord and Lady Henry were born at Yate. Ferdinando, the eldest son, in the 2nd of Elizabeth; who, dying two years afterwards, was buried in the chancel of Yate Church; Frances, "sweet and virtuous," afterwards married to Sir George Shirley; and Katherine, who died young, and was buried at Yate. Mary, the eldest daughter, was born in London, 1558, "whither her mother was brought in a litter from Yate, with her nurse, fetched from Cheddar, whose reward for her services was 6s. 8d. at her departure." Queen Mary herself stood sponsor to the infant.

After Lady Anne's death, Lord Henry made his principal residence at Caludon, and in the 7th of Elizabeth, having already outrun his purse, sold the remaining forty-two years' lease of Yate to Sir Nicholas Poyntz "for 600 li; thus parting with the ancient habitation of his father, grandfather, and great uncle, where they had bestowed great charge in building, and which he himself had much repaired."

Meanwhile, Lord Daubeney having died without issue, the manor reverted to the Crown, and was bestowed upon the Duke of Somerset. On his attainder, becoming again Crown property, it was granted, 1557, to James Basset; and to his son Arthur, 1565. He, however, could not have possessed it long, for we find, from an old brass in the church of Yate, that Alexander Staples, Esq., was owner thereof in 1590. This brass, still in excellent preservation, is very curious, having engraved upon it the figures of the then Lord of Yate with his two wives and eleven children, all habited in the quaint costume of the period.

From Burke's "Landed Gentry" we gather that this ancient owner of the manor came of a good old family who "took their name from Staple in Somerset and the Hundred of Staple in Wilts," in which counties, as well as in Gloucestershire, they had considerable property. Thomas, fifth son of Alexander, was created a baronet in 1628, and settled at Lissane, Ireland, where his descendant, Sir Nathaniel A. Staples, still resides.

During the Irish massacres of 1641–2, "Lady Charity Staples, relict of the 2nd Sir Thos. Staples," was taken prisoner by the O'Quins and confined in Moneymore Castle. In her evidence on oath at Londonderry she states (see "Ireland in the 17th Century," by Mary Hickson) that while in prison in Moneymore Castle, she "looked out of the window where she was kept, and did see a Scotsman and five small children, with several others of the British nation, driven along by the rebels to be murdered; and that she saw the rebels at that time cutting and slashing the poor British as they passed by her window, amongst whom was one, Archy Laggan," so miserably cut and hacked about, "insomuch that she heard him cry out and beg them for God's sake to give him leave to lie down and die." A harrowing picture. One, alas! of many such presented by both parties during that terrible time.

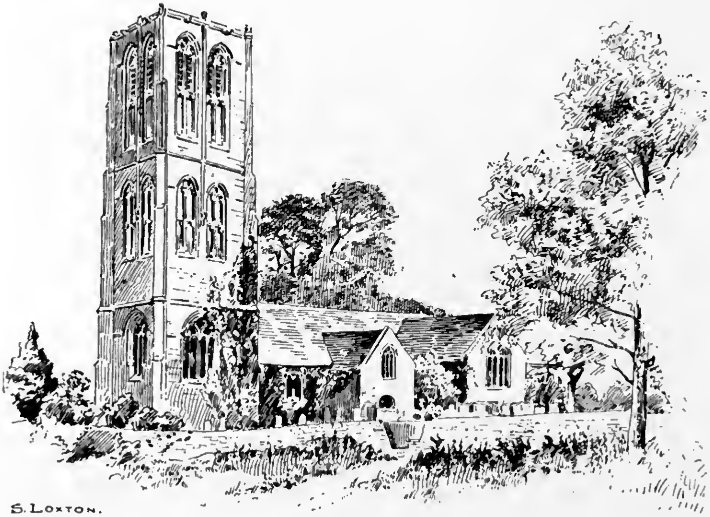
Sir Thomas Staples's eldest brother, Alex, having no son, left the English property to his two daughters; but of them nothing is recorded. It is possible that one of them, or a descendant, married into the Oxwich family, as a Mr. Oxwich owned the manor at the beginning of 1700; but of him, likewise, nothing can be gleaned, although a large house in the neighbourhood, still called "Oxwich Hall," was probably his residence. Late in the same century Yate had come into the possession of Sir Francis Knollis, he having bought it, and other property appertaining thereto, with the fortune of his wife, a Miss Cator; from them it has descended to its present owner, Mr. Cator Randolph, of Bath.

From the foregoing it appears that the Staples' owned the Court at the time of the Civil War, and as the present representative of the family asserts that they have always been "loyal subjects," its destruction at the hands of the Parliamentarians might have been owing as much to party feeling as to expediency.

So complete was the demolition, however, that it was never rebuilt, although, as was so often the case, a farmhouse subsequently arose among the ruins. This house, still inhabited, which stands on the west side of the courtyard, its outer wall encircled by the moat, contains portions of Lord Maurice's mansion. Some of the walls, from their thickness, have evidently formed part of the old structure; as also the stairs, which, like those of Iron Acton Manor, time of Henry VII., are composed of solid blocks of oak, almost black, and hard as stone. Several doors, too, of the same material, one thickly studded with iron, are of that date, while many of the windows have the square Tudor head and dripstone. Across the courtyard, on the north-east, are the only ruins of the old mansion still left standing, except the gateway and a few fragments incorporated in the farm buildings. The principal ruin appears to have been a square tower of several storeys; a now shapeless mass of strong masonry, within, seeming to suggest a spiral staircase;

but the whole is so thoroughly dilapidated and overrun with ivy, alder, and bramble, that it is impossible to ascertain anything clearly. That the remains form part of Lord Maurice's building, however, is certain, as the Berkeley lion rampant (an exact counterpart of those at Rodway) still decorates one of the ruined windows; and these, as well as the doorways and fireplaces, are in the Tudor style. One fireplace, backed with zigzag tiling, is as firm and perfect now as if erected yesterday; and while some old buildings on the east were being taken down to put up the present cowsheds, four or five large ovens were discovered, thus locating the "bakery," that important part of the domestic establishment; its adjunct, the mill, may still be seen a short distance west of the moat. The old gateway, which bids fair to outlast the remaining fragments of the younger building, is described by Parker in his "Domestic Architecture" as "an interesting old ruin of the time of Edward I.; the upper part has been mutilated, but the lower part is perfect (evidently the Parliamentarians found it too tough for them!) with the outer and inner archways; there is a small ogee-headed doorway on each side, and a good fireplace in the first floor room that has a fine mantelpiece ornamented with four-leaved flowers." Over the outer archway, in which was the portcullis, is also a two-light, traceried window, belonging to the room described, with, I am told, some device carved above; but the "envious ivy" now hides all from view; while, owing to the many changes of ownership through which the manor has passed, whatever records once existed have been lost.

Yate Church is, for a village, a spacious and interesting structure, although of its history, also, no memorials remain. It is Perpendicular in style (except one portion, which bears traces of Norman workmanship), with a nave and north aisle, two transepts, and what Rudge calls "three chancels;" or rather, the chancel is in three divisions, the centre having been restored, retiled, &c., in 1879, by the present vicar, the Rev. Alfred Pontifex, who, together with his brothers, also presented a handsome stained-glass



YATE CHURCH.

window. The roof of the chancel bears a sanctus turret, and in the north transept may still be seen some of the steps which led up to the rood loft. The ancient parish chest also remains intact; while the massive doors, with their enormous wooden bolts and lock cases, seem intended to withstand a siege. The western entrance not being required, the space beneath the tower has been utilised as a vestry; a beautiful carved oak screen, representing the four Evangelists, the work of a former parishioner, dividing it from the nave. The tower itself is very fine, rising up straight, and square, and shapely, far above the rest of the building, its arched doorway, and graceful, traceried windows, bearing eloquent testimony alike to the skill of the architect as to the liberality of the builder. Who these were it seems vain to inquire, the silent stones, destitute of inscription or armorial bearing, mocking all effort to find out. It is true that, carved on one of the topmost turrets, a keen eye can discern, grouped together, the fleur de lis, portcullis, and Tudor rose, which latter also appears on other parts of the tower; but the name of him who ordered those Royal insignia to be placed there, has vanished with so much else that is curious and interesting, in the shadowy mists of the dim and voiceless Past.

CHAPTER V.

CALUDON CASTLE.

THE battered remains of this ancient castle lie in the heart of Warwickshire, about three miles north-east of Coventry, and between it and Combe Abbey, the beautiful seat of the Earl of Craven.

At the Conquest Caludon came into the possession of the Earls of Chester, descendants of the famous Lady Godiva, whose memory is still cherished in the ancient city; the last of the Chesters giving it to Stephen de Segrave, a Baron and Chief Justice of England, in whose family it continued as long as the male line lasted.

The estate of Caludon does not seem to have been extensive, comprising only some 200 acres of land, with a park of 20 acres, a pool, and two watermills. Nothing is said of a house; but as the "one freeholder, John de la Hay," must have had some rooftree, it is probable that he built the first dwelling erected on or near the site of the castle. In Henry III.'s reign the property was forfeited to the Crown, but regained on payment of a fine. An immediate descendant of Stephen, Gilbert de Segrave, married the heiress of the Chaucumbs, from whom comes the "lion rampant" of the Berkeley arms. His son Nicholas obtained a "charter of free warren," *i.e.*, control of the smaller game, such as hares, rabbits, pheasants, &c. He was succeeded by John de Segrave, who seems to have decided to make the place his home, for in 1305 he "obtained license from Edward I. to build a house at Caludon with moat and embattled walls; this he afterwards enlarged, his son further extending the buildings and park, and building or rebuilding the chapel." Another John, grandson of the former and last of the line, married the Duchess of Norfolk; and their daughter, in default of a son, carried the hereditary rank of Marshal of England. This daughter married Thomas de Mowbray, a powerful and wealthy Baron of Arholme, Lincolnshire, upon whom consequently devolved the barony of Segrave, and who brings us to the incident in the family record, which, although issuing so tragically to themselves, helped not a little towards the betterment of their native land—an incident vividly chronicled by Hall, and which, in "Richard II.," inspired the graphic pen of the prince of play writers.

Thomas Mowbray, Duke of Norfolk, son and successor of the great Baron of Arholme, accused Henry Duke of Lancaster (afterwards Henry IV.) of treasonable speech against King Richard. Henry denied the charge, and challenged Mowbray to single combat; and the king, failing to make peace, commanded them to meet in his presence, near to Mowbray's Castle of Caludon, and decide the quarrel by force of arms.

Accordingly, in the autumn of 1397, the lists were set with royal splendour upon Gosford Green, between Caludon and Coventry—the spot is still shown. The King having arrived, and being seated on his throne beneath the royal pavilion, the combatants entered the lists fully armed, their horses and themselves resplendent in their respective colours; Mowbray in crimson velvet, embroidered in silver with the mulberry-tree and lion rampant; Henry, arrayed in blue and green embroidered with swans and antelopes of "goldsmith's work." Having professed the justness of their quarrel, and taken leave of king and courtiers, the marshal at the king's command bade, "Sound trumpets, and set forward combatants." Both sprang to horse, Henry riding impatiently forward, spear in rest; but scarcely had Mowbray advanced a pace when Richard, the weak and vacillating, threw down his gauntlet as a signal for them to stop. The heralds shouted a restraining "Ho! ho!" and, advancing at the king's command, took the spears from the hands of the astonished combatants and bade them dismount and retire to their respective tents. There they sat on their gorgeous chairs of state for two weary hours, while Richard and the council he had hastily summoned came to the decision familiar to every reader of history, and on which, although they little thought it, hung the fate of king and kingdom; the decision condemning Mowbray to banishment for life, and Hereford for ten years—afterwards commuted to six. Long ere that time had elapsed Henry had returned to wear the crown which Richard had so deservedly forfeited; but Mowbray, after wandering remorseful and desolate for several weary years, "died of melancholy." He left three children: John, his successor; Isabel, married to James 1st, Lord Berkeley (this was the "Princely Lady Isabel," who died a prisoner in Gloucester); and Margaret, married to Lord Howard, Earl of Surrey.

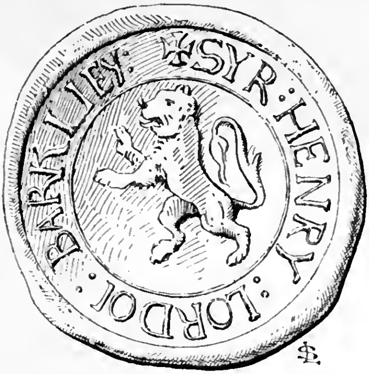
John was shortly succeeded by his son John, who had one little daughter; Anne, married, before her seventh year, to Richard, Duke of York, the younger of the two hapless lads murdered in the Tower. The poor little Duchess did not long enjoy her dignity; dying, according to Stowe, the very day after her marriage, and her immense estates finally passed to the Howards and Berkeleys; William, Marquis Berkeley, inheriting half the vast property, including Caludon, in right of his mother, the Lady Isabel. Although owning, he did not enter into personal possession, as John de Mowbray had leased the castle and land for life to Sir Humphry Talbot.

Maurice, brother and successor to Lord William, was the first Berkeley to live at Caludon; he did not spend much of his time there, however, but entailed it upon his wife (another Lady Isabel) and children, and she, after his death, lived and died there. On Lord Maurice's first visit, the abbot of the neighbouring monastery of Combe incurred his displeasure by not entertaining and honouring him as became the heir of the founder of the monastery, and as he had honoured the other heir, Thomas Howard, Earl of Surrey. Lord Maurice, therefore, filed a bill in Chancery to prove his descent and compel the abbot to entertain him as a "founder" and treat him with due reverence. The case was decided in his favour, and his posterity were thenceforth received with due homage; as is evidenced by the respect paid to the remains of the Lady Isabel when they were conveyed to their last resting-place beside her beloved husband in the church of the Augustine Friars in London. An account of the funeral ceremonies then observed has been left by Thomas Try, of Caludon, her relative and faithful administrator, and is well worth recording, as showing how a noble lady of those times was borne to her last resting-place.

From the Wednesday of her death until the following Monday she was watched continually with prayer and the chanting of psalms, one company of priests succeeding another, while the bells of Coventry Priory and churches, and of the neighbouring monastery of Combe, kept up a doleful clang. On Sunday, her "horse-litter" having been provided, she was placed thereon, and the procession set forth. First, thirty women of her household in black gowns and kerchiefs upon their heads, one ell each, with raw edges to show they were cut out of new cloth, every woman bearing a wax taper of 1lb. weight. After them followed twenty-six "crafts" with two hundred torches; about her hearse were her own servants, thirty-six, robed in black, and carrying waxen torches. Next after the crafts came the friars, white and grey, with their crosses: the priests, to the number of one hundred, likewise with crosses, preceded the hearse, and behind it walked five gentlewomen mourners. After them came the Recorder, and proxies for the family; then the Mayor of Coventry, with Alderman, Sheriffs, Chamberlains, &c. "And so she was conveyed to the Mother Church (the Priory of Coventry), where she rested in the quire before the high altar all that night, and had a solemn derge; and the Maire and his brethren went to Sir Michael's, where was a derge in like manner. And after derge they went into St. Mary's Hall, where a drynking was made for them; first, cakys, comfetts, and ale, the second course, marmelet, snoket (sweets?), redd wyne and claret, and the third course, wafers and blanch powder with romney and muskadele; and," adds the careful steward, "I thanke God, nor plate nor spones was lost, yet there was XXti desyn spones." On the following morning, after mass, they again set forward in the same order, except that the five lady mourners rode on horses draped with black, the gentlemen also rode in like manner. At Binley Bridge they were met by "my lord the Abbot of Combe with his mitre, censing the hearse, and with him a great company, numbering five or six thousand." And then there was more feasting, "the bordes being set divers times," before the company separated, and the funeral cavalcade proceeded on its way. Verily, the committing of "earth to earth" must have been a costly process in those days!

Maurice 4th, Lord Berkeley, having no family, and spending much of his life abroad, let Caludon on lease for life to the afore-mentioned Thomas Try, a descendant of the Berkeleys, and a most faithful friend and counsellor. He afterwards granted twelve years' extension of the lease, to date from the death of Try, in recognition of his services to him while abroad. Lord Thomas 5th (of Yate and Mangotsfield), "from his great love to Gloucestershire," had determined at one time to exchange Caludon and his manors in other shires for property in the latter county, but was dissuaded by the earnest representations of Try from thus sacrificing the ancient baronies of Segrave and Mowbray, from which his family took their titles.

Caludon was part of the jointure of Lady Anne Berkeley, and immediately upon the death of Try, she went to take possession, ignoring the extended lease; but was kept out by Try's widow and her son. Anne declared the lease forged, and had recourse to her usual argument—a bill in Chancery; which, after two years, was, by influence and misrepresentation, decided in her favour. During the interval she made frequent attempts to obtain forcible possession ; once filling up part of the moat with faggots to effect an entrance, and in the scrimmages both sides suffered considerably. She also claimed as part of the manor a house and lands in Binley, near by, which Try had bought and left to his illegitimate son, Gerrard ; and upon the latter remonstrating and showing his deeds, she threatened to make him "burn a faggot" (he was a Protestant) if he troubled her any more. This Gerrard subsequently became a priest, and so effectually assailed Lord Henry, Anne's son, with importunities and texts of Scripture, as to procure 40s. a year, and a sum down in lieu of his land.



SEAL OF LORD HENRY BERKELEY.

At this time, 3rd of Mary, 1556, Cardinal Pole granted to Lord Henry, the successor of Thomas 6th, permission to "use his chapel in Caludon as his ancestors had done before the schism, and to have a portable altar, to say mass and to receive the body and blood of Christ, and to keep the same in a box covered with a faire linen cloth, with a candle burning before it;" and at the same time granted him the tithes before obtained from Pope Gregory, but which were lost at the schism. It is most probable, however, that in suing for this grant, Lord Henry was influenced more by the wishes of his mother and wife than by his own, as he appears to have leant to the reformed religion; for we find him, some years afterwards, availing himself of one of the long sojourns he and his family occasionally made with friends and relatives, to shake off the Popish hangers-on of his wife, because they were not conformable to his tenets in religion.

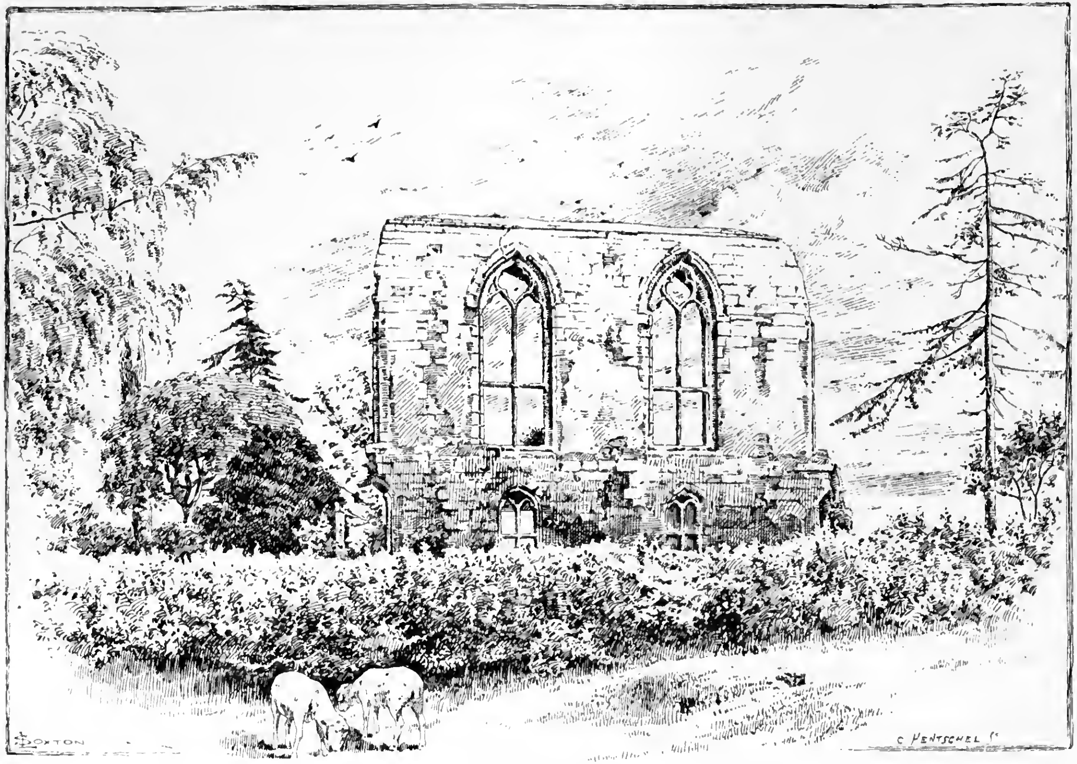
Lord Henry seems to have had a great liking for Caludon, for from the death of his mother in 1564, he lived almost entirely there, making only occasional sojourns at Berkeley and Yate. Probably the facilities for hunting and hawking which Warwickshire and the adjoining counties at that time afforded were one great attraction, both he and his wife, Lady Katherine, being such ardent devotees of the chase. They had no sooner settled at Caludon than they sent for their buckhounds from Yate, and began a progress of buckhunting in the neighbouring parks of Berkeswell, Bradgate, Groby, Leicester Forest, Ashby, and Kenilworth.

The Earl of Leicester, the owner of the latter, having, as we have seen, an eye to sundry properties of

Lord Henry's, which he claimed as heir to the Lisles, professed great friendship for him, and invited him to Kenilworth to hunt as much as he listed ; lodging him in his own chamber as a brother and fellow-huntsman. Then, having secured the goodwill of his guest, whose open, honest nature was slow to suspect deceit in others, he deftly introduced the subject of pedigrees, saying he counted it an honour to be descended from his guest's noble house, and should much like to know the particulars of the connection. Whereupon Lord Henry courteously permitted him to send a herald to Caludon and Berkeley to search certain deeds ; which kindness the dishonourable and rapacious earl returned by abstracting many of them and using them to contest the possession of Wotton and other valuable estates. Indeed, the unsettled and involved tenure by which Lord Henry held his property, together with the litigious and overbearing dispositions of his mother and wife, involved him in continual lawsuits ; and as he had neither the legal acumen nor the learning of his progenitors, the Lords Maurice Berkeley, he lost heavily. Sir James Harris, Serjeant-at-Law in King James's reign, facetiously observed that "the Berkeleys had with their longe walking beaten smooth the pavement between Temple-barre and Westminster Hall !"

Some of Lord Henry's lawsuits, however, had their comic side ; as that in which he brought an action against Cyprian Wood, the groom of his wife's chamber, to recover certain moneys which the Lady Katherine had given him to disburse shortly before her death ; Lord Henry bringing the man to account, not so much for the sake of the money, as because it had come to his ears that Wood (acting for one of the gentlewomen of the household) had attempted to steal a quantity of his fine linen. The said linen, with other valuables, had been packed, presumably by the "gentlewoman," in two trunks, which it was arranged were to be ferried over the moat, in one of the brewhouse coolers, under cover of the darkness. The trunks had been safely conveyed to the bank and got aboard, but scarcely had the steersman pushed off two yards from shore when the bung-hole in the midst fell open, and the impromptu ferry-boat, being heavily laden, began to sink ! Dire was the consternation ; diverted, not lessened, by a sudden shout, as several of Lord Henry's retainers, who had got wind of the plot and set themselves to watch, sprang from their concealment, and, rushing upon the scene, succeeded by dexterous exertions in rescuing the precious linen and restoring it to its rightful owner.

Lord Henry's suits, however, were not always in defence of his own property. He seems to have taken a kindly interest in the affairs of his tenants and poorer neighbours, not unfrequently intervening to save them from the exactions and encroachments of rapacious land-holders. Which regard for justice, so unusual in those days, together with his boundless hospitality, and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REMAINS OF BANQUETING HALL, CALUDON CASTLE.

candid, generous nature, won him a warm place in the hearts of the common people. Indeed, this lord, in spite of his too great love of amusement (and "His longe, slender, lady-like hand knew a dye as well and how to handle it as any of his rank and time") was a right good and honourable gentleman—the most upright in character and generous in nature of all the ancient lords of Berkeley.

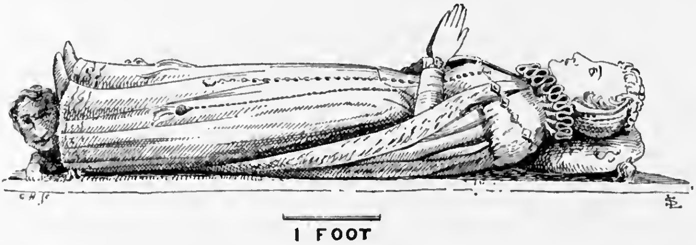
Caludon Castle under Lord Henry was a large and imposing mansion; much more imposing and extensive, as indeed was the manor itself, than it was under his predecessors. Fortunately, Smyth gives some account of the additions and rebuildings, which will enable us to form a fairly accurate idea of its size and general appearance in this lord's time.

He says: "About the 22nd of Elizabeth (1580) was the porter's lodge, the buildings towards the great pool on the north-western part of Caludon House, with the brewing house, the stables, and many other out-houses, both within and without the moat, built of new; and the roofs of those old castle buildings taken down and so altered that the whole house might be said to have been moulded and made new. But for the banqueting house on the north side of the said pool, it was the polite work of the Lady Elizabeth, wife of Sir Thomas Berkeley, in the 40th and 41st years of Elizabeth, and the retired cell of her soul's soliloquies to God her Creator."

Thus it will be seen that a practically new mansion was erected; of which, alas! owing to the destructive havoc of the Civil Wars, only one solitary wall now exists. The general plan of the castle remained the same as when first designed by John de Segrave; that is an oval, of little more than an acre in extent, lying east and west. This was surrounded by a moat and strong embattled walls, and within stood the various buildings; the entrance being by a gateway and drawbridge on the east. No trace of this is to be seen, however, the moat having been filled in on that side; on the other three it is perfect, though now dry and turfed. The principal apartments of the castle lay on the north and west of the courtyard; viz., the great chamber or banqueting hall, the hall where the yeomen dined and lived, the dining-room, withdrawing-room or lady's chamber, chapel, great gallery (used for audiences and for exercise in bad weather), sleeping apartments, &c. The kitchen, brewhouse, bakery, and other offices occupied the south and east sides, the stables being near the entrance, as was usual; although on account of the confined space, some of these must have stood without the moat with the other farm buildings on the east and north, where is now "Slaughter-house Close," an old timbered barn, and other traces. The chief entrance to these ancient castles was invariably through the farmyard. The bowling green is still clearly traceable about 250 yards south of the moat, the gardens most probably occupying the intervening space. The "Great Pool" is now a fertile field of about three acres in extent, called "The Pools," and still keeps its ancient shape.

The household of Caludon, even when, through losses and lawsuits, Lord Henry's fortunes were at their lowest ebb, never numbered less than seventy persons: viz., the "gentlemen," under the gentleman usher, who was expected to keep order and regulate the household; to see that all attended service in the great hall or chapel, and to meet and, with the gentlemen, entertain all strangers of worth. The yeoman usher; usher of the hall; yeoman of the great chamber, with the yeomen under them, whose duty it was to prepare and keep in order the dining chamber, to strew with rushes, dust cushions, remove spots from carpets, chairs, stools, &c.; to cheer with fire in winter and flowers in summer, and one or both of whom was to be always in attendance to remove seats, snuff candles, and light gentlemen guests to their chambers; also "to suffer no doggs to come into the dyneing chamber." The yeomen had also to attend the lady when she rode abroad; the "gentlemen" performing like service to the lord. Then there were gentlewomen, maid-servants, and servants of the kitchen; cooks, bakers, brewers, &c.; besides grooms, smiths, huntsmen, falconers, and men-at-arms; with also a resident priest, secretaries, and steward; and several youths and maidens of gentle birth, attendants and companions of the younger members of the family. It was in this capacity that Smyth himself entered the service of the Berkeleys when a lad of seventeen.

During his earlier years few contemporaries outshone Lord Henry in the magnificence of his style of living and the number of his retainers, to which extravagances he was incited by his high-born wife. The following is her portrait, sketched by the compiler of the Chronicles ; " The Lady Katherine was tall, with yellow hair and a lovely complexion, of haughty carriage and bearing, though gracious to her inferiors, and very eloquent of speech ; but she ruled her husband too much and not wisely, helping herself from the proceeds of all that was sold without his knowledge." He (the chronicler) gives an amusing instance of her " haughtiness."



EFFIGY OF LADY KATHERINE, FIRST WIFE OF LORD HENRY BERKELEY.

Soon after entering her service, and while the family were living at the White Friars, Coventry, which had been taken on a three years' lease, he was passing her hurriedly in the corridor with a covered dish for her son's breakfast, and, in place of the customary elaborate salutation, made only a " running legg," or courtesy. She immediately called him back and ordered him to make a hundred "leggs." Then, seeing he did it awkwardly, being a novice in the art, she gave him a lesson, raising her own dress nearly to the knee, that he might see the exact angle at which to bend, and the graceful sweep of the foot! The same author has a story of how this high-born lady, in her desire to pry into futurity, wrote a letter to an old wizard in the Forest of Arden, and how the letter fell into wrong hands and liked to have caused grave scandal. But he tells also how sweet a singer she was, and how her husband and the ladies of her household would stand outside her chamber door to listen while she sang, accompanying herself upon the lute.

Once, to please her haughty fancy, Lord Henry outbid Queen Elizabeth for a mother-o'-pearl lute upon which both ladies had set their minds. The price was so heavy that he agreed to pay it by instalments; but ceasing to carry out his agreement, he was finally sued for the remainder! Ten years after Katherine's death Lord Henry gave this lute to the Countess of Derby; in 1810 it had come into the possession of Mrs. Jordan, the actress. In addition to her musical talent, Lady Katherine was, also, a good linguist, and learned withal; in later life giving herself to the study of natural philosophy, astronomy, mathematics, and other abstruse sciences.

Interesting and valuable indeed are the glimpses given of the owners of this stately mansion, and the life lived there in those far-off times. Their chronicler tells, for instance, of Lord Henry's religious exercises, how regular and devout he was at public and private devotions; describing how his own duty was, as a youthful page of the household, so soon as his lord was up and dressed, to carry his cushion and book to his chamber; and how, as he waited without to bear them away again, he had heard him pleading audibly, "for mercy and forgiveness." To his servants Lord Henry was kind and liberal: too much so, for many of them seem to have been arrant wasters and time-servers; while he did not forget the poor at his gate. On three days of the week "the poor of the villages and parishes next adjoining Caludon came for relief, each receiving a mess of wholesome pottage with a piece of beoffe or mutton therein; half a cheat (wheaten) loafe, and a kan of beere; while he daily carried in his purse, for private distribution, 8s. or 10s. in small sums. On Maundy Thursday many poor men and women were clothed by this lord and his wife; and at the three great feasts, Christmas, Easter, and Whitsun, a sum of 20 marks was sent by him to several of the chief inhabitants of those villages, and of Gosford Street, Coventry, to be distributed."

As showing how kindly and perfect a gentleman Lord Henry was, Smyth says: "At Christmas and other festivals when his neighbours were feasted in his hall, he would, in the midst of their dinner, rise from his own, and, going to each of their tables, cheerfully bid them welcome; and when guests of honour and high rank filled his own table, he seated himself at the lower end; and when such guests filled but half his board and those of meaner degree the other half, he would take his own seat between them in the midst of his long table near the salt, which gracious considerate acts did much to gain the love that his people had for him"—Far more than they had for his haughty wife, Lady Katherine, high-born and beautiful, and clever though she was. Indeed, one could never imagine her as sitting "below the salt," out of consideration for the feelings of an inferior. She seems to have claimed and enforced royal homage; even her prayer-book must be presented with the lowest courtesy and on the knees of her gentlewoman; and she never forgave those who had slighted her or detracted from her power and state. Much of the trouble that befel herself and family through the continual lawsuits with the powerful Earls of Warwick and Leicester, might have been averted had she not pressed and harried her too yielding husband into contesting their claims, instead of, as wisely advised, letting the lands go by default. She also obstinately refused the offer of a double marriage between her two daughters and Sir Philip and Sir Robert Sydney, nephews and heirs of the Earl of Leicester: which marriage would have healed the feud, and, as Smyth truly says, have given her daughters for their husbands "two of as eminent gentlemen as England afforded."

Her haughty spirit and resolute will, however, stood her in good stead at times; as in the following instance. About three years before her death, suffering much pain in one of her fingers, she was told by "an excellent chirurgion of Coventry" that either it must be cut off close to the palm, or else be lanced all along to the bone. She chose the latter, although far more painful; and when he desired one of her strongest gentlewomen to hold her, as the pain would be extreme, she refused, saying, "Spare not you in performing your part, and leave the rest to me." Then, "holding out her hand, he did his office, she never blenched nor appeared even to notice the pain. At which the surgeon seemed incredibly to wonder"—as well he might!

Early in Elizabeth's reign a son had been born to Lord and Lady Henry, but he died in his second year; several daughters followed, two only arriving at maturity. That the male line should thus die out was a great trial to Lady Katherine, and she confided her trouble to Mr. Francis Aylworth, of Kington Magna, Warwickshire, "a little old weirish man, but an excellent well-read chirurgion and physician, and for many years a gentleman living in her house." He cheered her by prophesying that within a year she would have a son and heir, offering to wage ten pounds to thirty that so it would be. The lady accepted the wager, willing enough to lose if the prophecy came true. It did come true, and when assured by her attendants that she was the mother of a son, her first words were, "'Carry Aylworth his thirty pounds,' which she had purposely laid ready in gold in her chamber."

This son, born 1575, was named Thomas; Queen Elizabeth, then staying at Kenilworth, being his godmother, the Countess of Warwick acting as proxy. The "most part of his education was at Caludon, under the indulgent instruction of his mother and her gentlewomen, whom, in nine years, they had only taught to spell and meanly read a little English." At that time the family entered on their three years' residence at the White Friars, Coventry, where the young heir was provided with a tutor, and two youths as attendants and fellow-scholars—Smyth himself, and William Ligon, a descendant of the Berkeleys. After two years the lads, with their tutor, went for three years to Magdalen College, Oxford; where Thomas Berkeley fell ill of a fever, from the effects of which he never wholly recovered. Coming up to London with his father at Michaelmas term, 1594, to a lodging in Fleet Street, he first met Elizabeth Carey, only child of Sir George Carey (afterwards Lord Hundson), then living at his house in the Black Friars, to which lady he was married in the following February.

When Queen Elizabeth died, this Thomas Berkeley accompanied his brother-in-law, Lord Carey, to Scotland to carry the news to King James. At the coronation he was created Knight of the Bath, and on the assembling of Parliament, was one of the representatives of Gloucestershire; for the rest, he seems to have been weak in health, selfish and extravagant. He died at Caludon in his thirty-seventh year, and was buried "in the north-east corner of St. Michael's Church," his widow erecting to his memory the tomb of grey marble; since removed lower down the aisle near to the north door.

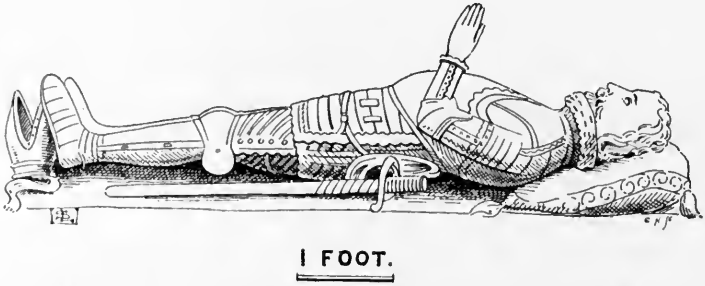
In that same north-east corner of St. Michael's, then the Draper's Chapel, now the Lady Chapel, his mother, Lady Katherine, had been laid to rest some fourteen years before, "with the greatest state and honour that for many years past had been seen in that city or in those parts of the kingdom." Her monument, of black marble, has been destroyed.

The account of her interment, although too long to give, is interesting and suggestive when compared with that of the Lady Isabel, as showing the change in funeral observances from those prevailing in the pre-Reformation days of Henry VIII.

In the later as in the earlier time, the corpse was watched with prayer and psalm day and night (in this instance for six weeks); and when at length removed to Coventry for interment, a train of mourners a quarter of a mile long, clad in all the orthodox habiliments of woe, and marshalled according to their rank, escorted it to the church. Bells clanged dismally from neighbouring steeples, and crowds of curious sightseers lined the narrow streets; but priest and monk, gilded cross and waxen candle, that had made such a show in the old days, were conspicuously absent. His "Lordship's Chaplins," of course, were there, to perform the ceremony and preach the sermon; but instead of the company of priests, and friars, white and grey, walked with marshal steps and stately bearing a train of knights and gentlemen, carrying aloft the "banner of honour," banner-rolls, and escutcheons, great and small, blazoned with the titles and dignities of the lady's noble house. While marshalling the long procession was no less a person than "Mr. Garter" in his "kingly coate of arms," assisted by "Chester Herald," and "Marshall Denis." As has been well said, "The heralds' visitation commenced when the doom of the monasteries was sealed."

Lord Henry was not present at the ceremony, having remained "mourning in his chamber at Caludon." To which place, after all was over, the funeral train returned and were entertained in such liberal and sumptuous fashion that the dishes left over which had been scarcely touched, served to feast more than one thousand poor persons. The noble mourner, however, did not long remain disconsolate, marrying in the following year a widow of mature age, daughter of Sir Michael Stanhope; though why he did so sorely puzzled his chronicler, for the two seem never to have lived together, nor to have shared each other's goods or interests; the lady residing at her mansion in London, Lord Henry, for the most part, at Caludon. Here, in 1603, after a fortnight's illness (caused, it is said, by a surfeit of small custards!) he passed quietly and peacefully away; "letting fall his fatal anchor that never can bee wayed up." He was buried in his own chapel at Berkeley, the funeral train being met at Tetbury by a great company of tenants, who attended it to Berkeley with real tears and lamentations for the "loss of the best landlord England had, whose like might not after bee by them expected."

Upon the tomb of white marble that covers his remains are beautifully executed effigies of himself and Lady Katherine; of which Smyth, who, from his personal knowledge, was well qualified to judge, says,



EFFIGY OF LORD HENRY BERKELEY IN BERKELEY CHURCH.

"The resemblances of both Henry and Katherine are to the life." The reproductions given of these interesting effigies are from sketches by Mrs. Bagnall-Oakeley, to whose clever and artistic pencil archæologists are much indebted.

Lord Henry was succeeded by his grandson George, then a boy of twelve, who, with his sister Theophilia, were the only surviving children of Sir Thomas and Lady Elizabeth Berkeley.

The first part of his childhood was passed sojourning with his parents at various mansions, finally settling at Caludon, where he attended school at Coventry under Dr. Philemon Hammond (the first translator of "Camden's Britannia") until his grandfather's death, when he removed with his mother and sister to London. Here, and at Lady Elizabeth's various mansions in the neighbourhood, he remained, under the instruction of a tutor, until ready for Oxford. Long before then, however, ere he had completed his fourteenth year, a marriage had been arranged and consummated, by the exertions of his mother and grandmother, between him and Elizabeth, daughter and co-heir of Sir Michael Stanhope, "she being of the age of nine years."

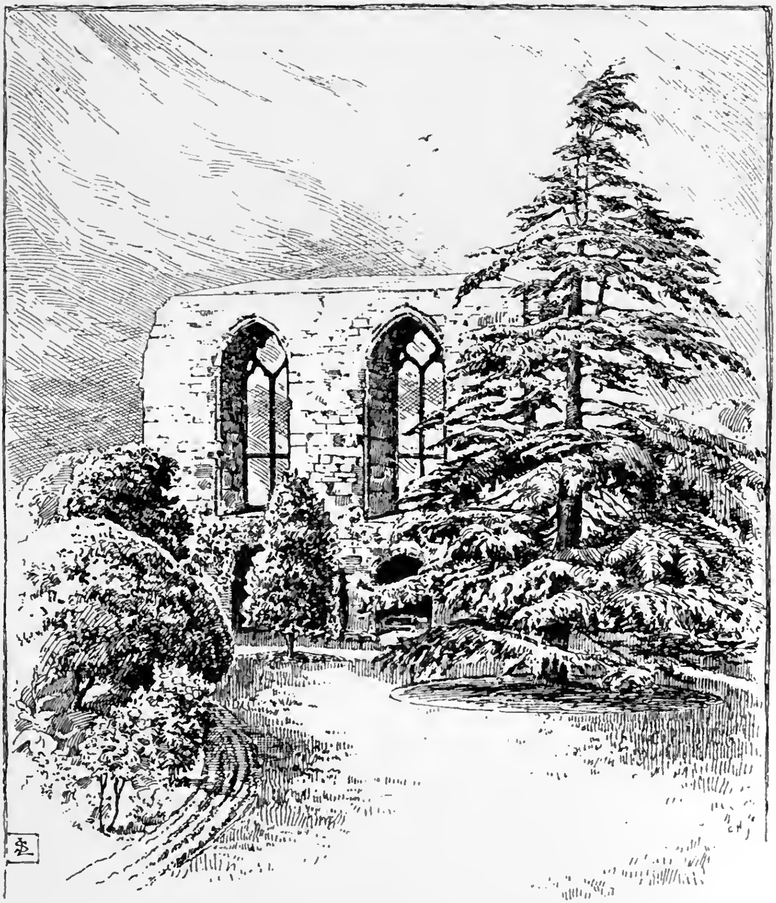
And here (1618) the chronicler, "having traced the history of this noble family through all its vicissitudes for 20 generations, extending over 550 years," ceases, leaving Lord George just entered upon his University career at Christ Church, Oxford.

From other sources, however, we gather that in 1632 Lord George sold his castle and manor of Caludon to Thomas Morgan, of Weston-upon-Weatherley, in the same county:—a scion of the Berkeley stock, from whom, through failure of direct issue, it passed to Colonel Thomas Morgan, in whose time the castle was demolished, for this Col. Morgan was a Parliamentarian soldier of great repute. He commanded a regiment of dragoons under Fairfax; was some time Governor of Gloucester; took Hereford from the Royalists; served with Cromwell's Ironsides in the

Netherlands; and finally assisted General Monk in the Restoration!

It is impossible to tell which party was responsible for the destruction of Caludon, or when it actually took place, as no account seems to be extant. Tradition says it was "besieged, the opposing force gathering at a place still called 'Campfield'"; but it is silent as to whether the "force" was composed of Royalists, or whether it was battered down by the Parliamentarians themselves lest it should be used against them when Charles laid siege to Coventry.

Whichever party did the work, however, they did it thoroughly; only a portion of one solitary wall, that of Lady Elizabeth's banqueting hall, being left. It is an outer wall, 4½ feet thick, with four windows entire, two above and two below, and traces of others on either side; and as the portion remaining is 60 feet high and 36 feet long, the hall must have been a noble one. The top windows (those of the hall) are graceful examples of late Perpendicular; they are ogee-headed, the trefoil-headed lights being divided by mullion and transom, with an open quatrefoil above. The lower windows are much smaller, trefoiled and transomed likewise, but with round traceried arch, and deeply recessed inside. This, together with the remains of a fireplace (the chimney going straight up in the thickness of the wall) show that it was a living room, not a "cellar," as has been stated; and most probably the "retired cell" of Lady Elizabeth; the sleeping apartments of lord and lady



INTERIOR OF BANQUETING HALL, CALUDON CASTLE.

being usually on the ground floor—as at Thornbury. Some years ago the remains of the chapel were visible west of the hall, but no traces now exist.

Local authorities have always considered this ruin as belonging to the original building. This, however, is clearly wrong; for, even apart from Smyth's account, the transomed windows would be sufficient to disprove it, as, with scarcely any exception, they were not used so early as John de Segrave's time. There is, however, equally little Elizabethan architecture in the fragment of building, Lady Berkeley evidently having the good taste to prefer the light and graceful Perpendicular to the heavier and more elaborate Tudor style. Most probably, also, she built to correspond with Lord Henry's renovations, the Perpendicular being much used at that time in restoration and rebuilding.

Colonel Morgan having no son, the property passed through his daughter's marriage, to Sir John Preston, of Furness, and from him to his brother Sir Thomas, who left two daughters, co-heiresses—one married to the Earl of Powis, the other to Lord Clifford of Chudleigh. On the partition of the property, Caludon fell to the latter, one of whose family in 1800 built the present farmhouse, "using much of the fallen stone." From the Cliffords it ultimately came to its present owners, the Rev. and Mrs. E. H. Garrard, of Marston Sicca, Warwickshire.

The old courtyard, once resounding to the tramp of hoofs, the sharp clink of armed heel, and all the busy preparations for the war or chase, is now a pleasant garden. Sweet white roses fling their graceful tapestry over the ruined wall ; while in the deep recesses of the windows children play hide and seek ; or perchance (for there are maidens in the old farmhouse) lovers whisper and protest, little witting the strange or stirring stories those ancient stones could tell.

CHAPTER VI.

KINGSBURY AND HURLEY HALLS.

Kingsbury.—The little town, or village, of Kingsbury, situated some eleven miles from Birmingham on the Midland line, dates back to early Saxon times, and was, according to Dugdale, a residence of the Mercian kings.

Its name "*Tyng*," belonging to the king, and "*Burgh*," a fortified place, certainly favour the assertion; as also its situation—nearly in the centre of Mercia, on a wooded hill overlooking the Tame, and surrounded by the once Forest of Arden, and the Chase of Sutton, a royal preserve of the Mercian kings.

In 827 the various Saxon kingdoms became united under one sovereign, Egbert, whose grandson, Alfred, after ceding a considerable portion to the rapacious Danes (then settled in the neighbouring towns of Derby, Leicester, Nottingham, Stamford, and Lincoln) bestowed the remaining, western, portion upon his daughter, the famous Ethelfleda, on her marriage with

Ethelbert, whom he had made military commander of Mercia.

To do justice to this princess, the able and heroic "Lady of the Marches," would require an article in itself; I can only briefly glance at her history.

On the death of her husband, she administered with wisdom and justice the affairs of the entire earldom, and taking personal command of her troops, afforded the greatest assistance to her brother, King Edward, in his frequent struggles with the Danes. Not content with protecting her own territories, she carried the war into those of the Northmen, retaking and restoring various important places which they had captured and partly destroyed, and wresting from them several of their large towns. The following are a few of her exploits as given in the ancient "Saxon Chronicles," *Ingram*, pp. 130–2: "This year (A.D. 913) by the permission of God, went Ethelfleda, Lady of Mercia, with all the Mercians of Tamworth, and built the fort there in the forepart of the summer, and before Lammas that at Stafford. In the next year that at Edderbury, in the beginning of the summer, and the same year, late in the autumn, that at Warwick. Then in the following year was built, after midwinter, that at Cherbury and at Warburton; and the same year, before mid-winter, that at Runcorn. In 918 was the Battle of Porlock. Ethelfleda conquered the town of Derby, and there were slain four of her thanes that were most dear to her within the gates. 919, she took Leicester. Soon afterwards, 12 nights before midsummer, she departed, at Tamworth, the 8th year that she was holding the government of the Mercians with right dominion, and her body lieth at Gloucester in the E. porch of St. Peter's Church." Tamworth still perpetuates her memory in the name of its patron saint.

At the time of the Conquest, Leofric, husband of Lady Godiva, was Earl of Mercia; but upon the unscrupulous appropriation by William of all, or nearly all, Saxon lands, Kingsbury was added to the already extensive possessions of Turchill, Earl of Warwick, who, although a Saxon, had taken no part in the recent struggle, and was therefore high in William's favour. The history of this powerful family, from whom the Bracebridges and Willingtons claim descent, contains so much of romance and interest that it is well worth briefly sketching.

The first *Saxon* "earl" (Dugdale goes back to Arthurian times and the legends of the bear and ragged staff!) was Rohaud, who, in Alfred's reign, was made Governor of Warwick under the powerful Earls of Mercia, themselves holding from the king—earl meaning really a substitute, or lieutenant. In theory, all land belonged to the Crown, and was usually held either in "fee farm," *i.e.*, by a fixed money rental, or by military service, and no portion could be disposed of without the king's consent. This Rohaud left a daughter, Felicia, married to the famous Guy, who, in her right, became Earl of Warwick, and whose adventures, even when stripped of fable and fancy, are strange and romantic enough.

Whether caught in the wave of religious enthusiasm, which once at least in a lifetime seemed to sweep over these ancient warriors, or whether in sorrow for the loss of his young son and heir, who had been mysteriously spirited away, Earl Guy, in the prime of early manhood, exchanged his good broadsword for the palmer's staff, and started on pilgrimage to the Holy Land. Of his travels and adventures, his return *incognito* in the nick of time to overcome the terrible Danish champion, Colbrond ; of his refusal to reveal his name to his grateful sovereign, or to accept honour or reward ; and of his retirement to the hermit's cell near his own lordly castle of Warwick, and his subsequent death there, let quaint old Dugdale tell. To our practical modern minds it seems he would have been better employed in searching for his missing son ; or in comforting his wife, left sorrowing and desolate in the gloomy old castle. For since the young Reynburn had been seized and carried away—to Russia, it was said, by foreign merchants (probably some vindictive Danes, the Northmen having long before settled in that country)—nothing had been heard of him.

Slowly, indeed, must the sad years have passed to the solitary *châtelaine*, with no tidings of husband or child, and the poor sick heart must have well-nigh ceased to hope ; when, one day, a hind craved audience at the castle gate. He bore a message bidding her haste to a spot which he would show, where one awaited her coming; and in pledge of good faith presented a ring. Ah! well the lonely lady knew that ring; many a time she had caught its glitter on a brave hand she had never thought to clasp again! In a fever of joy and wonder she hastened to obey the message; but, alack! reached the hermit's cave in the rock overhanging Avon, only to receive her husband's last embrace.

Guy dead, it became more than ever necessary to find, if possible, the missing heir; and "Heraud de Ardene, a valiant and hardy knight," volunteered to undertake the search. It proved successful, and the young earl returned to delight his mother's heart and console her for all the lonely years of their separation. Honours were showered upon him, he became a favourite of King Athelstane, who gave him his beautiful daughter, Lernetta, in marriage. But the love of adventure was in his blood, and soon after the birth of a son and heir, Wageat, he returned to the Continent, where he died, and was buried on a small island near to Venice.

Wigod, the third in succession from Reynburn, married a sister of Leofric, Earl of Mercia, and was succeeded by Alwyne, father of Turchill, who, as we have seen, was one of the few Saxon nobles who retained office and possessions after the Conquest. He was, however, permitted to bequeath only a small portion of his estates (including Kingsbury which had come to him through his second wife, Leverunia), to his son Osbert;

the larger share, with the earldom, being bestowed by William upon Henry, son of Roger de Bellomont, who thus became the first of the *Norman* Earls of Warwick.

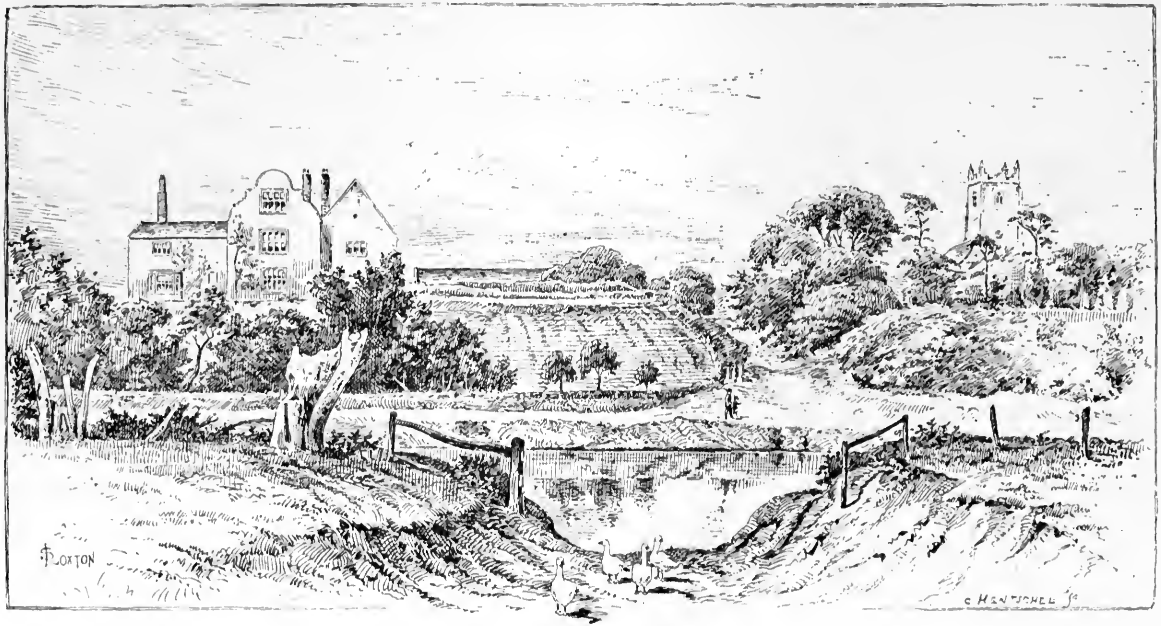
Turchill had taken the name of Arden from the district north of the Avon (in which his principal possessions lay) being all woodland, and was, by his first wife, ancestors of the Ardens of Peddimore and Park Hall, Sutton Coldfield.

Kingsbury (Chinesburie) manor and lordship, of which Hurley formed part, and which descended to Osbert, consisted at the General Survey of "6 hides of land, 2 priests, 1 mill, value ixs. ivd.; 12 acres meadow, and woods 1 mile long and 1 broad, rated at xiiili, by weight." Osbert bestowed the church, St. Peter, upon the nuns of Mergate, Bedfordshire; and his two daughters, who succeeded a second Osbert, still further curtailed their possessions by giving Kingsbury and Hurley Mills, with a portion of land, to the nuns of Polesworth. These sisters also dying without issue, the manor devolved upon their Aunt Amicia, daughter of the first Osbert, who, some time previously, had married Peter de Bracebridge, a gallant soldier, skilled alike in war and tourney, from Bracebridge, near to Lincoln.

Settling at Kingsbury, he became the ancestor of the Warwickshire Bracebridges, who, until the 18th of Elizabeth, made Kingsbury Hall their principal residence. John, the third in descent from Peter, joined the rebellious barons, 48th Henry the III. His estates were forfeited, and being taken prisoner, he was placed in charge of Hugh de Turberville; but, escaping, fled to the Isle of Arholme with young Simon de Montfort and others, until his party being completely defeated, he submitted under the Dictum of Kenilworth. His son John regained his inheritance and became high in favour with King Edward, by whom he was knighted, taking for his arms, *vairé ar and sa a fesse gu.* In the Harl. MS., 1167, the arms are given as "*Quarterly of four* 1 *and* 4 *vairé argent and sable, a fess gules,* 2 *and* 3 *per pale indented argent and sable.*" Sir Ralph, who succeeded John, accompanied Edward III. to France, his wife, Lady Joane, residing at the Hall during her life; as in 20th Richard the II., she obtained a license of Bishop Scroop to have a private chapel within her manor house. Ralph, her second son in succession, took a lease for life of the park and pools at Sutton ("History of Park and Chase of Sutton Coldfield") of Richard Beauchamp Earl of Warwick; one of which pools is still called "Bracebridge Pool." He afterwards attended the said earl "with ix lances and xvii archers for the strengthening of Calais." His son and successor, Richard, was father of the heroine in the "Old Love Story," told by Dugdale, so quaintly illustrative of the times.

Young John Arden (son of Walter Arden of Peddimore and Park Hall, who, as it will be remembered, was descended from "Turchill de Arden" by his first wife), an esquire of the body to Henry VII., fell in love with his cousin, fair Alice Bracebridge, and she returned his passion, her father also countenancing the suit; for the young man was heir to a fine estate. Walter Arden, however, considering the Bracebridges as usurpers of property to which he, as descended from the elder son, had a better right, would have none of the match, and sternly forbade his son to think any more of the maiden. But the Kingsbury squire was not one to be easily baulked in his projects, nor to see his daughter thus flouted and scorned. So, watching his opportunity when Walter Arden was out of the way, he, with his retainers, made a sudden raid on Park Hall, and carried off young John, a willing captive, to Kingsbury. Positively abducted a bridegroom! Imagine the hue-and-cry that arose at such an unheard-of proceeding, and how Walter Arden vowed vengeance! But little recked the lovers, or the old squire, safe within the strong walls of Kingsbury; and at length, accepting the inevitable, Arden consented to refer the matter to two neighbouring magnates, Sir Simon Mountford and Sir Richard Bingham, who decreed that on consideration of a jointure of 200 marks, the young couple should be married forthwith; and that, in recompense for trespass, Richard Bracebridge should give to Walter Arden the best horse that he, Arden, could choose out of the park at Kingsbury.

Little noteworthy is recorded of Richard's successors until we come to the fourth Thomas; and nothing of him to his credit. He married, first, Joan, daughter of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KINGSBURY HALL AND CHURCH.

George Catesby of Lapworth, by whom he had a son, William, and several daughters. On his wife's death he married again, and disinherited his eldest son in favour of the children by the second marriage. But little good came of it, for, taking to evil ways, he wasted his substance in riotous living; finally giving Sir Ambrose Cave a bill of sale on the house and manor; and his brother Antikil, on succeeding to the remainder and following like courses, finally sold the whole, 18th of Elizabeth, to Sir Francis Willoughby of Middleton—from whom it came, through intermarriage, to the present owner, the Right Hon. Sir Robert Peel. Thus ingloriously ended the Bracebridges of Kingsbury. The late Charles Holte Bracebridge of Atherstone was the last of the male line.

Meanwhile William Bracebridge, the disinherited, had married the daughter of Julien Nethermill, a citizen of Coventry, by whom he had a son, Michael, who died without issue, and two daughters—Jane, married to Lionel Skipwith, Esq., of Salthorp, Lincolnshire; and Margerie, who became the wife of Waldyve Willington, Esq., of Hurley.

The ancient Hall of Kingsbury, built by successive Bracebridges, stands on a small eminence rising abruptly from the river and separated by a deep cutting from another eminence on which is the church. The oldest remains are the walls which still partly surround the site. They are of rough sandstone, 6 feet to 7 feet thick at base, and about 4 feet thick at the top which is much dilapidated, and if once crenulated, no traces of such work remain. At the south-east corner is an octagonal tower, and the ruined bastion of another tower at the south-west extremity ; appearing to indicate that similar ones originally existed at the corresponding corners, thus forming a rough square. In both of these towers are entrances to secret passages ; that in the south-west is securely boarded up, and of it nothing seems to be known ; but some time ago an adventurous countryman attempted an exploration of the one in the south-east tower, penetrating some two cart-ropes' length, when his progress was stopped by fallen earth and stones.

The passage is entered by a small door, a drop of about 6 feet leading to a cell in the foundation of the wall ; from the roof of the cell a square opening extends upwards to the top of the wall, probably for ventilation. Beyond this cell it is now impossible to go, for the farmer, finding that his poultry, more desirous than himself of solving the mysteries of the place, wandered down and never returned, either losing themselves—poor things !—or succumbing to foul air, filled up the opening with rubbish.

The passage is generally supposed to lead to the church, apparently because it is the only building anywhere near ; but I think the nature of the intervening ground precludes the possibility of this, and that the more probable supposition is that the passage extended to the other tower ; possibly even formed a *girdle* of covered communication, if my idea as to the original existence of towers at the two remaining corners of the site is correct. Anyway, it would be extremely interesting to explore, and could not prove a very costly undertaking.

The centre of the east wall is pierced by a "depressed four-centred arch," still in good preservation, which gives access to the courtyard. The date of these ruins has been variously given, between the thirteenth and fifteenth centuries; but they could not have been later than the middle of the latter.

The ancient portions of the house itself are Elizabethan, and consist of two gables running from west to east. The north gable is in its original state, but the south was repaired with brickwork about a hundred years ago; many of the large transomed windows in the south wall have also been filled, or partly filled, with brickwork. The basement is, as was usually the case, devoted to the buttery, cellars, &c., the dining-hall and withdrawing-room being on the floor above. The hall occupied a third of the whole length of the south gable and must have been a noble room, with its panelled ceiling, handsome fireplace (zigzag tiling), and windows rich with the blazoning of many coats of arms, some of which were in existence in Dugdale's time (1656), and are reproduced in his "Antiquities." In the north gable were the bed-chambers and other private rooms, the attics above, 60 feet long or more, being evidently used by the servants and retainers, access to them being gained by an ancient oak staircase ascending directly from the courtyard.

Interesting as are the remains of the house, the ancient church, standing east of the deep cutting, is even more interesting, and I am, fortunately, able to give many particulars hitherto unpublished.

The building consists of nave, chancel, aisle, tower, and the "Bracebridge Chapel." Of these the oldest are the nave, some portions of the chancel, and the chapel, they having been built at different dates between 1150 and 1300. The aisle and tower date from the fourteenth century, the northern buttress and upper battlements of the latter having been added by Thomas Willington, 1610—Was it as a thankoffering for the Hurley heiress? The fine Norman pillars of the nave, with their cushioned capitals, are still in excellent preservation; the arcading, however, is transitional, being widely separated and pointed. Most of the windows are early Perpendicular. The chancel contains a triple sedilia, a combined cinq-foil-headed credence table and piscina, and a hagioscope communicating with the chapel on the north. It has also another square aperture in the outer wall, variously termed an "outside confessional" and a "leper's window." Neither of these terms, however, appears to be correct; certainly not the latter; for, as a recent writer (the Rev. Dr. Cox, F.S.A., *The Antiquary*, August, 1894) has pointed out, "lepers were forbidden, by the 9th Canon of Pope Alexander III. (latter half of thirteenth century, the date of most of these windows), to use the churches or *church-yards* frequented by others." These openings were used, the writer says, "for ringing the sanctus bell"; and I believe it is a fact that they are not found where a sanctus turret exists.

The Bracebridge Chapel is a most interesting relic of mediæval times, and must, in its original state, have been very fine. But it has been barbarously mutilated and defaced by misguided Puritans; and still more by modern vandals, who have built an ugly lean-to outside, erected an organ inside, and *roofed* the latter over! Hiding thereby much of the ancient groining, and a beautiful little piscina in the east end. The remaining portion of the chapel is now fitted up as a vestry. Dugdale has prints of several of the ancient monuments: two flat tombs on which lie full-length, cross-legged figures, clad in chain mail, one with his face to heaven, his hand on sword-hilt; the other reclining on his side in the strangest attitude, one hand holding his shield, the other supporting his head. Alongside them on a plain stone is the head of a woman (the figure probably having been demolished), the face framed in the ugly, close-fitting whimple of the thirteenth century. "These," says the historian, "are broke and lye upon another, and the chapel is used for a school."

In Dugdale's time, also, various coats of arms, showing the intermarriages of the family, were in the window of the church; and still the Bracebridge crest, a "ragged staff" held in a clenched fist, may be seen on the stonework of the tower; together with the initials of Thomas Willington. At a subsequent date the monuments were removed from the floor of the chapel *to the earth beneath it.* Was it to make room for the children, or for the organ? At any rate, buried they were; for in taking up the old flooring, about 1885, the broken fragments were discovered, lying, together with a number of human bones, some few feet below. The bones were reinterred, the effigies, much more "broken" and dismembered, were restored to the light of day, and now "lye upon another" alongside the north wall.[1]

It is said that this chapel, or rather an earlier one which stood on its site, was the burial-place of those kings of Mercia who once held court at Kingsbury.

Hurley Hall.—No mention is made of Hurley in the General Survey because, with the neighbouring villages of Dosthill, Halloughton, Whatley, Bodymore Heath and others, it was included with Kingsbury. The name, anciently Hurnlie, is, according to Dugdale, derived from *hurne*, or *hyrn*, Saxon or Old English for nook or corner, it being situated in the utmost corner of Kingsbury lordship, eastwards; and that the Bracebridges were owners is evident from the fact that

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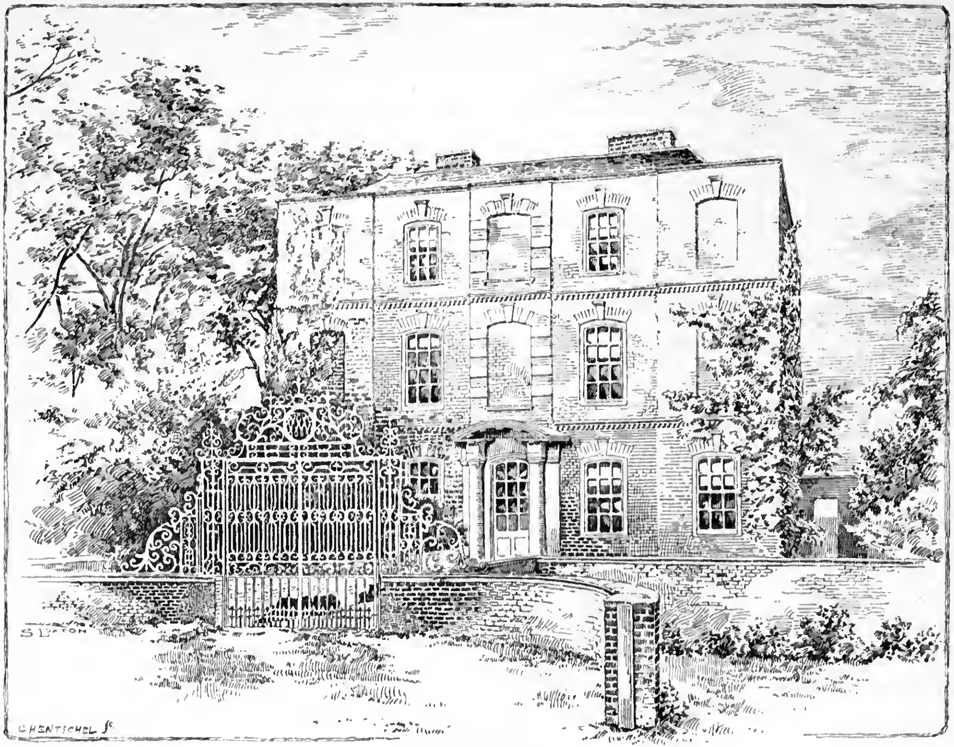
[1] For many of these interesting particulars of Hall and Church I am indebted to the Rev. A. Onslowe and Albert V. Owen, Esq., of Kingsbury.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HURLEY HALL.

in a document of about the 25th Henry III. Ralph de Bracebridge includes greater part of Hurley in the dowry of his ancestress Amicia, wife of Peter de Bracebridge, who most probably resided there, at Kimberley Hall, until the accession of Amicia to Kingsbury, when they removed thither. A branch of the family, however, continued to make the former place their home, as one of them "erected a chapel at Kimberley Hall, *temp.* Edward II." (removed to Kingsbury about 1535); and Sybilla, daughter of "Simon Bracebridge of Hurley," married William Waldyve of the Waldyves of Alspath. Through this union, presumably, the property passed to the latter family; as, in the 36th of Henry VI., "Joan, daughter of William Waldyve of Hurley, was married in the chapel there by special license from the bishop directed to the then vicar of Kingsbury"; and John Waldyve, Esq., died, seized of it 31st of Henry VIII. ("Ant. War," Ed. 1730, p. 1063). The Waldyve family appear to have first settled at Meriden, anciently Alspath, near Atherstone, soon after the Conquest, continuing there until 17th of Richard II., when Alan Waldyve married the heiress of Richard Whitacre of Elmedon, and went to reside there—the Waldyve arms, *or* 3 *leopards' faces sa*, are in Meriden Church and also cut on a beam of Elmedon Hall. From this Alan descended William, the ancestor of the Hurley Waldyves.

In 1541, Joan, heiress of Hurley through her mother

Joyce, sister and heir of John, the last of the Waldyves, married Thomas Willington, who, settling at Hurley, became the ancestor of the Waldyve-Willingtons. When, as we have seen in the history of Yate Court, the main line of the ancient family of Willington became extinct, a younger branch still remained in Gloucestershire, at Todnam, possessing also property in Devon and Warwickshire, certain lands at Brailes having been in the family from the time of Henry III. One of these Willingtons, John, 1500, had two sons, William and Thomas. William, "a wealthy merchant of the staple," married Ann, widow of Thomas Middlemore, Esq., of Edgbaston, Birmingham, and settled at Barcheston, near Shipton-on-Stour, having bought the estate, 1581, of Henry Durant. He had seven daughters, whose "brilliant" marriages may well provoke the envy of match-making mothers, and are worthy of record, as, through them, the Willingtons became progenitors of many well-known and noble Warwickshire families.

MARGERY married, first, Thomas Holte, Esq., of Aston Hall; second, Sir Ambrose Cave. Her son, Edward Holte, married Dorothy de Ferrers, of Tamworth Castle; and from her only daughter by Sir Ambrose descended the Willoughbys and the Marquis of Anglesea.

GODITHA, or Gooditha, married Basil Fielding, Esq., ancestor of the Denbigh family. Their portraits occupy a compartment in the beautiful memorial window at Newnham Paddox; the Willington "*saltire vairé*" being conspicuous on the inner side of the lady's cloak. An engraving of this window is given in the "Ant. War," vol. i. p. 89.

ELIZABETH married Edward Boughton, of Lawford, a good old Warwickshire family.

MARY married William Sheldon, of Beoley and Brailes, a gentleman of considerable note in Worcestershire and Warwickshire. Besides the estate of Beoley, originally belonging to Pershore Abbey, he obtained leave of Henry VIII. to empark three hundred acres at Weston (near to Bidford Grange), his son, Ralph, building the mansion which once stood there. William Sheldon was said to have first introduced weaving tapestry into England. He had some maps of Warwickshire woven, so large as to cover two sides of a spacious room; on the sale of the furniture, &c., at Weston Park in 1781, they were purchased by Horace Walpole, and are now in the museum at York (see "Old Warwickshire Houses," W. Nevin).[1] Beoley Church contains some very handsome tombs of the Sheldons of Milcote, lineal descendants of the family; especially that to the memory of this William and his wife, Mary Willington.

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[1] Muntz, in his "History of Tapestry," p. 237, also writes:—"William Sheldon placed his manor of Burcheston, Warwickshire, at the disposal of the tapestry weaver, Robert Hicks, and commanded him to execute on a large scale, maps of the counties of Oxford, Worcester, Warwick, and Gloucester. In his will, 1570, he calls Hicks 'the only auter and beginner of tapestry and arras within this realm.'" It has now, however, been ascertained beyond a doubt that tapestry was made in England (by foreigners) as early as 1353.

MARGARET married Sir Edward Greville, heir of "the flower of woolstaplers," who founded the family, but *not* the ancestor of the Earls of Warwick—they descended from Fulke Greville, uncle of Sir Edward. The family of the latter became extinct in his grandson; another Sir Edward, whose father, the only son of Margaret Willington, was the Ludovic Greville of evil memory, whose crimes and fitting end are detailed in "Bidford Grange." A handsome monument to Margaret and her husband, with full-length effigies, is in the parish church of Monk's Kirby, where they were buried.

ANN married Francis Mountford, Esq., of Kingshurst, a scion of a very ancient race.

CATHERINE married successively: Sir Richard Kempe, William Catesby of Lapworth, and Anthony Throckmorton, all of good Warwickshire families. Truly the worthy merchant had his revenge on the fate which denied him sons! And if all the daughters were as pretty and gentle as "Goditha," kneeling grave and sweet beside her mail-clad lord, the sons-in-law might think themselves equally fortunate, apart from the substantial *dot* each maiden brought.

Meanwhile Thomas Willington, the merchant's brother, eschewing the devious ways of trade, had made a quicker bid for fortune in the person of Joan, heiress of Hurley, whom he married in 1541, and, settling at Hurley, bestowed the old family name of Waldyve upon his eldest son; the "Waldyve Willington" who, in 1563, married for his second wife Margery, daughter of Michael Bracebridge, of Kingsbury. This was, as we have seen, the second intermarriage of the two families; so that the Hurley Willingtons may lay double claim, through the union of Reynburn, the lineal ancestor of the Bracebridges, with Lernetta, daughter of King Athelstan, to descent from the royal house of Mercia. John, a younger brother of Waldyve, founded the Whatley branch of the family, from which the Willingtons of Tamworth claim descent.

Waldyve was drowned at Sawley, and his son, Thomas, married to Alicia, daughter of John of Whatley, succeeded. They had eight children, of whom the eldest, Waldyve, afterwards the famous Parliamentarian Governor of Tamworth Castle, alone deserves particular mention.

He was born in April, 1600, marrying in his thirtieth year, at Kingsbury Church, Joan Porter, of Edgbaston—the same family as that from which was descended the worthy Birmingham mercer, whose widow, Ann Porter, married the great lexicographer. No record exists of Waldyve Willington's early life; but Gresley, in his "Siege of Lichfield," describes him as "a gentleman of considerable consideration in that part of the county"; and that he possessed courage, ability, and military experience is certain from his conduct and position in the Parliamentarian army.

Upon the taking of Tamworth Castle, June 25, 1643, after two days' siege, "Captain Waldyve Willington" was placed in command, with two deputy-governors under him, Richard Harvey and Thomas Hunt—the ci-devant Coventry mercer who sent the "extraordinary" challenge to Colonel Bagot, Royalist Commander of Lichfield (and was by him put to ignominious flight!), which those who list may read in Gresley. And so ably did the gallant captain defend the castle that the Royalists, with all their endeavours, were never able to retake it. His first care seems to have been to strengthen his fortifications and to put the place in a thorough state of defence; for means to do which he appealed to the Earl of Denbigh (Basil, the second, and Parliamentarian, earl), between whom and himself there appears to have subsisted a very cordial feeling. They were kinsmen, remote, it is true, a century having elapsed since Goditha Willington married Basil Fielding.

The earl took prompt means to further his request by writing the following letter, preserved among the Denbigh papers, and endorsed, "My Lord's letter to y^e^ Parliament on behalf of the Governour of Tamworth":—

"My Lords and Gent^m^,—Upon y^e^ request of Cap^t.^ Waldyve Willington, Governo^r^ of Tamworth Castle, I am become an humble suito^{r} to yo^{r} ld^{pps} in his behalf, to bestow upon him a Saker and two Drakes, for the better strengthening of his garrison, for that he hath express^{d} his dutie in y^{t} place to y^{e} Parliam^{t} with a great deale of care and vigilance, by w^{ch} means y^{e} place wilbe much y^{e} stronger and be hereby more enabled to withstand any assaylants of y^{e} enemy in y^{e} line of communicacon betwixt Stafford and us, and without y^{e} help of w^{ch} none of our friends can safely pass for Lichfield garrison; and this favour of yo^{r} ld^{pps} to him herein shall much oblidge yo^{r} most affect and humble serv^{t}, DENBIGH."

There is little doubt that such a letter from such an advocate brought the desired help. And sorely it was needed if the Parliamentarians were to hold what they had so hardly won; for the Royalists made many attempts to regain possession, so that the whole district round was kept in a state of distraction and turmoil through the incessant skirmishing, until, in 1646, Lichfield Close was finally taken by the Parliament.

A letter written, March 15, 1644, by Governor Willington to Lord Denbigh gives a vivid picture of the situation, and reveals, also, not a little of the character of the writer. One seems to see the forceful, vigilant, vigorous commander rapidly penning his dispatch—too rapidly, for here and there occur words and phrases which the present writer, lacking the clue to their signification, found it impossible in an unavoidably hurried reading to decipher. No heading appears to the letter, which commences abruptly :—

"There is 200 horse come to of Coll. Edwards and Coll. Egertons, 11 hundred foote sounding after y^e^ are at Bridgnorth of them are of y^e^ Princes regiment that came first to Shrewsbury with him. The rest are Shrewsbury train bands. My Lord Byron cometh along with them, Prince Rupert is in Chester and doth not come : what their intent is y^e^ Lord knows, whether to joyne with Hastings and get to rayse the King at Newarke, or else to fall into some of their petty garrisons hereabout. I fear Tamworth town will be plundered by them. Your ld^ps^ horses that are gone forth to-day went to catch some of Tamworth somewhere near Coleshill where it should seem there are many of them invited to dinner at some house on purpose to entrapp them. Captayne Ridgley is the man that had the intelligence Nothing is done at Tamworth but the last intelligence of it I could rightly know soe much, my brother's man that came hither from Leicester along with the horses told me this. It is given out y^e^ Prince will be here when the foote comes but there is no such thing for the meſſenger telleth me he makes line into Chester, and he stayeth there till the King's forces return. Let this be sent to some that may give notice y^r^ ld^p^ knows where. I heard of Cavaliers (?) that my Lord Willoughby of Parham is slayne and Major G^l^ with a thousand common souldiers at Newarke. I desire if y^r ld^p heard anything of it to acquaint me with it.[1]

"Your friend, &c., for Collonel Houghton, as the meſſenger telleth me, signed, WALDYVE WILLINGTON."

This letter was followed on the 18th by another containing more definite and startling information (obtained through a spy) of the movements of the enemy:—

"R^t Hon^{ble} and the rest of the Comittee. Wee have had a speciall frend that lay in Lichfield last night who brings us certain intelligence that this day wee shalbe fiercely $assault^d$ by fifteen hundred foote and five hundred horse and that fower peeces of ordinance are advanced upon their carriages towards us and that their rendezvous is upon Hoppas Hill where wee doe now discover diverse troopes of horse and many g^t companies of foote. Our scouts have discovered them making up Hoppas Bridge w^{ch} may be for the passage off the carriages and foote. Our scouts and theirs have fired one against another. Yo

WALDYVE WILLINGTON
THOS HUNT
RICHD HARVEY.

"Tamworth 18 March
1644 11 of the clock
in the day."

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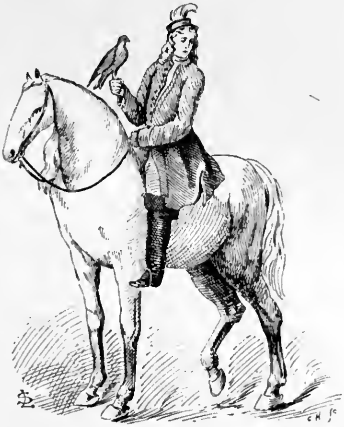
[1] Lord Willoughby survived until the Restoration. This letter was copied from the original by the kind permission of Lord Denbigh, and, I believe, has not hitherto been published; the others may be found in Gresley.

This formidable assault was successfully repulsed by the gallant governor, and the Royalists obliged once more to return to their quarters in Lichfield Close.

On the cessation of the war, Captain Willington, resting on his well-earned laurels, retired to Hurley, where, in addition to the usual pursuits and pastimes of a county gentleman, he discharged the duties of Justice of the Peace, together with the novel one of Registrar; as, according to the ancient register, "from 1655 and through the Commonwealth all marriages in this (Kingsbury) parish were performed at Hurley Hall in the presence of Waldyve Willington one of the Justices of the Peace for the County of Warwick." In confirmation whereof may still be seen the bold and characteristic signature of the gallant governor appended to many of the entries. He died in 1675, and was buried, April 9th, in the family vault in Kingsbury Church. No monument, however, exists to his memory, nor inscription of any kind, unless one is hidden beneath the flooring of the pews. The Willington stones at the entrance of the chancel are of much later date, and belong to a different branch of the family, the name Waldyve having been borne by many members.

The only other Hurley Willington of note was Waldyve, third grandson of the Parliamentarian, born 1677. He was High Sheriff for Warwickshire in the 13th of Geo. I., and built the present house upon the site of the ancient mansion.

His are the initials upon the beautiful wrought-iron gates (recently restored by the present owner), and his the equestrian portrait reproduced. It is painted upon a panel over the mantelpiece of the dining-room, that to the right of the front door, and represents him as a young man, dressed in hunting coat of scarlet, with hawk on wrist. The horse, also evidently a portrait, is a white "Neapolitan," corresponding almost point for point with the description given of that breed by old Gervase Markham, 1617, and quoted in Sidney's "Book of the Horse." "The Courser of Napels," he writes, "is a horse of a strong and comely fashion, loving disposition and infinite courageousness. His limbs and general features are so strong and well-knit together that he hath ever been reputed the only beaste for the warres, being naturally free from fear and



PORTRAIT OF WALDYVE WILLINGTON, FROM PANEL.

cowardice. Head, long, lean, and very slender, doth from eye to nose bend like a hawke's beak. He hath a great full eye, a sharpe eare, and a straight legge, which to an overcurious eye might appear a little too slender, which is all the fault curiosity itself can find."

The old Hall, lying at the far end of the long, straggling village of Hurley, and upon which, after sundry sharp turns and twists of the quiet country road, one emerges somewhat suddenly, has little of external interest save its beautiful gates ; whose elegant tracery and exquisite workmanship, however, appear strangely out of harmony with the plain, square, red-brick house. Doubtless the contrast was less apparent when the house was in its prime ; when glass filled the now blank windows, and water brimmed the encircling moat and lapped the mossy wall of the garden ; when, among trim parterres and shady alleys, and hedges of fragrant box, merry children ran and shouted. Aye, all unwitting of the little lad who, some hundred years later, playing on the self-same spot, fell into the moat and was drowned before his horrified nurse or stricken parents could rush to his rescue !

This sad fate befell the son of the present tenant some forty years ago ; and it was at the entreaty of the poor mother, who "couldn't bear the sight of the water," that the moat was filled in ; a portion only, that to the left of the gates, being allowed to remain.

A broad, flagged hall runs through the house from back to front, with handsome staircase on the left, winding up to the second floor rooms, which are panelled like those below and adorned with paintings. One represents Joseph's brethren showing the rent and blood-stained coat to their father; another, the largest in the house, a child at his mother's knee holding a lily, while a maid with a kind of fork in her hand stoops beside him. In the same room are two smaller mythological pieces, apparently representing Cupid, Venus, and Vulcan, the anvil and tools being conspicuous in the foreground; also in one of them a *wheel*, upon which Vulcan is holding the child! The colours of the paintings are somewhat dull, but the faces are good and the details well rendered. In the dining-room, besides the portrait of the builder, are two fruit pieces, excellently painted, and an apparently fancy picture of a lady and child.

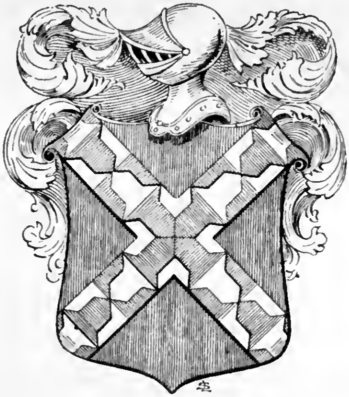
The house now contains little else of interest, having passed through many different hands since its erection by the High Sheriff.

The property continued in possession of his direct descendants until 1836, when, by the death of Mrs. Joshua Taylor, of Handsworth, who had succeeded her brother, Thomas Willington, of Nottingham, this branch of the ancient family became extinct, and the estate passed to the Floyers of Hints, heirs of the elder sister of Mrs. Taylor; and from them to the family of the present owner, Major Levett, of Rowsley, Derbyshire.

There still exist two Willingtons who claim direct descent from the ancient line, through Thomas 1st, of Hurley. One, the Rev. Francis Pye Willington, M.A., of Cambridge, son of the late Francis Willington, Esq., of Tamworth; described in Burke's "Landed Gentry" and Palmer's "History of the Town and Castle of Tamworth," as descended from "Anticle," son of John Willington, of Whatley, son of Thomas 1st, of Hurley. Neither Camden nor Dugdale make any mention of this "Anticle," giving only Thomas and Alice as the children of John of Whatley. Still there certainly was an Anticle existing at that time; Miller, in his "Parishes of the Diocese of Worcester," mentions "Anticle Willington, gent.," in connection with "Thomas Cope's Gift" to the Tamworth widows, Feb. 5, 1620–1.

The other representative is J. Waldyve Champernowne Willington, Esq., D.L., J.P., F.R.H.S., of Castlewillington, Co. Tipperary, who claims to be the chief representative of this noble and ancient family; and, according to Sir Bernard Burke, is Hereditary Constable of Tamworth Castle and High Steward of the Marches. He is lineally descended from a younger son of the Hurley family, two members of which are mentioned in connection with Ireland. George, son of Waldyve, son of Thomas 1st, said by Camden to be "*Vivens in Hibernia*"; and John, grandson of Waldyve, born 1612, whom Dugdale represents as having "died in Ireland." The first record of this family in Ireland is the will of "John Willington" (evidently the same John), of Killeens, in the barony of Stradbally, Queen's Co., dated September 10, 1658. A branch which settled shortly afterwards at Ballymoney, King's Co., were the ancestors from whom Mr. J. Waldyve C. Willington traces his descent.

The original arms of the Willingtons were identical with those of the Champernownes, the billets being omitted; viz., *gules a saltire vairé sable and argent* (still borne by the Tamworth branch); they were afterwards quartered with those of Waldyve and Bracebridge, with the Bracebridge crest. This, as given by Burke, is "out of a ducal coronet a pine-tree vert, fructed or"—not a "staff raguly," which was certainly the ancient Bracebridge crest — motto *Vigueur de dessus.*"



WILLINGTON ARMS.

The Willingtons must have been a prolific race, for their descendants are to be found all over the British Isles; and appear to have represented every grade, from baron to baker! Unlike the Berkeleys, whose name, curiously enough, is seldom, if ever, met with in the lower ranks of life.

CHAPTER VII.

LITTLE SODBURY MANOR.

LITTLE SODBURY is a small village on the western slope of the Cotswolds, four miles east of Yate station, and fifteen north-east of Bristol. No mention of it occurs in the Domesday Survey, because at that time, and for 450 years subsequently, it formed with Old Sodbury and Chipping (market) Sodbury, one estate; described in the old record as "Sopeberie in Grumboldston Hundred," and held of the Norman bishop (of Lissaux) by Hugo Mammot, who had ousted its ancient Saxon owner, Alunard. From him it passed successively to the noble families of Clare, Despencer, and Warwick, who let it to various tenants, Ann, Countess of Warwick, finally conveying it to Henry VII.; that rapacious landgrabber, scarcely surpassed by his famous son! The manor was then divided between the families of Stanshaw and Foster; the latter, Richard Foster, soon afterwards joining "with Thomas Moore and his wife in levying a fine of the Manor of Little Sodbury and of the advowson of the church to John

Walshe of Olveston," who had married Elizabeth, Foster's daughter and heiress.

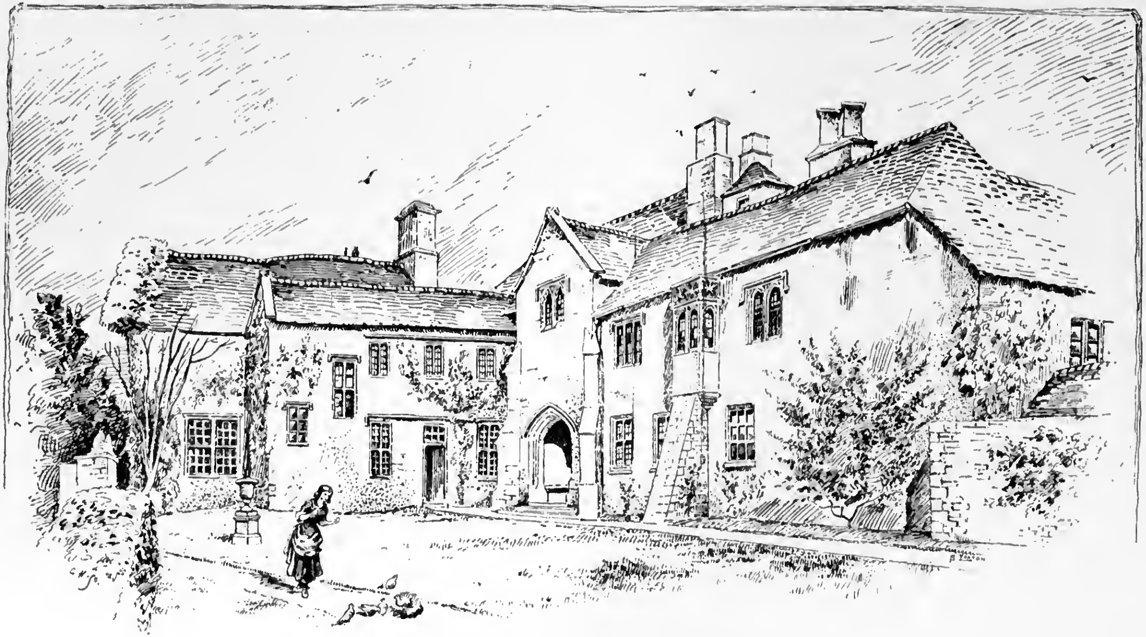
Thus it was that the manor came to the Walshes, not by gift from Henry VIII., as is so often stated, Little Sodbury being confused with Old and Chipping Sodbury, both of which were given by that monarch to John's grandson, Maurice, in 1546.

John Walshe, whom Henry VII. had made Receiver of his lately acquired Berkeley lands, died about 1492, and was succeeded by his son, Sir John Walshe, Champion to Henry VIII. He married, first, Ann, daughter of Sir Robert Poyntz, of Iron Acton, by whom he had one daughter ; second, Ann Dinley, of Hampshire, who bore him a son, Maurice, and three daughters.

As tutor to his children and chaplain to himself, Sir John engaged (1521) the services of William Tyndale, a native of Gloucestershire, and scholar of Oxford and Cambridge, distinguished for his learning and piety and for his strong leaning towards the reformed faith.

The pleasant mansion which thus became the temporary home of the future martyr seems to have been built by the first John Walshe; or rebuilt, as some portions date from the fourteenth century, although the greater part is early Tudor, the projecting west wing having been added in later times.

It is built upon a terrace, cut along the side of the hill, and has a pleasant south-west aspect. The centre of the mansion is occupied by the usual lofty hall, still



MANOR HOUSE, LITTLE SODBURY.

entire, though dismantled ; with its wind-braced roof, supported on angel corbels, its music gallery and screen at the south end, its wide, handsome doorways, and windows high in the wall. A grotesque mask in carved stone also remains high in the wall opposite the western door, through whose immense mouth the ladies could look down from the ladies' gallery outside upon the revelry in the hall below.

The fine porch, with its elegantly shaped, hood-moulded arch, and stone seats, leads into a wide passage, having the hall on the left, and the staircase and various rooms on the right ; in one of these is a beautifully carved oriel window. From the opposite end of the hall formerly extended a corresponding wing, containing the dining-room, library, &c., with other chambers above ; but this, owing to its insecure condition, was taken down many years ago, the wood and stone carvings which adorned it being removed to Lyegrove, another mansion on the estate, noted for its splendid avenue of ash trees. The modern addition before referred to, however, still remains—unfortunately; for, from its situation, standing aggressively out from the main building right across the beautiful terrace, and from its hideous eighteenth-century architecture, it considerably mars the artistic effect of the older portion. This wing consists of a ball-room and parlour, with bedrooms above ; the whole dilapidated and fast falling to decay, its ugliness only partly veiled by the mantling ivy. Behind this building, stretching from the site of the north wing to where the terrace merges in sloping meadow-land, lay the "ladies' pleasaunce" and gardens; from whence, through a doorway in the wall (still there), a succession of broad stone steps led along the hillside, almost on a level with the house roof, to the little church of St. Adeline, perched on its rocky ledge immediately above.

The broad, sunny terrace commands a lovely view of the valley far away to Bristol and the Channel; while beneath, among sloping fields and orchards, lies what was once a large fishpond.

Picturesque and pleasant as is the situation, it must have had its disadvantages, the back of the house being so close to the steep hill that, to quote Buck's "Historic Lands of England," "most of the basement rooms had one side underground, while the kitchen is on the floor above the parlour;" an arrangement which still exists "The great hall is, on one side, 15 feet below the ground, as was the old library, the bedrooms being level with the field!" In the north wing, now demolished, were the rooms more especially associated with Tyndale. They were the library, where he taught his pupils and translated Erasmus's "Enchiridion" for his patron, Sir John; and the bedroom above, to which, when weary of argumentative ecclesiastics and gay courtiers holding revel in the ancient hall, we may imagine him retiring to ponder over and prepare for his great life-work; then, rising with the sun, sallying forth to climb the steep hillside for early celebration in the little church, whither, some hours later, Sir John and his household would repair to hear matins.

Although held in high esteem by his friend and patron, Tyndale's religious opinions, which he could not, if he would, conceal, soon brought him into disfavour with the abbots of the neighbouring monasteries, and the great Church dignitaries of Bristol and Gloucester, who gathered around Sir John's hospitable table ; and who, although liking well an argumentative duel when it ended in their favour, did not care to be beaten, as was not infrequently the case, by the superior learning and eloquence of their host's tutor. Charges of heresy were therefore secretly preferred against him, and in 1522 he was summoned to appear before the Chancellor of the Diocese (see Foxe's "Book of Martyrs"), who, he says, "threatened me grievously and revyled and rated me as though I had been a dogge, and layd to my charge whereof there coude be none accuser brought forth, and yet all the prests of the contre were yt same day there."

Nothing serious, however, immediately followed the "rating," and he returned to Sodbury ; but not long afterwards, being in company with a "reputed learned divine," Tyndale brought him to a point in the argument from which there was no escape ; when, waxing wroth, he exclaimed, "We were better be without God's laws than the Pope's !" To which Tyndale hotly replied, "I defy the Pope and all his laws, and if God spare my life, ere many years, a boy that driveth the plough shall know more of the Bible than thou doest."

This was the climax; from that time Tyndale was a marked man, and Sir John, fearing for his safety, and also lest he might bring the ecclesiastical hornets' nest about his own ears, was obliged reluctantly to consent to his departure.

From the pleasant Gloucestershire manor Tyndale went to London, hoping he might succeed in gaining the favour of the young and learned Bishop Tunstall. Failing signally in this, and, as he pathetically expresses it, finding that "in all England there is no room for attempting a translation of the Scriptures," he took refuge in Holland, where, in 1526, he published the New Testament. Tunstall, through Packington, a friend of Tyndale, bought up every copy he could lay hands on, and burnt them at St. Paul's Cross, "as a sacrifice well pleasing to Almighty God."

Well pleasing, truly! for the money thus realised enabled Tyndale to bring out a second and improved edition, which was soon distributed throughout England; the Pentateuch following in 1530. Six years afterwards Tyndale, betrayed into the hands of his enemies, died a martyr's death at Vilvorde, near Brussels.

One precious memento of him and of his life-work, which its weight in gold would not purchase, has found a resting-place not many miles from the old manor house where that work was planned and prepared for. In the library of the Baptist College, Bristol, enclosed in a glass-covered box, jealously guarded by a fireproof safe, is the only perfect copy of the first edition of the New Testament which, so far as is known, was not consumed in Bishop Tunstall's bonfire.

It was with a curious sensation of living back for the moment in those long ago days of stress and persecution, that the writer examined this unique and interesting relic, which is thus described in the Harleian catalogue: "No. 420. The New Testament black Letter ruled with red lines and all initial Letters at the Beginning of each Book representing the Subject finely coloured, as likewise all the capital Letters to each Chapter and verse throughout the Book adorned with different Colours and raised with gold, neatly bound in red morocco."

The imperfect copy in St. Paul's library has none of these adornments, nor the contemporary marginal references; from which it is conjectured that the Bristol copy was a choice one belonging to some person of distinction who had had it rebound in the "red morocco," that not being the original binding. On the back of the volume is inscribed "New Testament by Tyndall 1st Edition MDXXV-VI." "Oxford" was also on the back, but has been partly gilt over.

A blank leaf in the front of the book bears the following in writing: "For proof of its being ye 1st Edition see ye note at ye end of his Address To the

Reader where he says this is the fyrst Tyme." A blank leaf in the end has two later entries ; one giving a copy of "Some Latin verses which were under a half-length picture large as life of the martyr, with his hand resting upon the Bible; which picture was in 1787 in the possession of Matthew Howell, Esq., Cromhall, Gloucestershire, who married a Miss Tyndall." The other entry reads thus: "N.B. This choice book was purchased at Mr. Langford's sale on the 13 May 1760 by me, John White, and on the 13 day of May 1776, I sold it to the Rev Dr Gifford[1] for twenty guineas, which was the price at first paid for it by the late Lord Oxford. John White." How the book came to Lord Oxford is told in a printed slip within the cover. "On Tuesday evening 13 May 1760 at Mr. Langford's sale of Mr. Ames, of Norfolk books, a copy of the Translation of the New Testament by Tyndall and supposed to be the only one remaining which escaped the flames, was sold for 14 guineas and a half, this valuable book was picked up by one of the late Lord Oxford's Collectors (John Murray) and was esteemed so valuable a purchase by his Lordship that he settled £20 per ann. for life upon the person who procured it. His Lordship's library being afterwards purchased by Mr. Osborne, book collector of Gray's Inn, who, ignorant of its value, marked it at 15s., for which price Mr. Ames bought it, see Lewis's history of the several editions of the Holy Bible and Testament, 1739." The copy has "Joseph Ames" stamped outside on both covers, and his book plate pasted within.

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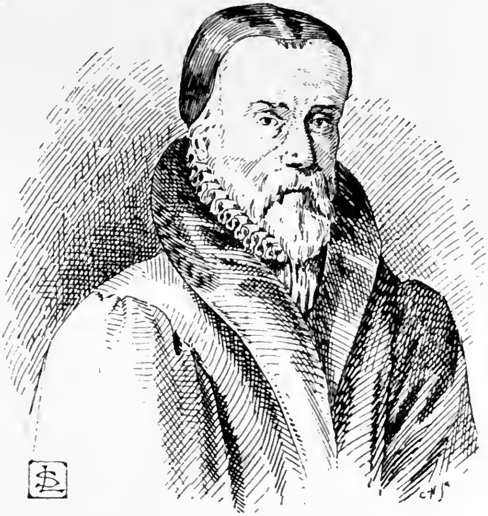
[1] By whom it was presented to the library of the Baptist College.

The late eminent bibliologist, Francis Fry, Esq., of Bristol, had a facsimile of the book made by tracing every letter on transfer paper, placing this on lithographic stones and then printing in the usual manner. A specimen is shown with the original. There is also in the same library a copy of the Pentateuch by Tyndale, within the cover of which is written, "Emprinted at Malborow in the land of Hesse by me Hans Luft, the year of our Lord MCCCCCXXXIV, the XVII day of January." At the end of Genesis is



TYNDALE, FROM AN OLD ENGRAVING.

the colophon, "Printed at Marlborow in the year 1530."

The peculiarity of this book consists in some parts being given in Roman, others in Black-letter. The whole, however, was printed by Hans Luft at Marburgh, but at different times and probably by different presses.

Much has been said and written concerning Tyndale's birthplace, but nothing is really known—except that it was not North Nibley, near which, in 1863, the monument to his memory was erected. His parentage also still remains a mystery, and, until some few years ago, even the family from which he sprang was unidentified. Thanks, however, to the researches of Mr. W. B. Greenfield (see "Genealogist," vol. 2, 1877), among the Court Rolls and public documents, together with ancient writings in Berkeley Castle, it is now proved that the Tyndales, or Huchyns, for they used both names, were not known in Gloucestershire before 1478, in which year two families came from the North and settled there, one at Melksham Court, the other at Southend (both in the neighbourhood of Sodbury), the Southend branch becoming extinct some hundred years afterwards. They appear to have been descendants of the "Barons of Tyne-dale," Northumberland, whose family seat, Langley Castle, now belongs to the Duke of Buccleuch; but, joining the Lancastrians, were, on the defeat of that cause, obliged to flee the country and assume an alias.

About 1485, Richard Tyndale—from whose son Thomas are descended the Tyndales (Tyndalls), of Oxford, Bristol, and Birmingham—succeeded a Tibeta, or Tibota, Huchyns at Melksham; though who he was or what his relationship to her—whether son, grandson or nephew—has not been discovered. Certain, however, it is, from legal and other documents, that he was brother to Edward Tyndale of Hurst Manor, Slymbridge, who succeeded John Walshe as Receiver-General of the Crown revenues of Berkeley, and that this Edward was brother to Tyndale the martyr, and to John Tyndale, of London, who was punished by the Star Chamber, 1530, for helping to circulate the New Testament. This connection is proved by a letter from John Stokesley, Bishop of London from 1530–1539, in which he distinctly states that Edward Tyndale was brother to "Tyndale, the arch heretic"; and as Stokesley, before becoming bishop, was rector of Hurst, he must have been well acquainted with the Tyndales and their connections, and therefore not likely to be misinformed.

It is to be hoped that further researches among these ancient records will bring to light both the parentage and the birthplace of him to whom every Englishman, whether he values his Bible or not, owes so much.

To return to the old manor house, the scene in 1556 of a terrible visitation.

During a severe thunderstorm, while Maurice Walshe, the son and successor of Sir John, was seated at dinner with seven of his children, in the dining-room in the old north wing, "a sulphurous globe entered by the open door, and traversing the room, passed out at the opposite window, killing one child on the spot, and so dreadfully injuring the remaining six and their unfortunate father, that they all died within two months."

Two sons, Nicholas and Henry, were left, the former of whom succeeded to the manor, and in 1562, married Mary, daughter of Sir John Berkeley. He died some sixteen years afterwards, and his young son being slain in a duel by Sir Edward Wintour, the next heir, a cousin, sold the three manors of Sodbury to Thomas Stephens, of Eastington, Attorney-General to the young princes, Henry and Charles. With his descendants it remained for more than one hundred years; the manor house, renovated (the fireplace in the great hall is of this date) and kept up in its ancient style, with its "handsome gardens and park adjoining," continuing to be the family seat. During the terrible storm which raged all over England in September, 1703, it narrowly escaped destruction. In the parish register of that date is the following memorandum: "Thos. Stephens Esq., patron of this church, his wife, his son and wife, were wonderfully preserved from being burned and the house also, an infinite number of trees torn up by the roots, brought in the ocean upon a spring tide; broke the walls; overflowed the country; 100,000 damage to Bristol."

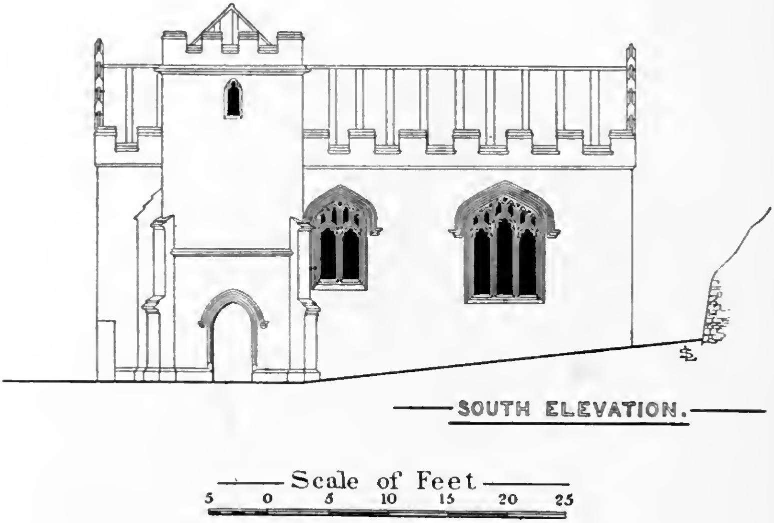
In 1728 the property passed through the female line to Robert Packer, Esq., of Donington Castle, whose daughter Elizabeth became the second wife of Dr. David Hartley, physician, metaphysician, and philosopher, the author of "Observations on Man." In this great work he explains all mental phenomena on the hypothesis of minute nervous vibrations; to which Coleridge thus refers in his "Religious Musings":

> "Hartley, of mortal kind
> Wisest, he who marked the ideal tribe
> Down the fine fibres from the sentient brain
> Roll subtly surging."

In spite, however, of what many would consider such materialistic views, Dr. Hartley was a sincere and devout Christian, and, although so learned, of singular simplicity and amiability of character. He does not seem to have lived for any length of time at Little Sodbury; as on his marriage with the heiress, he settled in London, removing to Bath (where he continued to practise) in 1742, on account of his wife's health. But although not residing permanently at Sodbury, he often came thither for change and refreshment; possibly entertaining there some of his learned friends—Bishops Butler, Law, and Wilberforce, with Dr. Jortian, and Hook, the historian; by all of whom he was beloved and valued.

A bedroom in the modern wing (next to the great hall) and a tiny dressing-room or study adjoining, are still shown as the rooms occupied by him. There, surrounded by the restful charm of the country, he probably worked out some of the abstruse mental problems in which he delighted ; or mused over the bright future, so firmly believed in, when

> "good
> Will be the final goal of ill."

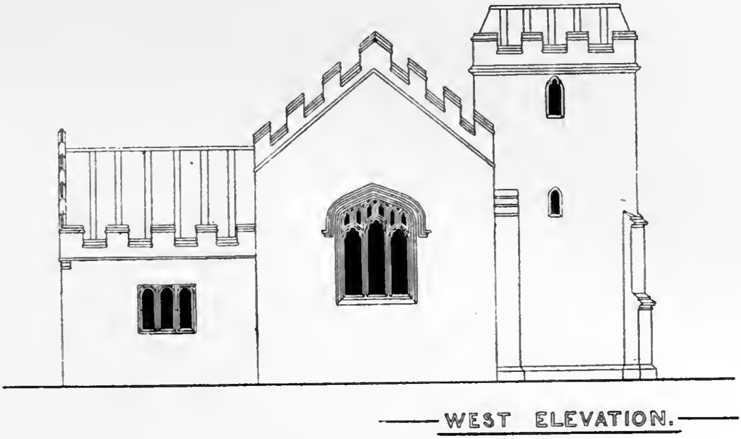


THE OLD CHURCH, LITTLE SODBURY.

No mere philosopher or dreamy visionary, however, was the good doctor, but a man of quick resource and strong human sympathies, ever ready to minister to the bodies and souls of those who needed his aid, no matter whether city magnate or poor rheumatic labourer lying bedridden in his cottage on the bleak hillside.

Dr. Hartley was the father, by his first wife, of David Hartley, the scientific inventor and statesman, the friend of Benjamin Franklin; in conjunction with whom he drew up and signed the definite treaty of peace between Great Britain and America at Paris, September 3, 1783.

Henry Winchcombe Hartley, his son by his second wife, inherited Sodbury; but preferring Bucklebury as a residence, the old mansion fell into disuse, and was at length converted into a farmhouse, of which Mr. Isaac Hatherell is the present tenant. The property is now held by four ladies, nieces of the late W. H. H. Hartley, Esq.



THE OLD CHURCH, LITTLE SODBURY.

The church of Little Sodbury occupied another terrace cut along the hillside immediately above the house. It was a quaint little leaden-roofed structure, in the Perpendicular style; and having been built with more regard to the space at command than to the canons of ecclesiastical architecture, consisted only of a nave (about as large as a good-sized parlour!) one aisle, on the north-east where was the carved oak pew of the lords of the manor; and a low, square, embattled tower on the south. No chancel; as appears from the following curious entry in the old register before referred to:

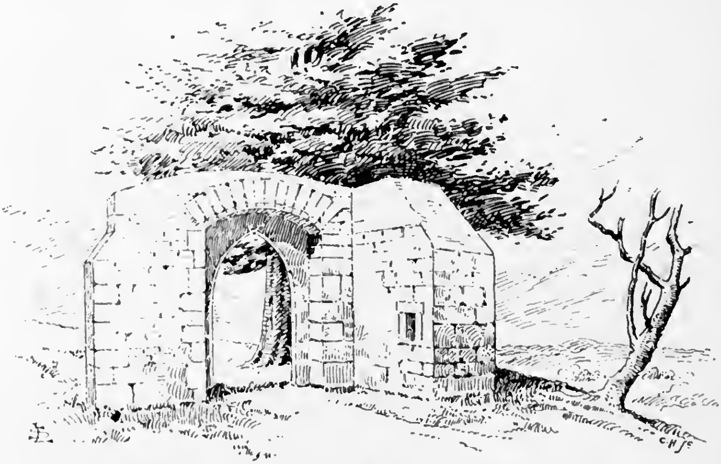
"In the year 1703, after many disputes and hearings before the Bishop Fowler, and the Chancellor and Archdeacon, it was adjudged that there was no Chancel; and that the parish, not the Rector, was to repair it [what?], and my Patron declared the same to the Bishop. Henry Bedford, Rector."

The accompanying illustrations are from sketches, now out of print, which the late Mr. Francis Fry had taken before the demolition of the building in 1858; they were most kindly presented to the author by Miss Fry.

The old church, however, suffered from a much more serious defect than the lack of a chancel. It had no graveyard—the hard rock of the terrace resisting all efforts of pick or shovel. This necessitated burial at the mother church of Old Sodbury, a mile or so away across the fields; and more than once, in winter time, as the mourners, were lifting their burden over the ice-coated stiles *en route*, the coffin slipped and fell, with gruesome results! To prevent such unseemly *contretemps* it was at length determined to forsake the ancient fane, which was becoming sadly dilapidated, and build another more accessible and convenient; to which the dead might at least be borne to their rest in peace. In 1859, therefore, the present church, surrounded by its spacious and beautifully planted graveyard, was built at the foot of the hill below the manor; in a great measure through the exertions and liberality of the present vicar, the Rev. Edward Hasluck.

Although considerably larger than its parent, the new St. Adeline is built on similar lines; most of its windows, and some of the material, having been transplanted bodily from the old structure, though the windows on the north side, with square head and drip stone, once lighted the north wing of the manor! The old bell too, encircled by its legend "God save the Queen and send us peace. A.R., 1707," still calls "the people to prayer." The roof is of carved oak, supported on corbelled figures of the apostles and prophets; the east window (like its prototype the church has no chancel) is of stained glass representing the Ascension, with Jerusalem in the background. Around the stone pulpit are finely carved statuettes of Hooper, Latimer, Ridley, Cranmer, and Tyndale. Indeed, the martyr with whom the neighbourhood is so closely associated, is well represented in the new church:—his head, carved in stone, ornaments several parts of the building; while in the stained glass of a small lancet window in the porch, is a full-length figure, taken from the original portrait which served as a model for his statue in the Martyrs' Memorial at Oxford.

But the most interesting mementoes of Tyndale, because beyond dispute intimately and personally associated with him, are the remains of the tower of the old St. Adeline, and the two yew trees, even in his time hoary with age, which stand sentinel on either side the ancient doorway ; for beneath these the reformer passed to his daily ministrations in the little church ; where, when his heart burned within him, he would " pore forth that heavenly eloquence " which Foxe so graphically describes.



REMAINS OF CHURCH TOWER, LITTLE SODBURY.

Why, instead of expending a little fortune upon erecting the huge monument at Nibley, with which place Tyndale had little or no connection, was not something done to preserve these interesting memorials, which if allowed to stand unfenced and neglected on their rocky ledge, cannot much longer resist "Time's effacing finger"? Will not those who still value the open Bible which Tyndale gave his life to secure, even now bestir themselves in the matter?

The patron saint of this ancient church has caused not a little speculation among local antiquaries; for, so far as can be ascertained, there is no other "St. Adeline" in the British Isles, and her antecedents have been searched for in vain. English Catholics, whether Roman or Anglican, know her not, neither is she to be found in any of their "Calendars." Inquiries on the Continent, however, have met with better success. Among the cloth-workers of the Netherlands is a nunnery dedicated to St. Adeline; and the late Father Joseph, of Bristol, suggests that some wealthy Gloucestershire clothier founded the original church at Sodbury, and adopted the fair Netherlander as his patron saint! Whether this was so, or whether the name is simply a variation of "Adela" or "Adelaide," will most probably remain a mystery.

Not far from the church another object of interest claims attention—the ancient camp that crowns the hill a little to the right of the manor, and from which indeed the latter derives its name, "Sod" being Saxon for South, "Bury" for Camp.

According to Tacitus, the enclosure appears to be one of the chain of camps formed by Publius Ostorius, to protect this side of the Severn from the incursions of the Welsh, and to keep the inhabitants of the district in subjection.

It is a rectangular area of about twelve acres, surrounded on three sides by a ditch and two aggee or mounds; the west side being almost inaccessible, has only one aggee. The principal opening is on the east, a smaller one on the west appearing to have given access to a spring. The camp occupies a most commanding position near the great "Portway," connecting *Aquæ Solis*, Bath, with *Corinium*, Cirencester; fifteen other camps being discernible from it on a clear day. The Saxons entrenched themselves here on their way to Dyrham, and Edward IV. availed himself of its protection when marching to Tewkesbury. For a more detailed description of this interesting spot, of the coins found there, and the still larger camp or "cattle fort" surrounding it, the reader is referred to papers in the "Bristol and Gloucestershire Archæological Society's Transactions for 1888."

From entries in the diary of an Avant Courier (preserved in the Public Record Office), who preceded Henry VIII. and Anne Boleyne on their progress through Gloucestershire, 1535, it is more than probable that the royal pair visited Little Sodbury, remaining the guests of Sir John Walshe from August 25th to 27th; but, so far, no actual record of the event has been forthcoming.

CHAPTER VIII.

HORTON COURT.

Horton Court lies far from road or rail—twenty-seven miles south of Gloucester, and two miles north-east of the old-world-town of Chipping Sodbury. It nestles cosily in a fold of the hills, which gird it round on three sides, but on the fourth slope steeply down, affording a lovely panoramic view of the fertile vale of Gloucester which stretches far away on either hand.

Climbing the hill through the village, and turning into a road on the left, which winds round its grassy shoulder beneath stately trees scattered over the sloping sides in park-like profusion, the visitor soon finds himself descending towards a small plateau ; and turning to the right comes suddenly upon the church, a fourteenth-century structure, with the square, battlemented tower so common to Gloucestershire, standing in its quiet God's acre—far older than itself, for this church superseded one of much more ancient date. On the right of the church, approached by a pleasant shrubberied drive, lies Horton Court.

Built, the greater part, in peaceful times, it boasts no massive wall nor encircling moat; no frowning tower guards its entrance, nor grim portcullis, rattling in its rusty grooves. It has no winding passages (there isn't room for any!) no secret stairs nor dismal dungeons—not even a ghost, although one might find congenial quarters among the high-pitched "roofs" and rambling garrets that form the topmost story. The ancient Court is just a pleasant country house, of various styles of architecture, lying, fair and peaceful, among its gravelled paths and mossy lawns, with the hills rising steep and green, or thickly wooded, immediately beyond. Rather eërie, may be, in the chill spring twilight with a rain-storm moaning up from the west, or when winter has spread a thick white pall over the silent mounds near by. But even then, bright fires and happy faces, and curtains closely drawn, form an excellent antidote; and in summer the old Court is perfect.

The first possessor of the Manor of Horton of whom we have any record was Ulf, third son of Earl Harold. It was then called "Horedon in Grimboldeston Hundred," now "Grombolds Ash." Upon the conquest of the kingdom by William, Ulf was sent prisoner to Normandy, and his estate given to Robert de Todeni, the Conqueror's standard-bearer and favourite. At which time, according to Doomsday, it consisted of "twelve hides, taxed, eleven plow tillages, a water mill, twenty acres meadow, wood two miles long one broad

—worth £12, now £7." For some time after the Conquest land depreciated considerably in value.

From Todeni the manor passed to his daughter Agnes, wife of Hubert de Ria, who, in 1125, gave it to the Church of Salisbury as the corp. of a prebendal stall. The gift is thus set forth in the "Register of St. Osmond," vol. i. pp. 202–3: "Be it known to all, now and in the future, that Agnes, wife of Hubert de Ria, and their son Henry, gave to the church at Sarum the manor of Horton." The charter of the prebend was confirmed by Henry II., 1160; Richard Poer, Bishop of Sarum, holding it in 1222. In 1254, however, on the ground that it was hardly seemly that the Bishop of Sarum should be in any way subject to the Bishop of Worcester, in whose diocese Horton then was, his lordship exchanged it for Potterne, Wilts. Ralph of York, or rather his substitute, Roger de Lockington, succeeded him at Horton, claiming also court leet and free warren (1270); which claim was allowed by Edward I., 1287 (Atkyns, p. 253).

So far the prebendaries appear to have lived at the manor house, of which the Norman hall still standing formed part, and exercised in all respects the functions of lord of the manor. A church also stood close by, on the site of the present structure. This, in 1150, was the property of Robert de Bella-fago, who himself held the living. He was a great Oxford scholar, an author, and the friend of Cambrensis and Map. An ebullition of his lighter moments, "*Versus de Commen-*

datione Cervisiæ" (A poem in praise of Ale), is still preserved, in the original MS., in the Library of Cambridge University. He was also the first prebendary of whom there is any record; resigning the prebend, however, in 1219, to the Bishops of Sarum. His wife Agnes (following in the steps of the other Agnes, sixty years before) after his death gave the church, *in prebendem*, to the church of Sarum. From which bequest it is certain that the first prebendary and rector, the builder presumably of the Norman portion, was a "family man." Thus, instead of a solitary "celibate priest" (he was an after institution!), there appears to have been a numerous household, with a wealthy ecclesiastic as lord of the manor; holding, from Ralph of York's time, court leet; enforcing the game laws, and if not joining in the chase, as was probable, undoubtedly dispensing hospitality to those who did. From the "Register of St. Osmond" it is quite clear that there was on each prebend a house of residence, with a *familia*, and often also a church, either served by the prebendary, or by a vicar appointed by him.

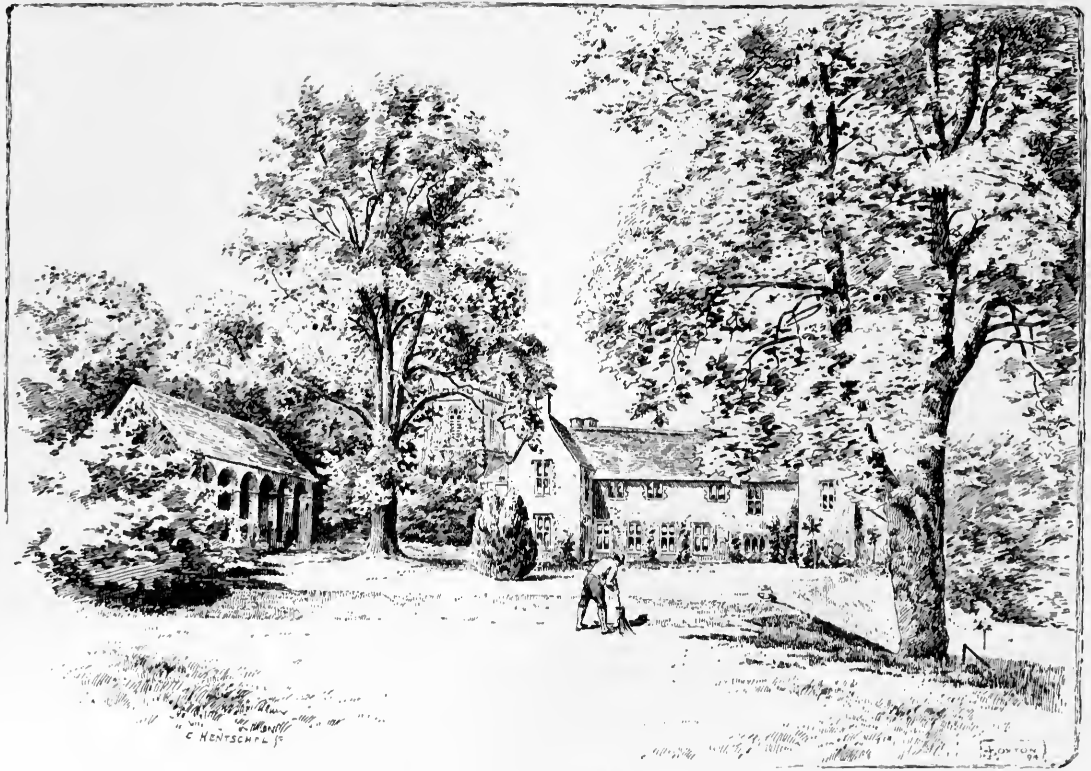
Early in 1300 the manor passed again into lay hands, Richard d'Abington holding it from the dean and chapter in 1316. Strangely enough, all Gloucestershire historians, with the exception of Fosbroke, have, by a peculiar obliquity of mental vision, seen in this arrangement the existence of two distinct manors; one the prebend, the other descending in lay hands from before the Conquest; whereas the whole of the manor was comprised in the prebend. At first it was held by laymen; then by the prebendaries; then again (as leasehold) by laymen; Richard d'Abington being succeeded by William Kayleway, and he by Thomas de Bradstone (that eminent retainer of the Berkeleys and favourite of his king), among whose descendants and connections—residing for the most part at the Court, but of whom nothing noteworthy is recorded—the manor remained until 1476, when it was once more held by an ecclesiastic—Robert Morton; being, however, sequestered when he fell under the displeasure of Edward IV. Restored in 1486, Christopher Baynbridge, Canon of Salisbury, became prebendary; in 1499 presenting William Draglowe to the incumbency. He was succeeded by "Master William Knight, Doctor of Laws;" a man who played no unimportant part in history, and whose rise from obscurity to power and influence was almost as rapid and surprising as that of his great contemporary Cardinal Wolsey; and, fortunately for him, without a corresponding downfall. The following is a short abstract of his life, taken from the "Dictionary of National Biography."

Born in London 1476 of humble parents, he became a scholar of Winchester; passing thence to Oxford, where by ability and diligence, he soon distinguished himself and was made a Fellow; shortly afterwards, it is said, becoming Secretary to Henry VII. On the accession of Henry VIII. he was employed as ambassador to various foreign courts; in 1512 accompanying Sir

Edward Howard to treat with King Ferdinand of Spain in defence of the Church. In 1514 he started on a series of embassies to the Low Countries; when, the better to equip him for his mission, he received a grant of arms; thus blazoned in Jewer's "Heraldry in Wells Cathedral": "*Per fess or and arg. in chief a demirose gu, conjoined to a demi-sun in base or, from the top of the rose a demi-imperial eagle, sans wings, sa.*" In the grant he is described as a "prothonotary of the Apostolical See and Ambassador from Henry VIII. to Maximilian," &c.

From this time until 1532 he was frequently employed on important embassies to foreign courts, notably that to the Pope concerning Henry's divorce from Katherine of Arragon; his ability and regard for the interests of his royal master being on each occasion rewarded by fresh honours and preferments. As Chaplain and Clerk of the Royal Closet—(Henry calls him his "trusty and right well-beloved chaplain, Dr. Knight")—he attended the king at the Field of the Cloth of Gold, and was present at the christening of Edward VI. He was also made Chief Secretary, and, later, Commissioner for collecting the ecclesiastical tenths.

His Church preferments were even more numerous. Besides holding prebends of the Cathedrals of Lincoln, Salisbury, and Bangor, he was rector of the latter city, and of Ronald Kirk, Yorkshire; managing to fall foul there of his archdeacon, who, he complains in a letter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HORTON COURT, SOUTH VIEW.

to Cromwell, " deals very unkindly with me, and cursed my official"—Daykin, the vicar-general. At this time he was himself archdeacon of Chester, Huntingdon, and Richmond, and canon of Westminster. But in 1541, having become too old and infirm for active service, Henry made him Bishop of Bath and Wells; when he resigned all his other dignities into the king's hands, occupying himself until his death, six years afterwards, in his diocese.

He was buried in the nave of Wells Cathedral, near to Sugar's chantry, and to the stone pulpit—bearing his shield of arms—which he had erected, and which serves as his monument. He also built, in the second year of his bishopric, and with the assistance of money left by Dean Woolman, a market cross, "of most excellent form, standing on 12 pillars of stone, and leaded on the top," for the convenience of the market people: this is now destroyed. By will he left money to Winchester, and New College, Oxford, with sundry bequests to Wells Cathedral. "He was," says his biographer, "a faithful servant of Henry, and a useful diplomatist of the old school, which regards dissimulation as one of the requisites of success." This is doubtless true; but he was also a man of courage and resource—during his embassies he encountered many dangers, from storm, and sickness, and the hand of man, once being nearly murdered; but he carried them through. He had, besides, a wise head and a kindly heart, or he would not have won confidence and affection—nor have cared to provide a shelter for the poor market folk. Also, which is more to the present purpose, he recognised the value of a rich prebend and a pleasant site, or he would not have retained Horton for thirty years, nor have built Horton Court.

Strangely enough, his biographer omits all mention of his connection with Horton, although it is clearly set forth in several ecclesiastical records, the "Valor Ecclesiasticus" giving particulars of the prebend in his time, with its value, £64 13s. 9d. It was called the "golden prebend" (*aurea præbenda*), and in 1226 was valued at 20 marks. No documentary evidence, however, appears to exist as to his having built the Court; but that he did build it is proved—by its style of architecture, Early Tudor; by the existence of his shield of arms over the entrance door and one of the fireplaces; and by the following inscription upon a stone built into the garden wall:

WILHELMVS KNYGHT PR° THONO TARIV^{s} ANO 1521.

This was the fourth year of his appointment, and as he was abroad nearly the whole of the two first years, and greater part of the last one, he must have begun building somewhere about 1519, probably intending the house for a pleasant retreat from the cares of office. If so, it was an intention seldom realised, his imperious and exacting master keeping him so constantly employed on foreign or domestic missions as to leave him little time for recreation or the enjoyments of country life.

It cannot now be ascertained what parts of the ancient mansion, occupying the north and east portion of the site, he retained in addition to the Norman hall. Certainly some portions, but the greater part of the centre block, containing as it does the doorway of early Renaissance work, and the Tudor fireplaces with the shield of arms, are of his building; as is the long south front with its small wings and mullioned windows, in some of which the tiny diamond panes still remain. So also is the "loggia," in the garden, which, from its being, apparently, the only structure of the kind in these parts, has given rise to much speculation. Most probably it was built as an Ambulatory, the house not being large enough to contain the gallery, which in wet weather was used for that purpose. It is an arcade of Tudor arches, some 50 feet long by 12 broad, open in front and one end, but enclosed on the remaining sides with a high wall; the whole surmounted by a tiled roof. On the wall, in medallions, are four heads in plaster of the Cæsars. This style of ornamentation was much in vogue in Henry VIII.'s time, the subjects of the medallions having possibly been suggested by the near proximity of a small Roman camp, called "The Castles," which crowns the steep grassy hill to the south of the house. The "loggia" occupies a small gravelled terrace that forms the western boundary of the broad, mossy lawn, which, extending along the whole south front, slopes abruptly down to a shrubberied garden, beyond which a large fishpond, now partly dry, winds round the back of the house, separating it from the wooded hill beyond—a tiny fragment of the once extensive "forest of Horewood." On the lawn, overshadowing the "loggia," is now a gigantic tulip tree, 20 feet in girth, and more than 60 feet high; one of the largest in England, and when in bloom a perfect golden glory. Behind the "loggia" extend the gardens, greenhouses, &c.

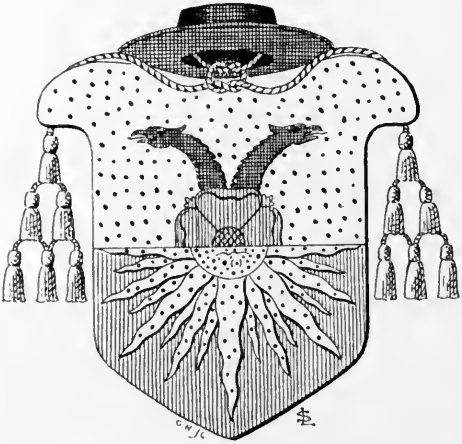
The house, as at present, is chiefly of three storeys, the attics being in the central roof, which runs east and west, and over part of the south wing. The stairs lead up from the hall, immediately opposite the front door. On the left is the dining-room, containing the mantelpiece before referred to; it has lately been enlarged by the addition of a bay window. Beyond are several other rooms and offices; the "servants' hall" having also a Tudor fireplace.

On the right is the drawing-room; once divided, now a long, pleasant apartment, with numerous mullioned and transomed windows, modern, and two fireplaces, also modern, as is the floor. Leading out of it in the west wing, is a little boudoir or library opening, by a French window, on to the lawn. Behind the drawing-room is the ancient kitchen, with its long, low, mullioned window.

Wide passages, with thick walls and large embrasured windows, traverse both storeys of the middle portion, the centre of which was, originally, a small open court.

To this pleasant mansion, then, in his brief pauses of leisure, came King Henry's Chief Secretary and confidential favourite, Prothonotary Knight, to refresh himself with country sights and sounds, and to dispense justice and hospitality as became the lord of the manor. Perchance around his board in the old Norman hall; which, embellished with panelling or tapestry, would still be used on state occasions, there foregathered among Court and city friends, the "Disenherited" Berkeleys, from their manors of Rodway and Yate; and brave Sir Robert Poyntz, of Iron Acton, who, not so many years before, had entertained his sovereign, Henry VII. Sir John Walshe, too, his brother-in-law, from Little Sodbury, hard by; and with him, for Dr. Knight was a learned man and loved a crack with a scholar, Master William Tyndale, with his fine face and quiet dignity, and that bee in his bonnet—the printing of the Bible in the common tongue. And then, if there was also a goodly sprinkling of ecclesiastics, as doubtless there was, argument would wax warm, and Master Tyndale be hard pressed to hold his own. Upon which the genial and courtly host would adroitly interfere, deprecating controversy and eccentric views as impolitic and dangerous, and suggesting an adjournment to the sunny lawn or sheltering "loggia," where music or song should soothe the jarring elements once more to harmony.

Then in a few short weeks, or months at most, the busy stir of coming or departing guests would cease, and the Chief Secretary be back again at Court, or speeding away to the Continent; leaving the pleasant mansion to the occupation of the rector and his curate—for he had a curate, one Robert Lye; though what his stipend could have been when the value of the rectory was something less than £15 per annum is a mystery, even allowing for the change in the value of money.



ARMS OF PROTHONOTARY KNIGHT.

Referring again to the arms granted to Prothonotary Knight, it may be noted that the coat described differs from that in the "National Biography," which was taken from Burke; but Jewer is correct according to the arms in Wells Cathedral and at Horton; the latter, however, being, in addition, ensigned with "the hat of a prothonotary"—similar to that of a cardinal, but black, with three rows of tassels; a cardinal's being crimson with five rows. The arms above the fireplace at Horton, indeed, are represented entire, even to the "angel supporters"; surely the most grotesque angels ever carved, even by a country stonemason! The "demi-imperial eagles," too, bear far more resemblance to irate ganders than to the king of birds. The author of the recent work on "Ecclesiastical Arms," Dr. Woodward, describing Bishop Knight's coat, says, "It is the latest instance of Angel supporters to Anglican Episcopal Arms with which I am acquainted, and affords a curious example of the overcharged style of the times."

Upon the translation of Dr. Knight to the bishopric another prebendary was appointed; but his tenure proved of short duration, the prebend being dissolved soon afterwards and the manor bestowed by Edward VI. upon the Duke of Somerset. On the attainder of the latter, 1552, Edward gave it to Sir Clement Paston, who was, although in other ways, almost as distinguished as his notable predecessor. He was the grandson of John Paston, of the "Paston Letters," that unique epistolary chronicle of the times of Henry VI., Edward IV., Richard III., and Henry VII.

Born at the family seat of Paston, on the Norfolk coast, he soon evinced a great love of the sea, and entering the navy early in Henry's reign quickly rose to the rank of captain. In an engagement with the French he took their admiral, Baron de St. Blankheare, or Blanchard, prisoner ; confining him in Castor Castle, Yorkshire, until he had paid a ransom of 7,000 crowns. As a souvenir of this achievement he christened his great "standing bowl" (probably part of the defeated Frenchman's possessions) "Baron St. Blankheare," bequeathing it in his will to his brother-in-law, the Earl of Rutland. He served with distinction at the Battle of Musselburgh, as also in various other engagements; and, descended from ancestors "noble" in the truest sense of the word, he well upheld the family prestige, gaining the regard and respect of the successive monarchs under whom he served. As is curiously evinced by the sobriquets they bestowed—Henry called him his Champion ; the Protector Somerset, his Soldier ; Mary, her Seaman ; and Elizabeth, her Father ! He owned large estates in various parts of England, but chiefly in Norfolk, where he built the fine mansion of Oxneade Hall, residing principally there, respected and beloved for his uprightness of character and his generous kindness to the poor. The inscription on his tomb in the village church records how—

> "Oxneade he built, in which he lived long,
> With great renowne for feeding of the poor."

He died without issue in 1597, leaving Horton, Appleton, in Norfolk, and some other bequests, to his nephew, Edward Paston, but the bulk of the property to the latter's elder brother, Sir William.

From this Sir William, who resided at the family mansion of Oxneade, was descended the courtly and accomplished Sir Robert Paston, famous for his learning and travels, who in 1664 proposed to Parliament the unprecedented grant of two and a half millions to the king for a war against the Dutch. In return for this, Charles created him Baron Paston and Earl of Yarmouth, ever after treating him with great favour. Accompanied by the Queen and Duke of York he visited Oxneade, and finally gave his natural daughter, Lady Catherine Boyle, alias Fitzroy, in marriage to his favourite's eldest son, William Paston. But the family property was not sufficient to support such an expensive alliance, and, becoming much encumbered, was sold on the death of the next heir, Lord Charles, and the beautiful mansion fell into ruins.

Meanwhile Edward Paston, the owner of Horton, had also built himself a family mansion at Appleton, which he made his principal seat : indeed it does not appear that either he or Sir Clement ever lived at Horton, although they may have done so, all their interests and associations lying in Norfolk. William Paston, however, a younger grandson of Edward, certainly resided there during some portion of his life, and there he died, his burial, 1673, being recorded in the Horton register ; followed a few months later by that of a daughter, Mary, and in 1677 by his son and heir, William, "Lord of the manor of Horton, in his nonage (14 years)." Their mother, Mary, daughter of William Lawson, Esq., was also buried at Horton, 1679.

John Paston, of Appleton, succeeded, and, the Norfolk mansion being burnt to the ground in 1707, Horton became the principal residence of the family.

This John married: first, Frances Tichborne; second, the Honourable Anne Calvert, daughter of Baron Baltimore, and widow of Lord Somerset, of Pauntly Court. He was a Roman Catholic, and is the Paston who, as will be seen, so completely destroyed the original character of the Norman hall by carrying a floor from end to end, and converting the upper storey into a private chapel. In the "Reliquiæ Hearnianæ," under date Dec. 15, 1726, is the following reference to him: "Mr. Calvert told me that he hath an uncle, Mr. Paston, who is a very curious gentlemen. He is a Roman Catholic. He lives at Pauntly, Glos." (probably held by his wife for her life), "and married Mr. Calvert's aunt, Lady Anne Calvert, as his second wife. His estates, at least a greater part, is Abbey lands, and thrives with him, as Abbey lands generally do thrive in R. C. hands, though not in others. Mr. Charles Hyde is chaplain to him. Mr. Paston's son married, 1725, a Miss Courtenay, a lady of great understanding and virtue. His brother, who is a Protestant, hath many valuable writings." (Did he mean the "Paston Letters"?) "The aforesaid young Mr. Paston, William Paston, Esq., lives at Horton, which once belonged to the church at Salisbury."

The assertion as to Abbey lands thriving in Roman Catholic hands was, as the editor of the "Reliquiæ" points out, rather unfortunate in this particular instance, the young Mr. Paston referred to becoming afterwards so indebted to his solicitor, Mr. Thomas Brooke, of Chipping Sodbury, that he was obliged to leave him the Horton estate in payment (about 1807), and the family appears now to have become extinct, the following extract from the *Morning Post*, January, 1887, presumably chronicling the death of the last representative :—

"On the 31st ult., at Bath, Margaret Lady Paston Bedingfeld, widow of Sir Henry Paston Bedingfeld, of Oxborough, in her eightieth year. R.I.P." [1]

The present owner of the manor, through his marriage with the granddaughter of Mr. Brooke, is Admiral Sir Frederick Richards, K.C.B. He, however, has never made it his residence, his duties occupying him abroad or in London. He was Commander of the Chinese Squadron, 1891–2, and served with distinction in the Zulu and Boer wars ; his wife, who had accompanied him thither, dying in Africa.

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[1] This lady, mother of the present Sir Henry Paston Bedingfeld of Oxburgh, was the only daughter of Edward Paston of Paston, not of Horton. Her husband assumed the name of Paston in 1830.

For many years the Court was let, but it is now in charge of a caretaker, the whole having been put, 1884, by Sir Frederick, in thorough repair, under the direction of the well-known authority on ancient architecture, Francis C. Penrose, Esq., M.A. The decayed wooden mullions of the windows were replaced by stone, the bay thrown out from the dining-room, and the whole repointed, but no structural alterations of any account were made in the Tudor portion; except that the rooms with separate entrances on the lower floor of the south wing were thrown into one, forming the present drawing-room. A conservatory, also, which once adjoined that side of the house, and which, together with a broad stone pavement, occupied the whole space between the wings, was removed, and the site turfed over, as at present.

The Norman portion, however, has suffered many mutations at the hands of successive owners, with most of whom it appears to have been a kind of white elephant.

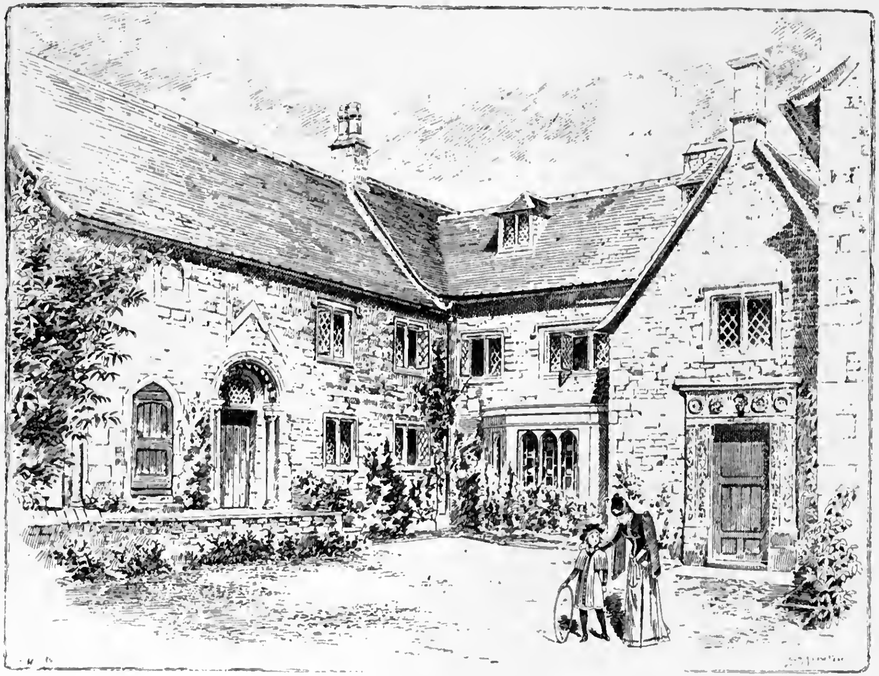
The late Mr. J. H. Parker, F.S.A., has two references to Horton Court, more especially to the Norman portion, which, as they have hitherto been regarded as authoritative, it will be advisable to present before describing the building as it really exists, and as, from the evidence, it appears to have existed in ancient times. In his "Domestic Architecture," 1859, vol. iii.

p. 260, Mr. Parker says: "The northern side of the structure is in the Norman style. . . . The remainder . . . was added by the Paston family in . . . Elizabeth or James I. (!) The manor, having become Church property, Henry I., its lord, necessarily remained a celibate, therefore the moderate structure of those simple days was sufficient for his wants." In the *Archæological Journal*, vol. xvii. p 328, published the following year, he still clings to the idea of the "celibate priest," and the complete "house;" upon which he enlarges thus (whether from observation or from hearsay is not stated): "A lofty hall occupied about two-thirds of the house," the length of the *whole* is only 35 feet! "the remaining third being divided into two storeys, the *cellu*, or parlour, below, and the *solar*, or bedroom, above, under part of which was the usual passage behind a screen. . . . The two small chambers were probably lighted by windows in the west end, now concealed by rough-cast and ivy on the outside and papered over on the inside." In a supplementary note, not published with the above, he corrects his error with regard to the builder of the Tudor portion; ascribing it to Knight, and giving (incorrectly) the inscription on the stone.

From these, and other, inaccuracies it seems probable that Parker wrote his description from hearsay, or that he had had only a cursory glimpse of the old Court and its still older "Norman portion." This, as originally built, was one room or hall, about 35 feet long, running east and west, and open from floor to roof. Opposite to each other, north and south, and 8 feet from the west wall, are two doors; their style late Norman, with zigzag ornament, moulding and shafts, pear-shaped in sections, and still perfect; two windows of the same date, high in the north wall, east of doors, and an open hearth, also east of doors.

At the west end was a gallery, probably later, supported upon a thick beam level with the top of the doors. It could scarcely have been a "*solar*," as the entire width from wall to beam is barely 7 feet; neither could there have been a "*cellu*" beneath, as no trace whatever of a window exists. This gallery was approached from the outside by a newel staircase or stone in the south-west angle, with transition doorway, and a small window high in the wall above, splayed *slantwise*, apparently to throw the light into the gallery. Beside it, within, is a recess about the same width, but considerably higher.

On the outer side of the north wall, above the door, is a small shield bearing a saltire, charged in the centre with two annulets braced. These are the arms or Robert Neville, Bishop of Salisbury, 1427-35. Two perpendicular buttresses, which support the wall, as also the present fine open-timbered roof, belong to this period; but whether they are the work of Bishop Neville, or of the contemporary lessee of the manor, does not appear. The locality of the hearth is plainly indicated by the blackened eastern portion of the roof.



HORTON COURT.

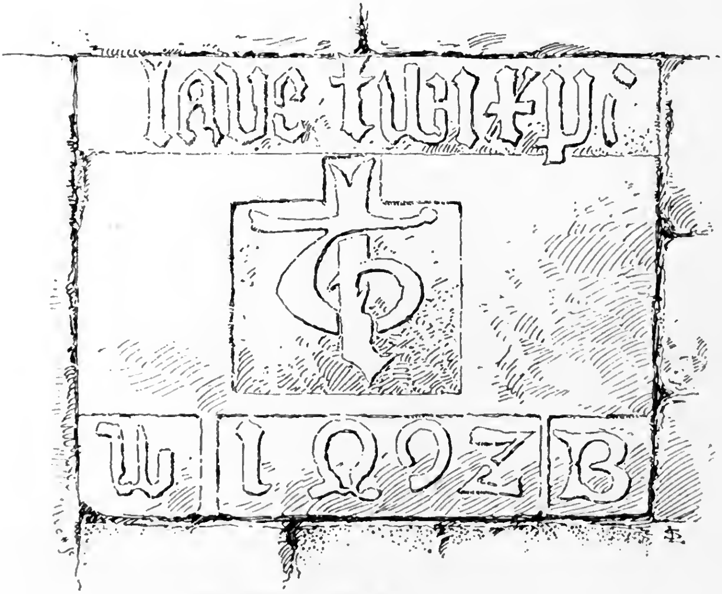
Several alterations were subsequently made in the old hall; notably that of carrying the floor from end to end, and thus dividing it into two storeys. Who was answerable for this destruction of the original character of the building cannot be positively ascertained. Whether Prothonotary Knight, when he built the Tudor portion in 1521, or John Paston some 250 years later, to secure a convenient chapel wherein to exercise his proscribed rites; but probabilities all point to the latter. Indeed, apart from there being no trace of a fireplace in the upper room, it is scarcely conceivable that the genial and hospitable Chief Secretary would thus deliberately curtail and disfigure the only banqueting hall his pleasant retreat possessed.

Some time after the Paston occupation, the old place suffered still further mutilation. Two modern sash-windows were placed in the upper south-east portion, while the lower part was partitioned off east of the Norman doors, and a fireplace built in the east end: this was called the "Churchwardens' Room," and was used for parish business. The spiral staircase had long been disused, and the door fastened up. In the Pastons' time entrance was gained *from behind the altar*, the present eastern door being of recent date. Later still the sometime chapel was used for a school, a door being made in the west end, with wooden steps leading down to the churchyard. Several old people still living remember the steps being placed there, and used to attend the school; notably a certain James

Watts, now over seventy, whose father, a keeper, was then living with his family in the Court. On the erection of the fine National Schools in the village, 1860, the children were removed thither, and shortly afterwards the doorway and steps were replaced by the present Perpendicular window to correspond with those in the church. In 1884 the whole building was repaired, under the direction of Mr. F. C. Penrose; the rough-cast and ivy were removed and stones re-pointed, &c.; while the paper, which had concealed the wall within, and the plaster ceiling, being pulled down the handsome timbered roof, and Norman windows on the north and south (round-topped and deeply splayed within, but blocked up outside), were once more exposed to view; and the whole, carefully cleansed and repaired, may still be seen. The windows had, most probably, been thus blocked and hidden when the place was made into a chapel, in order to preserve the secret of its forbidden use, artificial light being substituted. At the east end, where stood the altar, the wall had been panelled, and behind the panelling was discovered a secret recess, into which, on intimation of danger, the officiating priest could step; slipping out by a cleverly-contrived door into a tiny room immediately behind, a passage from which communicated with the house. Above the altar once hung a large painting of the Crucifixion; it is now carefully packed away in another part of the house. During the restorations the hideous sash-windows on the south were replaced by others, square-headed and mullioned, with diamond panes; the lower room being converted into a large and convenient butler's pantry!

Lying on the floor of the chapel among sundry fragments of carved stone, is a shield bearing the arms of William Paston and his wife Maria, *née* Lawson, the first of the family who lived and died at Horton. The arms, with their supporters, are very curious and elaborate. They are thus blazoned by Bigland—"*Six fleur-de-lis, ar,* 3, 2, 1, *a chief indented or, for Paston, impailing ar a chevron between* 3 *martlets sable for Lawson. Supporters, for sinister, bear muzzled, sable, collared and chained or, for dexter, ostrich holding horse shoe in its beak or; crest, a griffin or, Motto,* '*De mieux je pense en mieux.*'" The shield was removed, during some alterations, from the "Paston Chapel," in the north aisle of the church, where were also several other memorials of the family. The present writer unearthed a curious fragment from beneath a heap of rubbish in the Norman portion; a stone, some 2 feet long, having roughly carved upon it, what appears to be a sword-fish, with one enormous "fin," and the "sword" part curled up at the point like a miniature trunk! A still more interesting "find" was made in the low wall dividing the shrubbery from the church, near the west end of the Norman portion.

Built into the wall below the William Knight inscription and about a foot from the ground, were exposed to view two other stones. On the one, very roughly carved, is a bishop's mitre above a shield bearing a cross (plain), but the whole much worn and defaced. The other, however, an inscribed stone, is still in excellent preservation. It is oblong, 15 inches by 12, and the inscription, according to various experts to



INSCRIBED STONE, HORTON COURT.

whom a rubbing of the stone has been submitted, runs thus : In the centre a monogram, " T.L. " ; above, in Old English characters, " **Laus tibi Christe,**" *Praise to Thee, O Christ*; below, initials and date, "**W.** (1492) **B.**"

By careful research, and comparison of dates and historic notices, the writer has ascertained (as far as it is possible at this distance of time, and with no positive contemporary record, to ascertain anything) the monogram to be that of "Thomas Langton," Bishop of Salisbury, 1483–94, and the initials those of "William Burton," owner, or rather lessee, of Horton Court. Unfortunately the various histories are either hopelessly chaotic or altogether silent concerning this particular epoch in the existence of the manor; so that from the death of Sir Walter de la Pole, husband of Elizabeth, heiress of the Bradstones, in 1434, until the appointment of Dr. Knight to the prebend in 1517, all we really know is that during some part of the time the family of Burton held the manor, Atkyns stating (unfortunately without date), that "Thomas Burton and William, his son, levied a fine of Horton to the use of the said Thomas in special tail." Whether the said Thomas had a son, William, who rebuilt part of the mansion in 1492, and whether the stone, now once more brought to light, was a dedication stone, inscribed, in addition to the initials of the builder, with the monogram of the then Bishop of Salisbury, cannot, of course, be positively asserted, but the probabilities are strongly in favour of its being so; especially as no other initials or monogram corresponding to those on the stone are to be found among Prebendaries, Bishops, or Lessees during the whole of the fifteenth century.

The three stones have evidently been brought from various parts of the mansion, during some of the numerous alterations, and built into their present position in the garden wall, where a thick growth of shrubs has hitherto concealed them from view.

NOTE.

Since writing the above, the author sent the "rubbing" of the inscribed stone to Mr. W. T. Stead with a request that he would submit it to some reliable psychometrist by way of experiment, although, as the rubbing had been taken some six months previously, and had passed through many hands, no very satisfactory result was expected. Mr. Stead kindly sent it to Miss Ross, a lady whose "impressions" (though more of character than of past events) have been wonderfully accurate; accompanied by the following letter, which is transcribed as showing that no information whatever concerning the stone or its surroundings was given. Indeed, Mr. Stead himself was purposely kept in ignorance to avoid any probability of telepathic communication.

To Miss Ross—"I think your delineation of 'Mark Twain's' hands was quite wonderfully good; so much so that I venture to try whether or not you can get any impression from the enclosed rubbing; it is a rubbing of an old stone. A person who is writing a book upon the building in which the stone is, is completely at a loss to account for its presence. Do you think you could get an impression? I just send you this on the off-chance, not expecting you will be able to do so; but it is only by making continual fresh experiments that we are able to limit the extent of our own powers."

The following is Miss Ross's "impression," written down by herself—"A building, seeming an Abbey or religious house, dedicated by its founder or owner to the Lord. Many feet traverse its winding passages, many voices mingle together; sometimes in musical tones, sometimes in close conversation. The stone has been moved, but not far. Either the house where it now is is part of another house, or the stone has been used to mark some particular room where secret meetings for prayer or readings of the Word drew men of one mind together. The inscription is simply dedicative, and was originally *outside* and over an arched doorway."

It is not claimed that this "impression" is accurate in detail, or that it *proves* anything as to the original position or use of the stone, while the rubbing itself might have suggested the first part of the impression to any one of at all vivid or sympathetic imagination. But "imagination," however vivid and sympathetic, could scarcely account for the singular correspondence of the latter part of the impression, taken as a whole, with the ascertained facts relating to the removal of the stone (a few feet from the Norman portion), and the conversion of part of the ancient building into a room for the "secret" religious "meetings" of its Roman Catholic owners. For this reason the experiment appears of sufficient interest to justify its publication.

CHAPTER IX.

BIDFORD GRANGE.

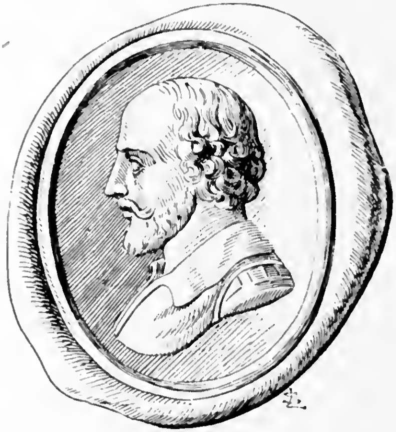
THIS ancient mansion which, rather more than half a century ago, occupied a pleasant and picturesque site on the north bank of the Avon, some six miles below Stratford, was, as its name implies, one of the many monastic granges, built by mediæval monks in sheltered vale or fertile meadow; and if the same axiom holds good of houses as of nations, that the happiest are those which have no history, the old Grange was peculiarly blest; for of history, in the general acceptation of the term, it had none.

No monarch on royal progress ever held revel there, neither, with a single exception, did one enter within its walls. Even the Virgin Queen, although she honoured Charlcote with a visit, and apparently spent a night in almost every other "moated grange" or ancient mansion, passed this by—but perhaps that might have been because it owners were all of the male persuasion. No council, fraught with the destinies of nations, was held there—nothing but the prosaic

Court Leet, and a monthly "assize of bread and beer"; whereat the worthy monks settled the price of those two commodities according to the prevailing price of wheat and hops; and, if their "taster" pronounced unfavourably of the articles, promptly incarcerated the makers thereof in the stocks.

Now and again as the centuries rolled on, and war convulsed the land, there came across the quiet meadows echoes from some great battlefield—Evesham, Edge-hill, Tewkesbury, or Worcester; but no armed band invaded the peaceful solitude of the old Grange—at least there is no record of such invasion. No raid was made on the fat "tithes" garnered in its immense barn (on whose spacious floor four waggons could turn at once); neither did the troops of king or parliament impress upon its ancient walls and encircling moat their devastating hand.

In each of these respects Bidford Grange was absolutely uninteresting. And yet it had an interest more lasting and far-reaching than them all. Monarchs may reign and be forgotten, nations perish from the earth, but as long as men love and women weep, the memory of the great poet who portrayed their every mood and passion will endure; and it is with him that the old Grange is associated—not prominently and intimately, as are Stratford and Shottery, but anecdotally and incidentally; and, in default of a more able chronicler, it has seemed good to the present writer, whose forefathers for several generations dwelt in a part of the ancient mansion, to collect and transcribe such fragments of its history and associations as are still obtainable.



HEAD OF SHAKESPEARE, FROM IMPRESSION OF RING.[1]

In early Saxon times Bidford and Bidford Manor, including the Grange, formed one property, and as such constituted a demesne of the Crown under Edward the Confessor and his immediate descendants. It consisted of " 5 hides of land, 4 mills value xliiis. iiid.; 150 acres of meadow, and woods 4 miles long and 1 broad." Bishop Odo also possessed " 2½ yds. of land with woods 2 fur. long and 1 broad." Bidford itself continued in the Crown until King John gave it with his daughter Joan to Lewellyn Prince of Wales; he, in his turn, bestowing it upon his daughter Helen on her marriage with John Scott, afterwards Earl of Huntingdon, a nephew of the famous Ranulph, Earl of Chester. From him it passed successively to numerous owners, until, during the Commonwealth, it came to that branch of the ancient family of Skipwith who resided at Newbold Hall, Warwickshire, with whom it continued for upwards of two hundred years.

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[1] This sketch was taken from an impression of the memorial ring bought by Richard Burbage with the money (£1, 6s. 8d.) left by Shakespeare for that purpose. It was worn by Garrick at the Centenary, and is now in the possession of Philip James Bailey, Esq., author of "Festus." The ring remained in the Burbage family at Cambridge for generations, when a needy member sold it to an enthusiastic Shakespearian, who left it to a friend by whom it was presented to Mr. Bailey. This "pedigree" is vouched for by the widow of the "friend," who is still living.

Meanwhile Bidford Manor and Grange had been allotted to the Empress Maud, daughter of Henry I., who, seeking in her old age some means to facilitate the passing of her soul in peace, founded (1 Richard II. 1189) the neighbouring Abbey of Bordesley, and among other endowments, bestowed upon it her share of these ancient Crown lands, together with " 2 mills."

The white-robed Cistercians appear to have lost no time in utilising the gift; for we find from an inquiry as to their " rights," held some hundred years afterwards, that immediately upon entering into possession, they " built divers houses upon this their lordship, and placed certain freeholders therein," the Abbot holding a Court Leet and Assize of Bread and Beer; which privileges were confirmed to the fraternity by Edward I. at the said inquiry. In the 19th of Edward I. (1291) the manor consisted of "V. Caracats of land (500 acres) valued at x s., and 1 Car. and 2 mills rated at xx s."

Bordesley Abbey itself stood some twelve or fourteen miles away, close to Redditch, and about midway between Bidford and Birmingham, on the site of what is now Bordesley Hall. Covering no less than 8 acres of ground, it must have been a spacious and imposing structure; wealthy, too, with its annual income of £400. And once, at least, it entertained royalty; Edward III., 1328, dating from thence his order to the Abbot of Westminster to restore to Scotland the ancient coronation chair, which his grandfather, Edward I., had brought to England and placed in that abbey.

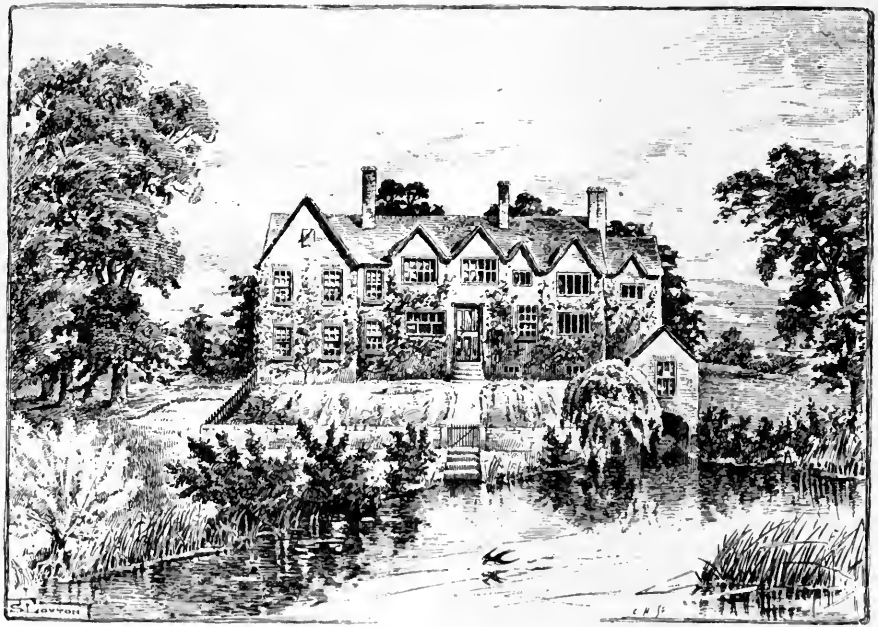
At the Reformation Henry VIII. gave Bordesley to Andrew, Lord Windsor (ancestor of the Earls of Plymouth, and of the present Lord Windsor-Clive), in forced exchange for his ancestral home of Stanwell; which exchange was effected in Henry's usual high-handed fashion. Inviting himself to dinner one day, and being "magnificently entertained" by Lord Windsor, he testified his gratitude by informing his host he "liked the place so well that he was resolved to have it," but would give him Bordesley in exchange. In vain Lord Windsor protested, humbly begging the king not to deprive him of the seat of his ancestors. Henry sternly insisted, commanding him, on his allegiance, to repair forthwith to the Attorney-General.

Upon doing so, and being shown a draught ready made of the exchange, Lord Windsor was compelled to submit, and at once quitted Stanwell, but left therein all his Christmas provisions; saying, proudly, "they shall not find it bare Stanwell." He never, however, appears to have lived at Bordesley, making his principal residence at Hewell, near by—another of the monastery's ancient granges—and the abbey was permitted to fall into complete decay; with the exception of the south aisle of the church, which, early in 1700, was converted by a Mr. Mugg, of Redditch, into a chapel-of-ease, the parish church being some distance away. A few shapeless mounds and fragments of stone, tiles, &c., are all that now remain of this once splendid monastery (see Shaw's "History of Worcestershire," vol. ii. p. 106).

Bidford Manor and Grange were not included in Lord Windsor's unwelcome exchange, but were granted, 1548, to Thomas Badger of Bidford, Thomas Fowler, Stretton-on-Forse, and Robert Dyson, Inkbarrow, for the yearly rent of xxis. ixd. "There being at that time," according to Dugdale, "a certain mansion named Bydforde Grange with 3 mills, called Grange Mills, reputed parcel thereof, together with the tithes of the said Grange, and fishing in Avon; to be held by the xxth part of a knight's fee."

The Grange and mills were allotted to Thomas Badger, who, in 1573, left the former to his eldest son Thomas, the mills to two younger sons. These were the owners in Shakespeare's time; and if the families were not intimate, as it is possible they were, they at least had an intimate mutual friend, a certain Thomas Atwode, alias Tailor, of Stratford, leaving in his will "£5" to his "godson Thomas Badger, son of Thomas Badger of Bydforde," and "4 oxen to Richard Shakespere of Snytfelde," the poet's grandfather. It is curious also to find a certain "Roger Shakespeare," in 1553, receiving a pension of £5 from the confiscated funds of the abbey. In 1588 the old mansion had a narrow escape from destruction; for on the 8th of July, according to the Welford register, "happened the great flood on Avon which broke down Grange Mill, the crack whereof was heard at Holditch, and carried away all the hay" from the meadows.

In 1616 the Grange passed, by the marriage of Frances Badger, to William Brode; then to Francis Bridge, of Alcester, who sold it, 1664, to Thomas Cookes, of Sambourne Court, Warwickshire. The uncle of this gentleman was the Sir Thomas Cookes, of Bentley, and Tardebigg, Worcestershire, who founded Worcester College, Oxford. He married Mary, daughter of the first Earl of Plymouth, and, dying 1702, "was," according to Nash, "buried at his own request, with a gold chain and locket about his neck, and two diamond rings, of no great value, upon his fingers. About fifty years afterwards, David Cookes, heir of the family" (presumably deeming it a pity that good material should be thus wantonly



BIDFORD GRANGE IN 1830.

wasted), "came with a hook and pair of tongs, and, searching, found the things above mentioned." Did he also *wear* them?

The son of Thomas Cookes sold the Grange, 1690, to Mr. Tolley, of Ombersley Court; and he, in 1701, to John Ayshcombe, of Armscote (a branch of the Berkshire Ayshcombes), who bequeathed it to his son John. This son, Captain John Ayshcombe, seems to have made it his home, as he had a son baptised at Bidford, 1733. Two years later, however, he sold the Grange to Sir Francis Skipwith, who also, as we have seen, owned the Bidford estate, together with property at Broom, Salford, &c.

Sir Francis, not desiring the old house as a residence, had it divided; the vicar of the parish, Mr. Holyoak, occupying one portion, the other being let with the farm to a Mr. John Hodges, whose family had for some time owned property in Bidford.

Thus it continued until 1841, when the Warwickshire branch of the Skipwith family becoming extinct, the whole of the Bidford property was sold to a solicitor named Oldacre, who resold it in portions, the Grange and farm being bought by a Mr. Brown. He, for what reason does not appear, pulled down the greater part of the ancient mansion, together with its grand old tithe barn, and built the present farmhouse, until recently in the occupation of the Freer family. The property now belongs to James W. Carlile, Esq., Ponsbourne Park, Hertford.

Such is a brief outline, prosaic and uneventful enough, of the history of Bidford Grange. Of the appearance of the house itself under its monastic owners we have no record (except that it was moated and of considerable extent); for the structure demolished in 1841 was Elizabethan, having evidently been remodelled, if not rebuilt, after it became private property. It was not materially altered when divided by Sir Francis Skipwith, except by the insertion of some modern sash-windows; and those who, from their recollection of the old place, are able to judge, agree that the illustration, taken from an old drawing in the writer's possession, gives a faithful representation of the ancient mansion.

It was situated half a mile south of "Haunted Hillborough," and about one mile south-east of Bidford. A many-gabled stone house, with handsome mullioned windows, and a terraced garden and pleasant, shrubberied lawn on the south and east which extended some 80 feet to the river, the clump of elms that forms such an effective sketch in Parson's "Warwickshire Avon," standing just within a long meadow bounding the lawn. The house was literally gabled on all sides, two gabled wings jutting out at the back, their windows overlooking the farmyard and great barn; for "in those days they thought not the noise of the threshold ill musique." Here, too, was the principal entrance, leading beneath a deep porch, into a large, stone-paved kitchen, with an ingle-nook capable of accommodating a good-sized family. This kitchen, and a room of equal size above, still remain incorporated in the modern building.

Upon the ancient oak salt-box in the cosy ingle-nook once rested the "First Gentleman in Europe," the only scion of royalty who, so far as is known, ever honoured the old mansion with his presence. George IV., then Regent, on one of his visits to the neighbouring mansion of Ragley Hall, called at the Grange in company with "The Beau" and his host, the Marquis of Hertford; whether attracted by the fame of my grandfather's home-brewed ale, or of his beautiful daughter, is not recorded. But, judging from the latter's perfect features and stately grace, even in middle life, she might well have proved the magnet. If so it is to be hoped she comported herself rather more courageously under the royal regard than did two of her compatriots in somewhat similar circumstances.

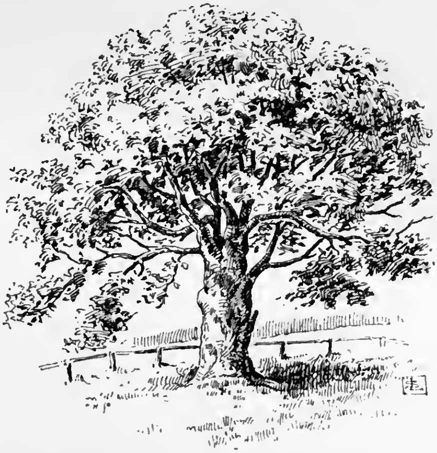
The story goes that, being exceedingly desirous of getting a near view of his Royal Highness while at Ragley, they obtained permission to secrete themselves in an ante-room, through which he would pass. Lady Hertford, hearing of it, told the prince, and he, with his usual graciousness, and thinking to please the damsels, stopped to speak to them. The effect was unlooked for and disastrous, not to say embarrassing to the Prince. One of them fainted dead away, while the other, struck absolutely speechless, stared at him in stolid silence!

Immediately opposite the house was a little island of osiers and reeds, the river between it and the wall of the garden being sufficiently deep for the passage of barges. It was, in fact, part of the "canal" which, in 1635–7, the philanthropic Mr. Sandy spent twenty thousand pounds in making, to render the Avon navigable; but the locks not having been kept in order, no barges can now ascend higher than Chadbury. A project, however, has just been started to repair the locks and render the river once more navigable, at least for small craft.

Almost abreast of the lawn, on the west of the house, stood Grange Mills, or mill, which for many years had been let separately. It was built on a stone causeway almost in mid-stream, the navigable part of the river bounding it on one side; the broader, but more shallow part, on the other. The causeway, which was of some length, was connected with the north bank below the lawn by a movable wooden foot and horse bridge; still there, as is also a stone cottage near to it, called the "Mill House." Above the mill is the weir, forming a pretty cascade, with a ford to the meadows on the south bank.

Many years ago the structure, which originally included the miller's house, was converted into a rag and paper mill, and after various vicissitudes has at length fallen into complete decay, and is now offered to any one who will take it down for the materials. So that soon this relic of the past, as well known on the countryside as the mansion itself, will have been swept away.

Returning to the Grange, let us make our way to the back and ascend a lane leading up what is called Tower Hill to the Stratford Road. Here, just within the fence, near to the junction of the roads, stood the famous Crab-tree, known for centuries in local parlance as "Shakespeare's Canopy," and around which the poet's admirers have long waged wordy warfare.



SHAKESPEARE'S CRAB-TREE.

"The only authentic version of the well-known story," says that most painstaking and reliable writer on matters Shakespearian, the late Mr. Halliwell Phillips, "is one published in the *British Magazine* for 1762." This I will transcribe for the benefit of those who have seen only Jordan's fabrications.

"A gentleman visiting Stratford in 1762, the host of the 'White Lion' took him to Bidford and showed him in the hedge a crab-tree, called 'Shakespeare's Canopy,' because under it the poet slept. Hearing that the Bidford men were deep drinkers and merry fellows, he went out to take a cup with them, when a shepherd, of whom he inquired, humorously told him that the 'drinkers' were at Evesham, but the 'sippers' would be enough for him. And so it proved; the poet, overcome and unable to get farther on his homeward journey than the tree, lay down to sleep on the grassy knoll at its foot. On awakening, it is said, he was urged to renew the contest, but refused; and looking round on the villages which are plainly visible from the spot, and which would appear to have furnished their quota of 'sippers,' he made the oft-repeated rhyme, the adjectives apparently referring to some characteristic of each village—

> Piping Pebworth, dancing Marston,
> Haunted Hillborough, hungry Grafton;
> Dudging Exall, popish Wixford,
> Beggarly Broom and drunken Bidford."

Devotees of the poet, more enthusiastic than wise, indignantly deny the whole story, pronouncing it a base fabrication, reflecting alike upon his morals and his genius. But if physiognomy affords an index to character, its silent testimony is decidedly against them. Shakespeare's face is not the face of the sensitive idealist whose ethereal nature shrinks from all contact with the grossness of earth ; still less is it that of the grim ascetic, looking with austere eye upon the pleasures of life. It is the face of one who, while finding his grandest achievements and purest joys in the field of intellect, and in the study and portrayal of the subtle play of human thought and emotion, is also keenly alive to more sensuous delights ; among which, in his day, the company of some "merry fellows" over a foaming tankard in the cosy inn parlour was by no means least.

Judging then from his face, and the corroborative testimony of his most intimate contemporaries, to say nothing of his writings and of persistent and unbroken tradition, it seems impossible to do other than accept the story as essentially true.

And what, after all, is there (even to those who abhor drunkenness) so very heinous in it as these vehement denialists would make out? In those days everybody, men and women, drank, what we should consider, too much beer — there was little else to drink !

I yield to none in admiration of, and pride in, our great poet—A sort of "family" pride, of all prides the strongest ; for were we not of the same county? Did not my own father gain his "small Latin and less Greek" where Shakespeare gained his ; and was not I, myself, introduced to the world of "letters" at a

Seminary for Young Ladies opposite the very house where he was born? But to apply a nineteenth-century standard of manners and morals to Elizabethan times, or to deify a man because he is a great genius, is a mistake, and one which defeats the very object at which it aims. History, alas! too sadly proves the possession of genius to co-exist with a very low standard of morals. Not that I am accrediting Shakespeare with a low standard—far from it. Of vice, I should say, again judging from his face and contemporary evidence, he was guiltless; while one could not imagine him false or mean. His faults were those of a strong, genial, mirth-loving nature; and if they occasionally led him into indiscretions, we may be sure that the higher part of him approved them not.

As for the "doggrel rhyme"—why should he not have written it? Separate from its setting Autolycus's description of his wares in the "Winter's Tale," and what is it but "doggrel"?—as, indeed, it should be. A hundred years hence Tennysonian devotees may just as hotly deny the authorship of—

"I stood on a tower in the wet
And the New and the Old Year met."

Nevertheless Tennyson wrote it; and no one thinks of denying him the title of a great poet.

But let us descend the hill of controversy and seek again the neighbourhood of the old Grange—

"Where daisies pied and violets blue,
And lady-smocks all silver-white,
And cuckoo-buds of yellow hue
Do paint the meadows with delight."

It may not be generally known that in these same meadows, grew, doubtless is growing still, the real "silver-white" lady-smock, *Cardamine amara;* the common pale lilac variety being the *Cardamine pratensis.* The Rev. T. P. Wadley, M.A., formerly of Bidford, tells me that, when a youth, he found specimens of this delicate flower, pure silver-white, in the Grange meadows—a fact which affords further evidence, not only of the poet's intimate and discriminating knowledge of our English wild flowers, but of his knowledge of this particular locality (for I cannot hear of this variety of the flower being found anywhere else), and supports the conjecture that that oft-quoted description refers to the meadows around Grange, instead of to meadows in general, as Mr. Grindon—apparently ignorant of the existence of the *Cardamine amara*—has, in his "Shakespeare Flora," so ingeniously laboured to prove.

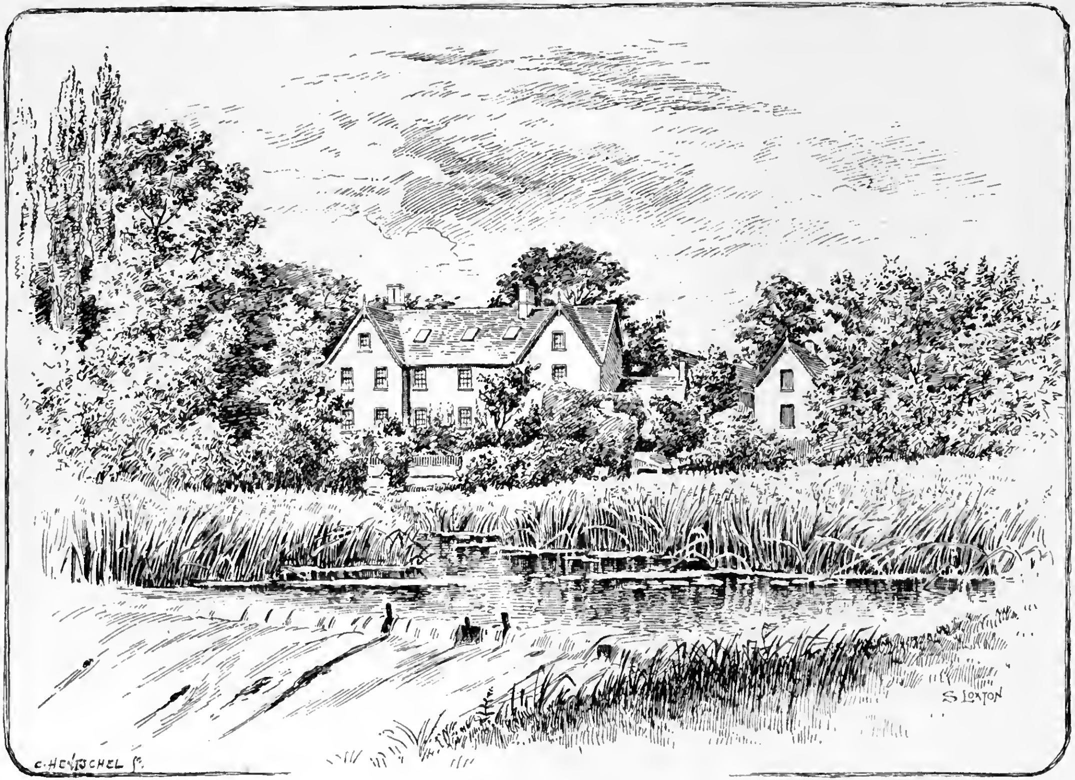
Tradition asserts that Bidford is also the original ot the "dejected Mariana's," "moated grange," in "Measure for Measure"; but the same has been asserted of almost every other moated grange in the country, and, to quote that noted Shakesperian, Mr. Sam. Timmins, "it is extremely doubtful if the poet had any particular one in his mind." There is, however, more probability that the allusion in the "Winter's Tale," act iv., scene iii.,

> "Or thou go'st to the grange or mill,"

is to Bidford; the scene, characters, and customs being redolent of the neighbourhood. Indeed there seems little doubt that Shakespeare was familiar with a place so pretty and picturesque; especially seeing that he wooed—and wed—his bride only a few miles from it!

As for the house itself, which may possibly have welcomed him within its walls, of it nothing now remains, save the old kitchen and room above, and some fragments of the mullioned windows strewn about the orchard. A few ancient yew trees still exist, relics of a long avenue which once led up to the house, and also some traces of the moat. The garden wall and summer-house, with the boat-house beneath (into which, by reason of the neighbouring osier-bed and the set of the stream towards the weirs, it required some skill to shoot the boat) are still there; all else has vanished as completely as the "crab tree."

This, as it was rapidly disappearing under the combined attacks of time and relic-hunters—who, moreover, did considerable damage by breaking down the fence and trampling the standing corn—permission was obtained from Lady Skipwith to cut it down and store the portions worth preserving at the Grange. These could not have been so few nor so completely "decayed" as Mr. Halliwell-Phillips describes them, seeing they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BIDFORD GRANGE AS AT PRESENT.

were ultimately made into a number of boxes, cups, and other small articles; divided between Lady Skipwith and the tenants of Grange, but now scattered to the four winds; the only relic still remaining in the writer's family being a snuff-box, with the rhyme engraved upon a silver plate let into the lid. The tree was not cut down in "1824," the date usually given, but previous to my grandfather's death in 1816.

Of course no old house is complete without its "ghost," and, although unfortunately not able to procure sufficiently strong evidence of the report to be accepted in these critical days, I have heard that a "lady in white" used to occasionally frequent the Grange. My opinion, however, is that she was not "indigenous," but occasionally strolled down from Hillborough, which all faithful believers in the crab-tree episode know to have been "haunted."

But if unable to produce a *bonâ-fide* "Grange-ghost," I have a ghost-story to relate connected with a neighbouring district, which that eminent authority on such subjects, Mr. F. H. W. Myers, pronounces (with deep interlineations) to be a "*very curious* one;" although, from no record having been made "within ten years of the occurrence," the Psychical Society is unable to undertake its investigation.

As I had the principal incident from a near relative, who was an actor therein, the recital will, unavoidably, partake more of a personal character than is desirable; but other people being also concerned, and the circumstances having for a long period excited curiosity, that may perhaps be pardoned.

It seems impossible to ascertain when this "ghost"—known from its haunt and the weird noise it utters as the "Mickleton Hooter"—first gave evidence of its existence, but my record dates back nearly sixty years, and it was an "old ghost" then. In two particulars it differed from the general run of ghosts—it appeared in various shapes (unless there were *several* ghosts), and it uttered weird and agonising cries without "appearing" at all; though occasionally it was both seen and heard.

Between fifty and sixty years ago Mr. Hodges, now dead, but then a young married man living some two miles from Grange on the opposite bank of the river, and six from Mickleton, had been spending the evening at the house of a Mr. Handcox, of Old Coombe, situated in the valley between Weston Park and Mickleton Wood. Leaving towards midnight in company with a neighbour (also now dead), they were riding up the valley towards Mickleton, talking over the events of the evening, neither thinking of, nor fearing, "ghosts," when a most weird and awful cry rang out just above them, and at the same moment they saw, in the clear moonlight, what looked like a calf running quickly, but *noiselessly*, along the top of a low wall bordering the field through which they had to pass. Their horses, startled like themselves, came to a dead stop, trembling violently, and it was with difficulty they induced them to proceed. Scarcely had they got through the gate into the field when again the awful cry rang out, and they saw, immediately before them, not more than sixty yards away, a tall, white figure like a woman. The horses stopped, so suddenly as almost to unseat them, and stood trembling from head to foot ; but their riders, thinking wrathfully that they were being hoaxed, whipped them up, and rode straight at the figure ; when it vanished—into air, apparently, for there was neither tree nor bush near, nor any possible place of hiding ; and after searching in vain for an explanation of the mystery, they continued their journey. Upon reaching home, Mr. Hodges found his wife standing at the door watching for him, looking pale and disturbed. Her first words were, "Oh —— ! Did you hear that awful cry? It seemed to come from over Coombe way. I never heard anything like it before !"

Such was my relative's experience. He never saw nor heard anything again himself, but said that once a Quaker gentleman, well known and respected for his soberness and veracity, called at Old Coombe, leaving there about eleven o'clock for his home on the other side of Mickleton. He refused his host's offer of a bed, or even of a lantern, the way being rough and the night dark, saying he was not afraid, and should meet no one worse than himselt.

Nearly an hour passed, and the family were retiring to rest, when hurried footsteps were heard, followed by a loud knock at the door. It was thrown open, and there stood their late guest, pale and breathless, large drops of perspiration bedewing his face.

"Friend," he said, grasping Mr. Handcox's outstretched hand, "I don't know what thou hast got up yonder, but I think I will accept thy kind offer and remain in thy house till morning." And he did, but could never be induced to relate his experience—only saying that he "would not go through it again for all he was worth."

An old gentleman, formerly a schoolmaster in Mickleton, whom I met in 1884, also told me that he knew several people who most certainly had seen and heard something uncanny in the neighbourhood, although not the apparition that I have described. The cry was similar, but the forms assumed were different; he could not give definite particulars. Two years ago, however, I was fortunate enough to obtain from a gentleman, well known and respected—a banker in a neighbouring town—an account of his own experience, which, in several particulars, singularly corresponded with those already related, and is the more striking as having happened in recent times. Here is his account:

"About fifteen years ago, towards the end of the year, after business at the bank, I started on my horse to Bidford; when half-way up the field between Hidcot and Mickleton Wood, I distinctly saw what I thought was a calf (it was getting dusk) come from the gate I had to go through and pass along the top of the field"

—that is, from the way of Mickleton Wood towards Weston Park, the direction in which the figure had been previously seen.—" I immediately set my horse at full gallop, but could not get near the animal, which disappeared at the other end of the field. I could not account for this, as I *heard no noise at all*, and there was nothing in the appearance of the calf to suggest its being other than it seemed, neither had I heard any story to put such an idea into my head. I have been up and down this hill, which runs between Mickleton Wood, at all hours till early morning, but have never seen any other appearance, although I have many times heard strange cries which were certainly not those of an ordinary owl. A gentleman residing in the neighbourhood told me that as he was riding near the same place his horse ran away, but he never saw anything himself, and could give no reason for it ; the horse seemed very much frightened."

From another source I hear, that as a man was going through the wood in the *early morning*, he felt something rush past him, and heard a " moaning cry " ; but the present tenants of Mickleton Farm assert that nothing uncanny has been seen or heard during the ten years of their occupancy, and that " it's owls "—an opinion which the unbeliever in appearances supernatural will emphatically endorse. One circumstance, however, militates strongly against that opinion. The witnesses whom I have quoted, besides being intelligent men of position and credit, were born and bred in the country, and thoroughly familiarised with all its sights and sounds, therefore were little likely to mistake, as has been suggested, the cry of an owl, or even of a fox, which, if the animal is hurt, is weird and dismal enough, for anything uncanny. Neither were they, as has also been suggested, slightly muddled by their evening potations, my relative always strongly asserting the contrary ; and certainly the banker was presumably sober, coming straight from his desk.

If, then, the experiences were due neither to "owls" nor to "alcohol," to what were they due? Were they "real objective ghosts," or were they "telepathic hallucinations?" For, according to Mr. Andrew Lang, "there are both, and the scientific attitude is to believe in both ;" the alternative being "to believe neither," which latter is possible only to the "'common steadfast dunce' who has never taken the trouble to acquaint himself with the evidence"!

Tradition offers two explanations of the appearances, which I give for what they are worth. One asserts that it is the spirit of a young Greville, accidentally shot by his brother in Mickleton Wood, which still "moans about" ; the other as strongly affirms it to be the ghost of a Miss Greville who was murdered near the spot. Neither accounts for the appearance of the *calf!*

If the first suggestion is the correct one, the ghost must be ancient indeed, for the tragedy referred to happened more than three hundred years ago, and is thus given by Dugdale : "Sir Edward Greville, in his younger years, inadvertently shot an Arrow upright out of a long Bow, it fell upon his elder brother's head and killed him. The father (Ludovic Greville) was so little sensible of the sad mishap that he made a jest of it, telling him that it was the best shoot he ever shot in his life." This Ludovic Greville, a descendant of the Campden Grevilles, the only son of Sir Edward Greville and Margaret Willington, resided at Milcote, some two or three miles from Mickleton, having property also in the latter place; and the unnatural speech just quoted is fully in keeping with what is elsewhere recorded ot him. He caused an old tenant to be murdered under circumstances of peculiar treachery and horror; then, fearing betrayal by one of the assassins, compelled the other one to murder his confederate; but the body being discovered, the murderer confessed, and he and Greville were brought to trial; when, to prevent the loss of his estates, the latter stood mute, and both suffered death, being hung, 31 Elizabeth 1559.

Following the track of the "ghost," we appear to have wandered far from Bidford Grange, but in reality it is not so, the various places noticed all lying within a radius of some six miles. And so much of interest attaches to every corner of this historic county, and in a scarcely less degree to its western neighbour, that it is difficult to know where to end these discursive sketches; which, with a vivid sense of their imperfections, I now submit to the reader.

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