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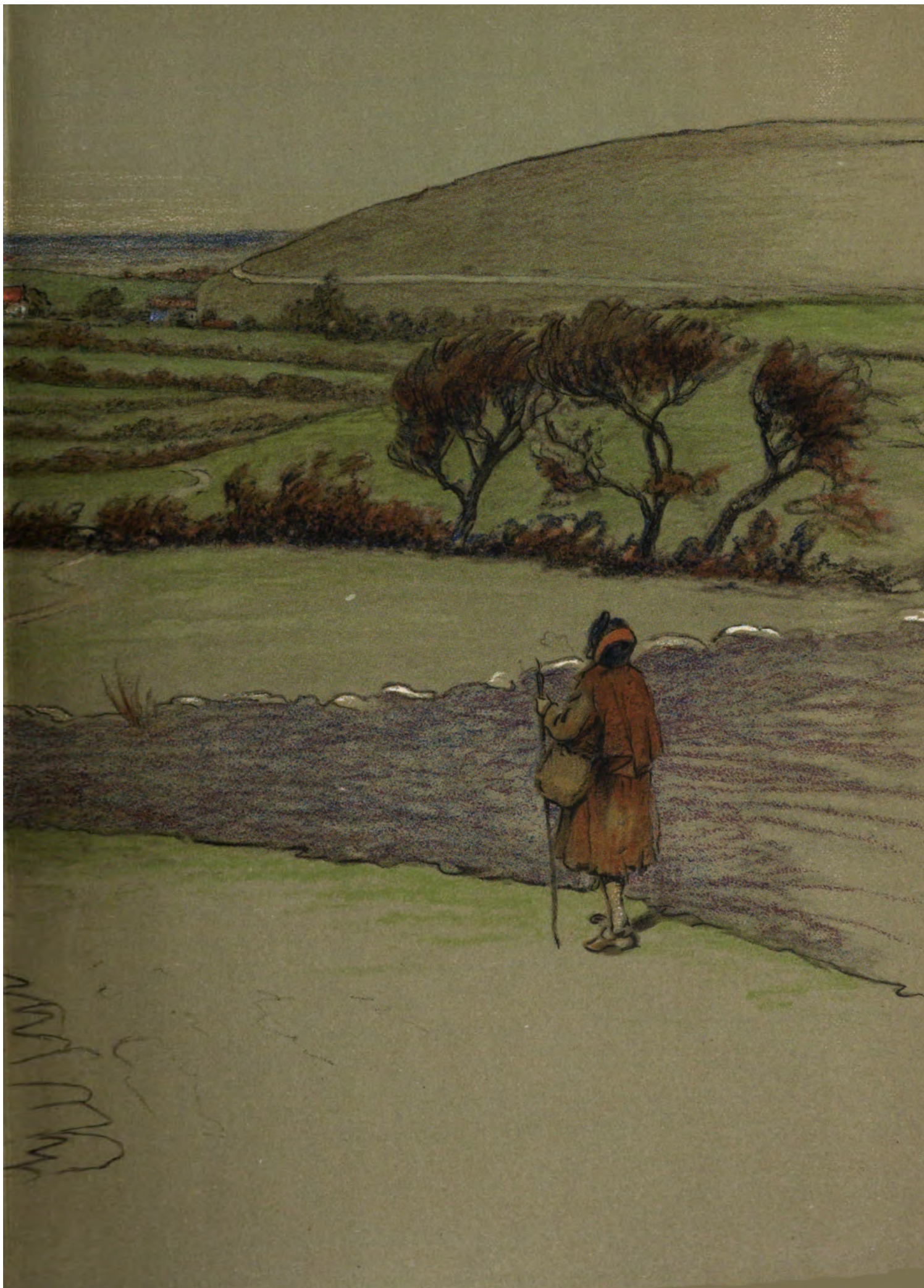
OLD MANOR
HOUSES

DECE
ALON





Edwin
A. D. W.



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OLD * MANOR * HOUSES

By the same Author :

OLD INNS

Illustrated with 16 plates in colour, and many black-and-white illustrations and decorations in the text by Cecil Aldin.

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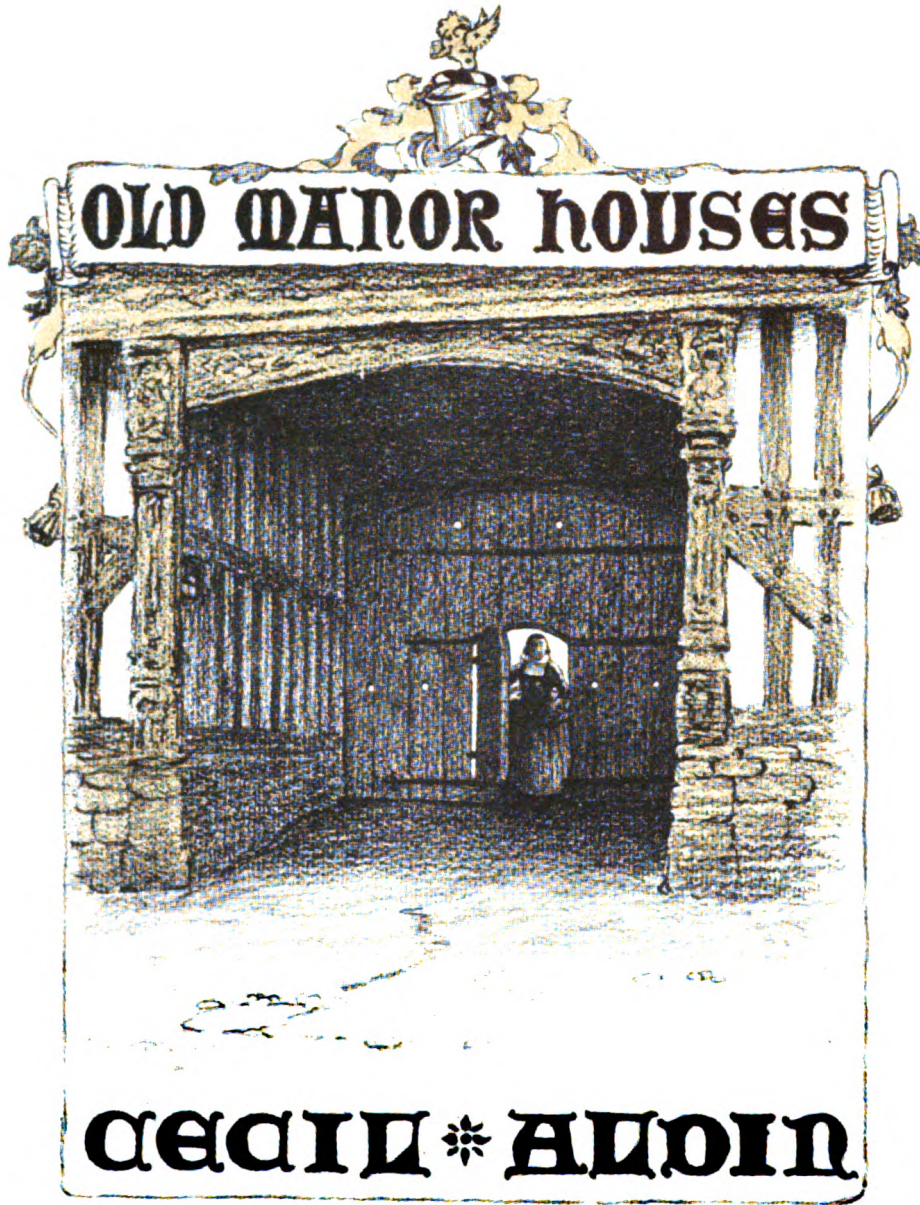
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MORETON OLD HALL
ANSHIRE



LONDON: WILLIAM HEINEMANN, LTD.

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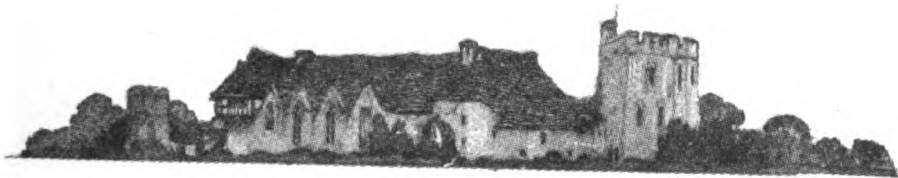
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IN MEMORY
OF
MANY HAPPY DAYS





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NOBEL WORDS



The proper and logical way of composing a picture-book is for the author first to tell his story in the text, and for the artist afterwards to illustrate what the writer's brains and pen have developed and described.

In this book I am forced to put the cart before the horse.

The pictures must tell the story, in the first place, and the text be but an accessory—a film reel with captions added by the producer!

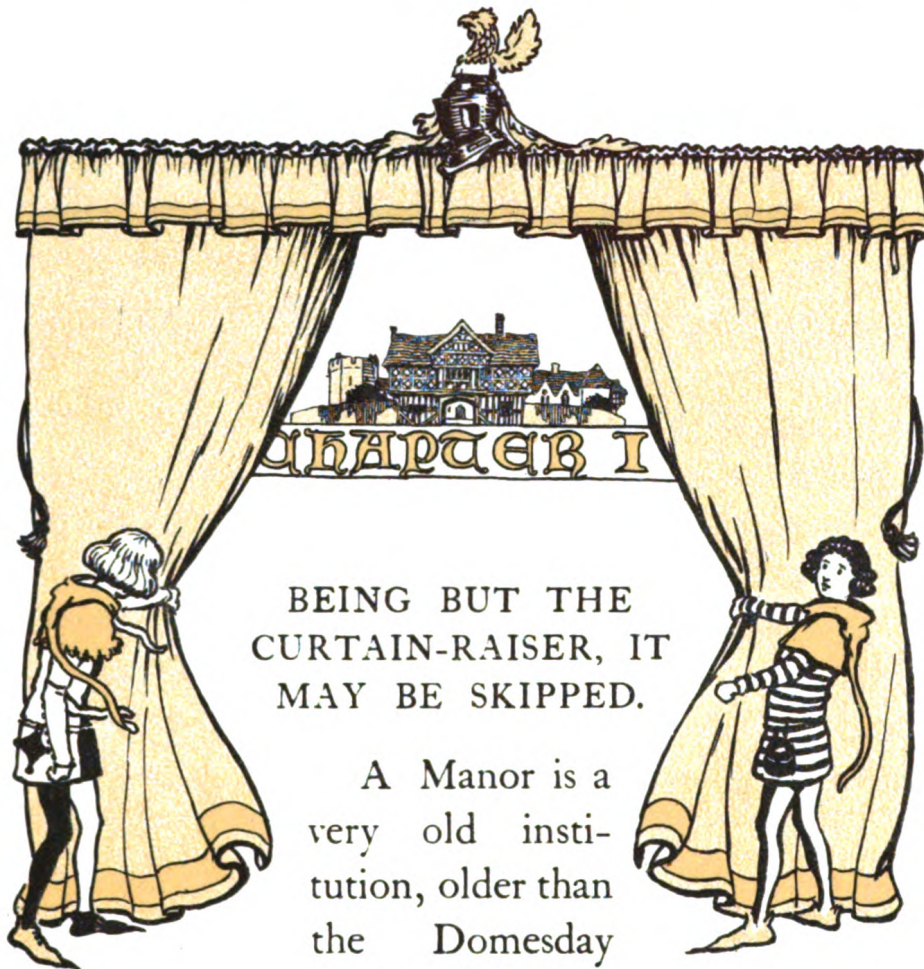
No deep antiquarian or architectural knowledge must therefore be expected, but just a few facts and impressions gathered during weeks, and sometimes months, spent in the atmosphere of these old houses, and in many cases jotted down as notes on the margin of sketches.

I present, then, in text and picture, my sketch-book of old houses.

Cecil Aldin



OLD * MANOR * HOUSES



BEING BUT THE
CURTAIN-RAISER, IT
MAY BE SKIPPED.

A Manor is a
very old insti-
tution, older than
the Domesday
Book of 1086,
the first book to

include the various Manors in England, it being
a register "to determine the right in the tenure
of estates."



OLD * MANOR * HOUSES

The Manor house was the house built on these estates, recorded in Domesday, in which the lord of the Manor lived; and in many cases that Manor house remains to-day, architecturally, at any rate, very much in the same state as it was in the fifteenth, sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

From these houses I have selected but a few, not because there was a dearth of subject, but because, as I stayed at each, I found such an enormous mass of material for the making of pictures, and so much that I hope will interest the reader, that it was impossible to include more than six of them in a book the size of which had already been fixed.

These Manors in Domesday were, in the first instance, either given to the original "lord of the Manor" direct from the King, or were leased to the dweller in the Manor house by a superior overlord, who had a superfluity of Manors granted to him from his sovereign. It was then either the original Manor lord or his tenant, so to speak, who had to pay fee in fighting men, labour, or possibly, in a fixed rental.

OLD * MANOR * HOUSES



In the early days the lord of the Manor, or the tenant, was a little king among the villagers or "villeins" on his estate. Each "villein" or smallholder under him had to pay fees in labour and in other ways, and could be called up before the lord of the Manor's court, the Court Baron, for any offence or misdemeanour, even to the extent of suffering capital punishment.

The "villein" had to pay death duties to the Manor lord, sometimes having to give up his best beast, horses, cattle, or swine, as heriot or death duty.

Besides these death duties, fines and taxes must be paid to the Manor. As an instance : if a "villein's" daughter entered the marriage state, one shilling for each offence ; and if he himself married a widow, he was fined the enormous sum of twenty shillings. The merry widow had a lot to contend with ! All of these sums went direct into the pocket

OLD * MANOR * HOUSES

of the lord of the Manor, instead of, as now, to the State.

Moreover, the "villein" was in reality a species of serf or slave. He could not leave his land, and had to take the oath of fealty to the lord of the Manor.

In Domesday it states that there were four classes below the lord of the Manor—the "villeins" who had thirty acres ; a "semi-villein" of fifteen acres ; a cottar or cobman of five acres ; and the farthingdole man of a quarter of an acre.

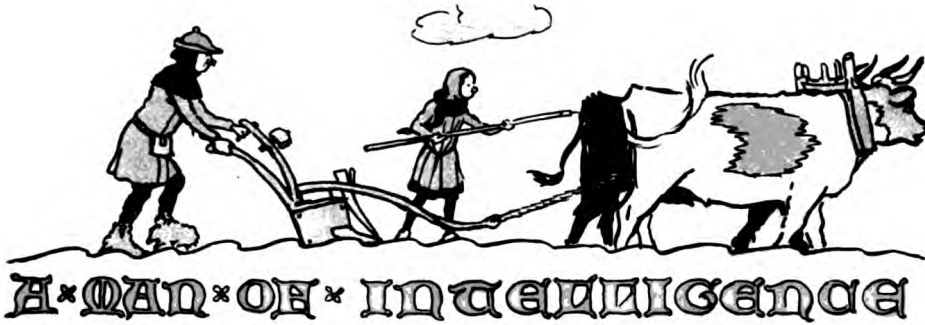


In the fourteenth century, villeinage we are told, numbered two-thirds of the population, but in the sixteenth century the greater part of the villagers were free men, or soke men. These latter could, if they wished, give up their land without permission from their lord, and could not be forced to work for him.

Among the retainers at the Manor houses were such offices as :—

The Ale-Taster, "to see that good wholesome beer was brewed of the requisite strength and purity."

OLD * MANOR * HOUSES



The Dairymaid, who should be “of good repute and keep herself clean.”

The Ploughman, who is described in an old manuscript as “a man of intelligence.”

The Reeve, the best husbandman elected by “villeins,” and who was responsible for the proper cultivation of the land ; the Bailiff, Hayward Beadle, Cowherd, Swineherd, Waggoner, Shepherd (who daily had a cup of newly drawn whey for his dog). As the shepherd’s wife was “dey of the dairy” Rover no doubt had his legal ration.

The first Manor houses were nothing more nor less than large barns or halls, with very possibly—besides a small entrance-hall known as the domus—a solar chamber in the upper part of the building for the owner’s personal sleeping



OLD * MANOR * HOUSES

and retiring room, and a bower or women's room, with kitchen, buttery and stabling in adjoining buildings.

Having no glazed windows, but only long slits closed with wooden shutters, it could not have been very comfortable. The large hall, open to the roof, in which most of the retainers lived and slept, had no fireplace, but simply a large brazier or log fire towards one end, the smoke from which found its way out either through the interstices of the roof, or through a specially built hole, called a louvre.

The remains of one or two of these original houses are still to be seen, but except as antiquarian curiosities they do not quite come within the scope of this book. Of those built at a later period, in Plantagenet times, we have many delightful Manors still with us.

In the fourteenth century they show a tendency to give more comfort to those who lived in them and to develop definite architectural features.

I have taken as my first sketch one of these, known as Stokesay Castle. It is in reality only

OLD * MANOR * HOUSES

a fortified Manor house, but as it has the original building of the thirteenth century and its subsequent additions in Plantagenet and Tudor times, since when it has been practically untouched, it shows the whole development of the Manor house.



STORRESAY * CASTLE



THE more an artist sees of these old houses the more he or she realizes the truth of *Ars longa vita brevis est*. The longest lifetime is much too short to study them from roof to cellar, and only the few lucky people who live in them are able to partake of the pleasures of knowing them intimately.

Every time I arrive at my inn and settle down for a few days' rambling over these old places this wretched saying about art and life will push its way into my thoughts. It buzzes in my brain as I trudge at morning and evening to and from my destination, and makes me feel that I shall never be able to get done half what

OLD * MANOR * HOUSES



I am longing to do. At each fresh place I visit, I want to stay there the rest of my life painting pictures of it simply for the personal pleasure it gives to me. You, I am afraid, reader, do not come into the transaction at all! Each varying climatic effect brings to me fresh characters who have lived and died through the centuries during which these old walls have stood.

Heaven forbid that I should ever be dragged to see these places when the summer sight-seers desecrate their glorious courtyards, halls, and solar chambers; alone—in the autumn, winter or spring, and with a week of no letters, telephones or messages before me—is what I always try to arrange. I stay at night at some quiet little roadside inn and live, for one glorious week at any rate, steeped in the atmosphere of my old house. In such a frame of mind I arrived at Stokesay,

STOKESAY * CASTLE

a house that always seems to have a fresh fascination, and where I can always find my old friends of previous visits, the Simon Pantulfs, Fulk Fitzwarrens, and Wild Humphrey of Kynaston—friends that I have conjured up from the days of my very first pilgrimage.



I can see Ambrosia de Dunstervil visiting Syr Richard Ludlo the Clothier, or John at Wood, the Constable of Bishops Castle in 1360, calling in at Stokesay for refreshment at the close of a hunting expedition after the red or "roo" deer in the forest of Clun, before riding home at the end of the day. As I stand on the roof of the keep they appear black on the skyline as they top the hill before descending the winding track which zig-zags down its side; old friends they seem to me, as they ride around the moat, while Roger Curthose and Eusebius Andrews let down the creaking drawbridge to admit them.



The Audelay, Botelers, Wild Humphrey, the outlaw, Fitzalan of Hopton Castle and Clun, and Vernon of the Red Hand, are they not all my travelling companions?

STORRESAY CASTLE
SHROPSHIRE





OLD * MANOR * HOUSES



On my last visit I lived at Stokesay for ten consecutive days, getting there early in the morning and returning to my inn at dark. Not a soul disturbed me, or interfered with my wanderings from gate-house to keep, keep to solar chamber, great hall to priests' rooms or buttery and kitchen.

It was in January and I had it entirely to myself. On two days it snowed heavily, which made me realize what living in these early Manor houses really was like.

Rushing over a house of this description on a warm summer's day, while your chauffeur turns the car round, is all very well, but that way you can never *know* your house or its inhabitants.

Between Clun Castle, Corvedale, and Wenlock Edge, solid and forbidding on the side towards the Welsh hills, but more homely looking on the timbered gate-house side which looks towards

STOKESAY * CASTLE



Corvedale, stands this home of some of my friends. Now it wears on stone roofs and timberwork that beautiful colour which can only be procured by a contented and respected old age. Moated and walled on three sides, or rather on three-quarters of the oblong, for that is roughly the shape inside the moat, it has stood here for the last five or six centuries, almost as it stands to-day, within twenty miles of Shrewsbury; still remaining untouched by the hand of multi-millionaire or profiteer, untelephoned, unlighted and unbathroomed, but by no means a ruin.



In 1066 the first part of Stokesay was built, at any rate there are some foundation-stones of that year that must still carry a portion of the building, and at that date *Stoke* Castle, as it was then called, belonged to one Edric Sylvaticus.

In 1086 the house was not identified in

OLD * MANOR * HOUSES

Domesday, but mention was made of a mill and a bee-monger at Stoke.

We are told its owner was one Roger de Lacy, but in 1115 a

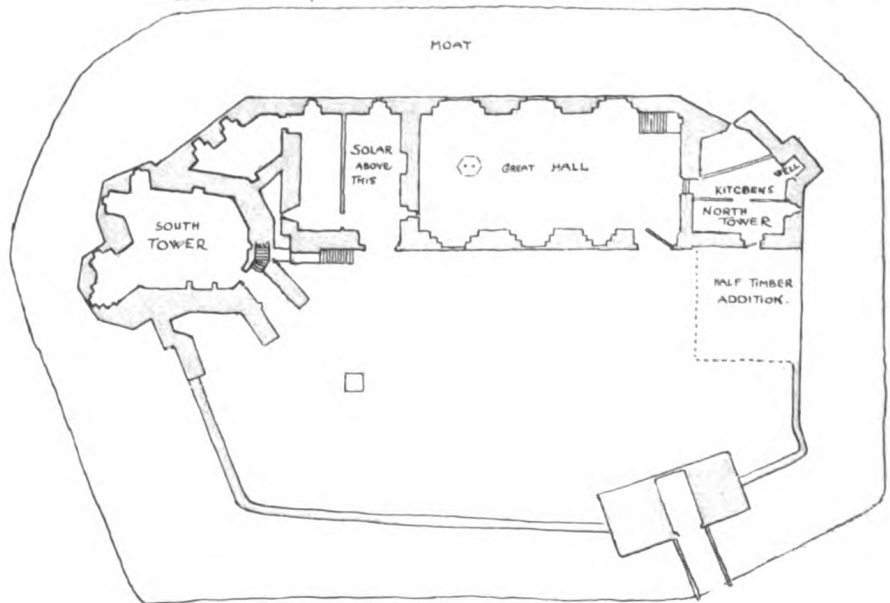
de Sai was the *occupier* although the de Lacy family still owned it, a Picot de Sai, of Stoke, having fought at the battle of Hastings.

It was about this time that the North tower was built, and with an endeavour to give you some preliminary idea of Stokesay, here on my screen is my first picture of it. It will save much reading of printed matter, giving as it does a view on the lines of those Samuel Pepys and John Evelyn were so fond of inspecting, and without which, in the days of King Charles II, no fine mansion was considered to have arrived at the summit of its ambition.

The next important item in Stokesay's history is the change of ownership in 1240 from the de Lacy family to that of the de Vernons; but later, when John de Vernon went to the Crusades, he sold a life interest to a Philip de



STOKESAY * CASTLE



OLD * MANOR * HOUSES

Whichcote for the sum of £24, which latter tenant, one authority states, was the builder of the great hall of this house, all of which happened in or about 1240.

Forty-four years afterwards, in the reign of Edward I, one of the de Vernon family sold Stoke, lock, stock, and barrel, to one whom we may class as a millionaire of the period, he having made a fortune in cloth at the near-by town of Ludlow.

This millionaire gentleman, named Lawrence de Ludlowe, however, was able to exist (although he had been in business!) without telephones, wireless and electric light installed in his house, but perhaps it was only because he was forced to by the century he lived in; but he it was, this Lawrence de Ludlowe the clothier, who built the South tower, the third addition in Stokesay's history.

Very soon after he had purchased the property he procured, in 1291, a licence to embattle it, which seems rather unnecessary as the Welsh were then supposed to have been conquered. Having a wise, sound business brain

1240



1284



1291



STORRISAY * CASTLE



he looked ahead, and as subsequent history shows, his caution was well advised.

With this tower of Lawrence de Ludlowe's we have the main building complete, North tower (1115), Great Hall (1240), South Tower (1284), the complete house standing almost exactly the same to-day as it was in 1284.

At one time a half-timber building stood at the kitchen end of the hall, which to-day has disappeared; but from an old drawing of this it was probably put up in late Plantagenet or early Tudor times, possibly before the gate-house.

There was also a well, roofed over, showing in the courtyard, but there was then, as far as we know, no fascinating little gate-house to complete its charm; only a walled and moated courtyard with probably some stone gate-house building, from which the drawbridge was worked.

STORESAY CASTLE
SHROPSHIRE



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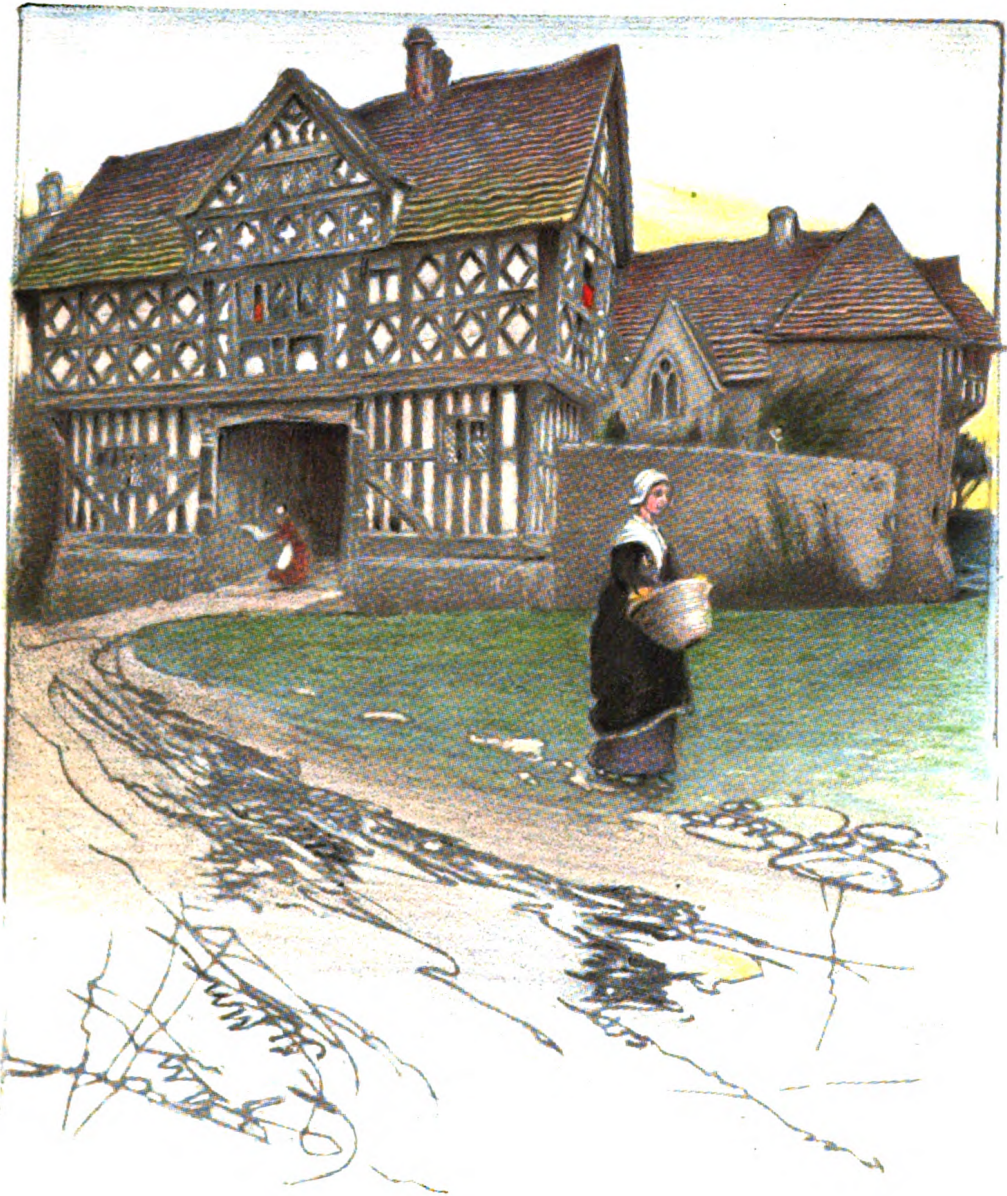


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OLD * MANOR * HOUSES

Here the de Ludlow family settled down as country squires, some becoming Knights and Sheriffs of Shropshire (in 1379 "John de Lodelowe, Kt., Lord of Hodnet and Stokesay," *was* Sheriff of Shropshire), leading a peaceful and quiet country life, until in the fifteenth century one Anne de Ludlow married a Vernon of the original Stokesay de Vernon family.

Seventy-three years afterwards Stoke was again sold by the Vernons, this time to Sir George Mainwaring in 1570, in the days of Good Queen Bess, and the gate-house, the last and most delightful link in the chain of Stoke's story, was built, thus entirely completing the picture for us. The half-timber building previously mentioned which once stood near the South tower, probably used as a kitchen, has either fallen or been pulled down, but I do not think it is a very great loss. In any case, it disappeared many years ago with sundry more or less modern timber buildings which once stood in the courtyard.

In 1616, in the time of James I, the house



STOKESAY * CASTLE



was in the hands of a Sir Thomas Baker, to whom it was conveyed by family settlement by the Mainwaring branch; and then in 1620 Dame Elizabeth Craven became owner, and in Pepys' diary of 16 August 1661 we find that he saw her son, Lord Craven, at the opera with the Queen of Bohemia, to whom he was supposed to be married. Here is the real thing as Pepys wrote it when the Cravens were the owners of Stokesay :

“I to the Opera and saw ‘The Witts’ again which I like exceedingly. The Queen of Bohemia was here, brought by my Lord Craven.”

Ten years afterwards Lord Craven let Stoke on a long lease to Sir Charles Baldwyn. During the time it was occupied by Sir Samuel Baldwyn, a descendant of Sir Charles, it was besieged by Cromwell's troops, but luckily surrendered before any damage was done to it.

OLD * MANOR * HOUSES



HALF-TIMBER BUILD-
INGS ON THE NORTH
TOWER, STOKESAY
CASTLE.

At the close of the Civil Wars the battlements were ordered to be pulled down, leaving the outer wall as it stands to-day, which I cannot help thinking, from a

STOKESAY * CASTLE



picturesque, if not from an antiquarian point of view, is a very great improvement to Stokesay, as these crenellated walls of the clothier's stood some thirty feet high and must have completely hidden the delightful roof line we now get on approaching the house from the south-east corner.

The rather ignominious taking of Stoke by the Cromwellian forces is the only recorded account of the fortifications possibly being of any service—which, as I will tell later, they were not in this case ; but there is very little doubt that raids by outlaw Welsh constantly occurred upon all these border houses for many years after that country was finally subdued.

On the whole, considering its proximity to Wales, Stokesay has had a very peaceful existence, and the demolition of its high defence wall was carried out in a very much more humane way

OLD * MAJOR * HOUSES



A PEEPHOLE FROM THE SOLAR CHAMBER TO THE GREAT HALL.

STOKESAY * CASTLE

than most of the Civil War demolitions, only about fifteen feet from the top of the wall having been pulled down. This may have been due partly to the easy surrender, which happened at the second challenge and before any actual fighting had occurred, and partly to the influence of Sir Samuel Baldwyn, who was apparently a man of taste and culture, and one who no doubt loved the old house he lived in and did all he could to save it.

To this gentleman our thanks are due for the carving and panelling of the solar chamber ; and it is recorded by a Mr. Younge, "lying at Stoke as he rod the circuit," that he saw "a book of armes of the gentlemen of Shropshire finely tricked out," as he describes it, which Mr. Baldwyn was copying, which shows that some of the Baldwyn family had artistic tendencies.

One authority seems to think that to this family of Baldwyns the timber additions on the North tower are due ; but it is probable that they are of a much earlier date. Certainly these buildings are earlier timber work than the gate-

OLD * MANOR * HOUSES

house. Of this gate-house and its actual builder there are no authentic records, but from its timbering and general design it is Elizabethan, and was probably built either by Sir George or Sir Arthur Mainwaring, as the carving over the gate-house entrance is almost identical with that over the entrance to the Council house at Shrewsbury, and which is dated 1501.





STOKESAY * CASTLE

In 1727 the Baldwyn family ceased to live at Stokesay, and it has been uninhabited ever since.

Between that date and 1850 the great hall was used as a barn for the adjoining farm ; but in 1869 Lord Craven sold the property to Mr. J. D. Allcroft, in whose family it remains to-day.

To this latter gentleman the thanks of the whole artistic and antiquarian world are due. It was he who saved Stokesay from Victorian desecration, for not only did he purchase the property and save it from demolition or at any rate rapid decay, but he thoroughly overhauled and repaired it where necessary, at the same time leaving the original building intact.

I do not think dragging the reader from room to room in the pages of a book can be anything but dull reading. No description, however adequate and complete, can ever convey the charm of the building itself ; besides this, many more facile pens than mine have already described in detail the gate-house, solar-room tower, and great hall with its wooden shutters and unglazed windows.

OLD * MANOR * HOUSES

It is in my sketches that I must tell the story as far as I am able, for those who already know Stokesay as a happy memory, and for those who do not, I hope as an incentive to a pilgrimage.



MORETON * OLD * HALL



*“Men can no more knowe weoman's
mynde by teares*

*Than by her shaddowe judge the
clothes she weares”*



ONE of the many wise sayings with which this house of carved legends, Moreton Old Hall, is decorated.

We must remember, however, that a “weoman's” shadow was a very different shape in Elizabethan days, when the rhyme was carved, to what it is to-day. Then perhaps it might have been difficult to judge from her shadow the clothes “she weares.”

Now, alas, her shadow often tells us which, my wife reminds me, has nothing whatever to do with old Manor houses !

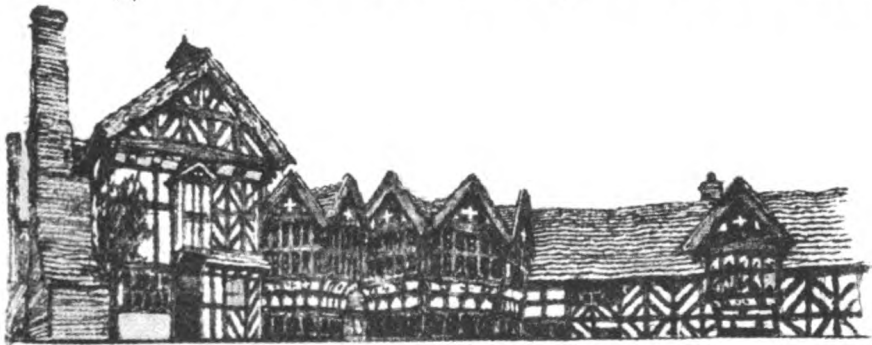
I always feel that this legend should have been written by the lord of the Manor of Shoyswell in Sussex, who left to his wife in his will in 1580, “the use and weringe of her weddinge ring during her lief and free liberty to bake and brewe

OLD * MANOR * HOUSES

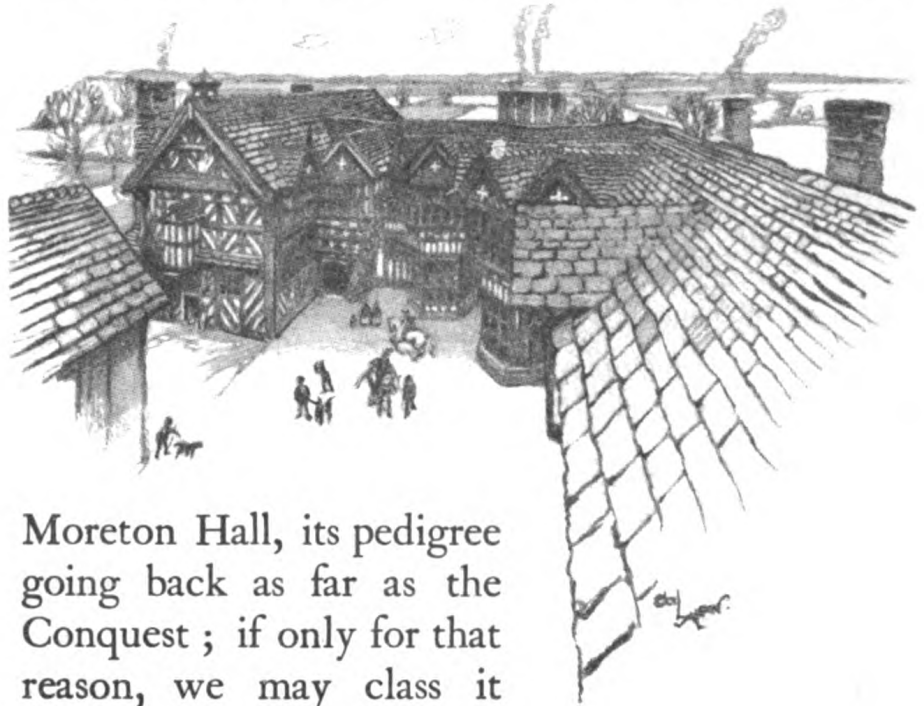
in the bake-house and brewhouse for her necessarie use, and to dry her clothes upon the hedges and bushes about his Manor of Shoyswell." A gentleman who no doubt kept his good lady in her proper place during his lifetime.

As Stokesay includes three distinct periods of architecture, so Moreton Old Hall is confined to one; and is about as unlike the former in character and appearance as is possible.

Here in Cheshire, we have that peaceful domestic character very strongly developed, which one generally associates with the name of Manor house, instead of the grim and heavy type as at Stokesay. Popularly called Moreton Old Hall, its real name is Little



MORETON * OHO * HALL



Moreton Hall, its pedigree going back as far as the Conquest ; if only for that reason, we may class it as one of the aristocrats among Manor houses.



1216

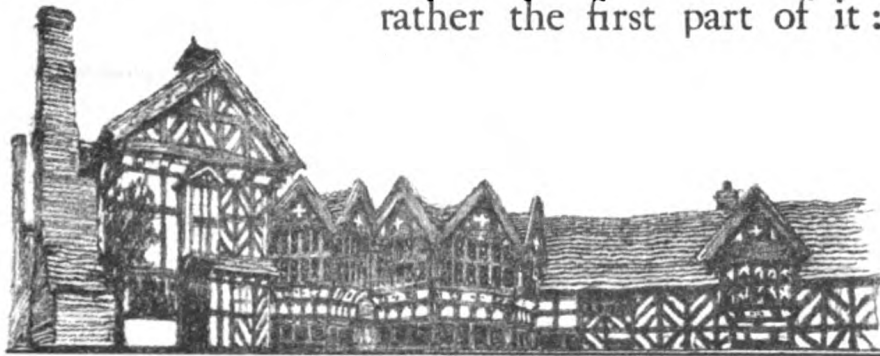
Let us just glance at its story and the history of the Moreton family, who built the house and lived in it so long. The first record is of one Gralam de Lostock who lived at Moreton in the time of Henry III, and the rather uncommon name of Gralam appears constantly in the Moreton family pedigree at subsequent dates. A Richard de Moreton lived here in Edward II's reign, and his

OLD * MANOR * HOUSES

descendants until 1449, at which time Sir Richard de Moreton of Moreton is heard of fighting in the Wars of the Roses.

Also, we have it on record that a William Moreton lived here in Henry VII's reign, his successor marrying a daughter of Sir Andrew Brereton of Brereton, the gentleman who had the celebrated law-suit with his neighbour, Thomas Rode of Rode, to decide whether Rode of Rode or Brereton of Brereton "should sit highest in church and foremost go in procession"; which important litigation cost both Rode of Rode and Brereton of Brereton a very considerable sum of money. All of which happened before the house we see to-day was built.

In early Elizabethan times, Sir William Moreton built our Little Moreton Hall, or rather the first part of it:

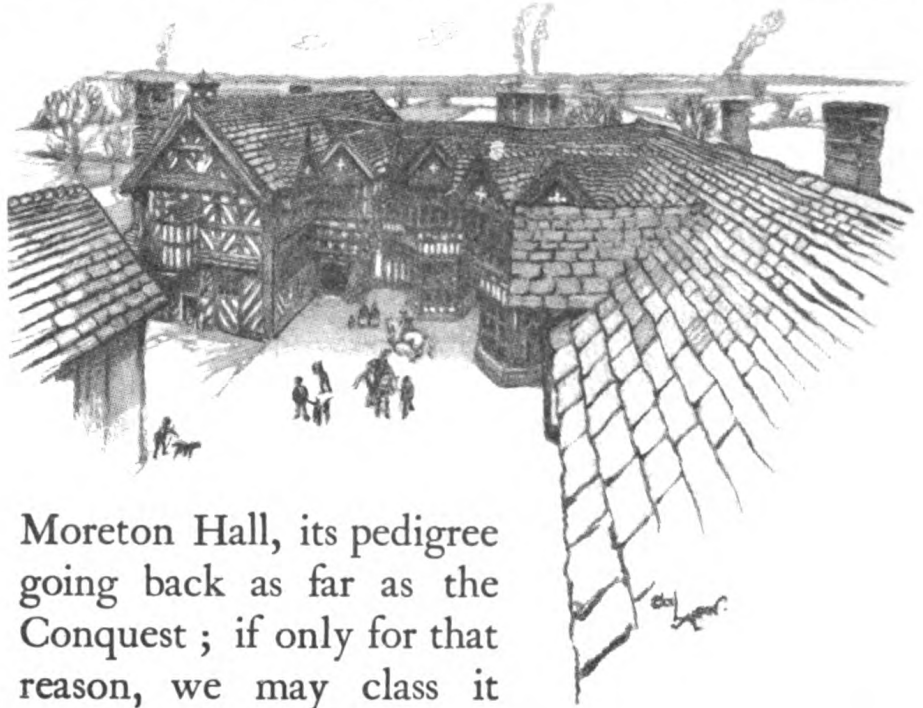


1449



1485.

MORETON * OLD * HALL



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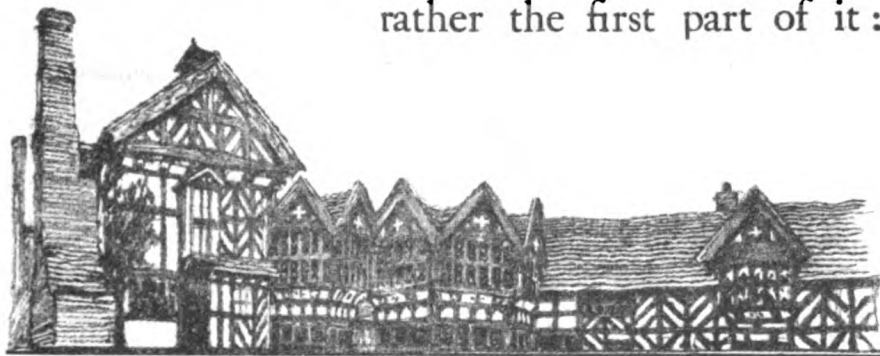
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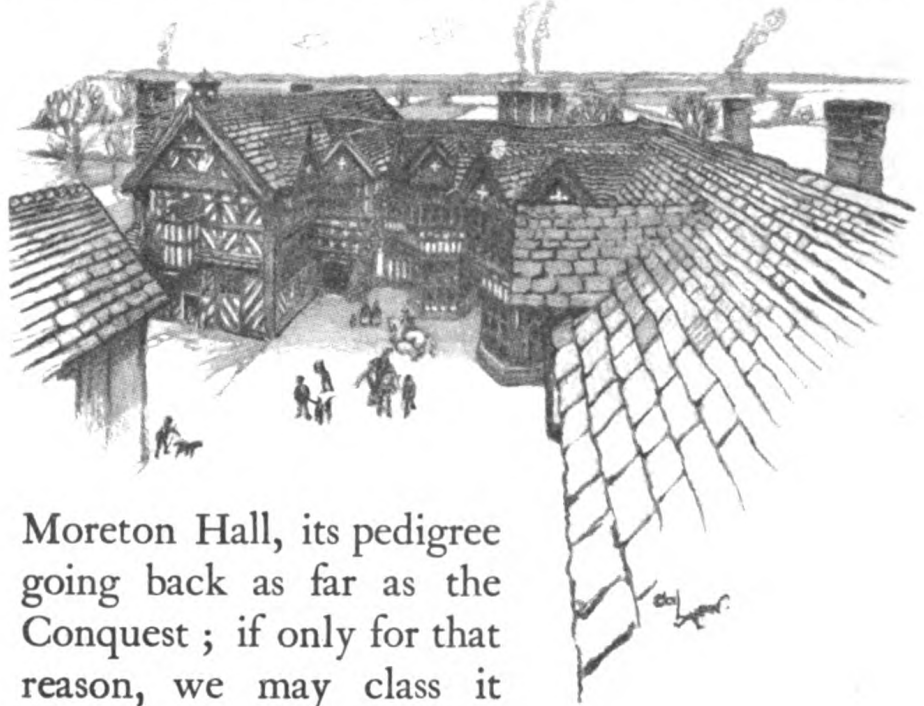
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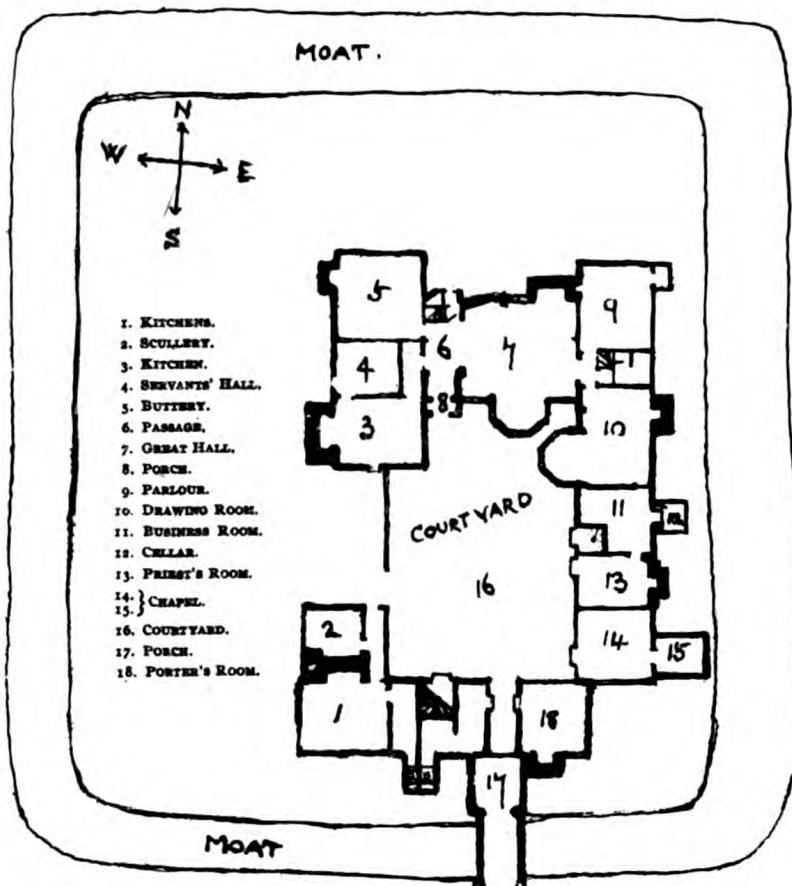
1449



1485.



MOBETON * OLD * HALL



and then as various members of the family came into the property they each added a room or wing until the house was finished, forming as it did originally the complete four sides of a quadrangle like Ightham

OLD * MANOR * HOUSES

Mote House and similar buildings. Indeed the process of development being very similar to that of Ightham.

Mr. Richard Dale the “carpenter” (with the cold in his head) has dated his window MDLXI and various other people (including, I am sorry to say, a gentleman from Lancashire who was at Moreton in 1922) have recorded the dates of their visit on the woodwork and glass of the building—the staunch old Tory, Mr. Henry Mainwaringe, scratching on one of the windows in 1627,

“All change I scorne.”



MORETON * OLD * HALL

1649



I wonder if he was a relation of our Sir George Mainwaringe who bought Stokesay in 1570 from the Vernons? Little Margaret Moreton dated her signature on August 3rd, 1649.



MORSTON OLD HAII
CHESHIRE



OLD * MANOR * HOUSES

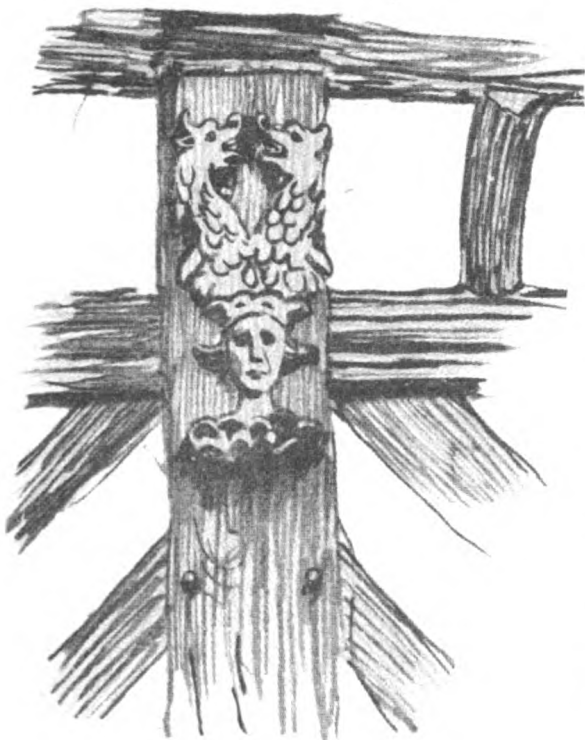
More and more Moretons lived at Moreton Little Hall until 1762, when the direct male line terminated in a Recorder of the City of London, Sir William Moreton, Knight,

who was followed by his nephew, the Reverend Richard Taylor, of West Dean in the County of Sussex, who took the name of Moreton. His descendants continued owners of the house until the death of Miss Elizabeth Moreton, a few years ago, when the property was left to the Right

Reverend C. D. Abraham, D.D., Lord Bishop of Derby, the present owner.

That, roughly, is a sketch of its story.

Besides the dates recorded in carving and cut



1923



MORETON * OMO * HAUN

on windows, we have many architectural landmarks which give definite date to portions of the building, but it is probable that the great hall and buildings on the south side were built first—with the gate-house portion—and that the other parts were added at a slightly later date.

It has been definitely settled by the “competent architectural authority” that the greater part of the house was built about the year 1540, all previous references in its genealogical tree relating to a building standing upon the same site.

Four miles from Moreton is the town of Congleton, known to all north countrymen by the rhyme :

Congleton rare, Congleton rare,
Sold their bible to pay for a bear,



OLD * MANOR * HOUSES

which, I believe, refers to the Mayor and Corporation—about the time Moreton Old Hall was built—disposing of the town hall bible, or rather, collecting money for a town hall bible, and using it to buy a bear for baiting purposes instead. A truly inexcusable thing to do.

But Congletonians have a very great admiration and reverence for their old house of Moreton, and this, notwithstanding the slur upon their character of the unfortunate bear incident, at once gave me a great liking for them.

Those I met at my inn were the descendants of the “wisket makers, jersey combers, mugmen, moldthrowers, towdressers, aledrapers and galloon weavers, and broaches-makers,” recorded in the archives of Astbury Church in the Manor of Moreton, trades which were carried on in the village of Astbury and town of Congleton ; and



MORETON * OLD * HALL

all these gentlemen without exception to-day are proud to have Moreton Old Hall to show the visitors to their town.



One enthusiast—he was not a “towdresser,” “galloon weaver,” or “broaches-maker,” but an ordinary, or I might say extraordinary, butcher—showed me an old book he had just purchased for two guineas, because he had heard it contained some reference to, and particulars of, his beloved Moreton Old Hall.

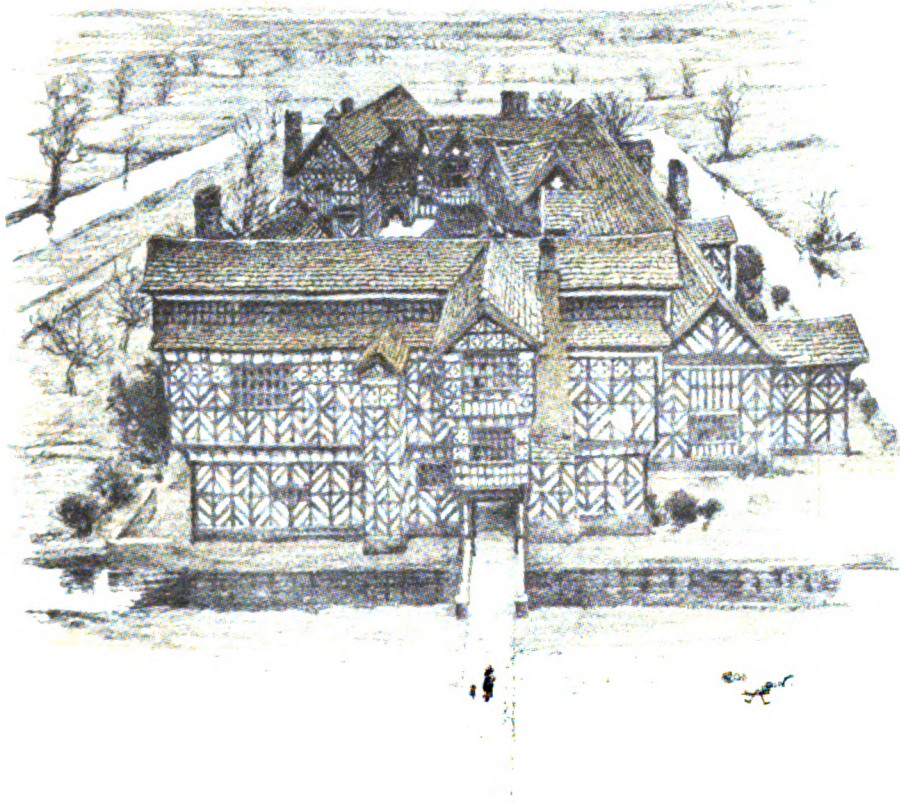
Moreton is the Congletonians’ “baby,” and, like every other baby in existence, is considered by its parents the finest that was ever made.

Although we must make allowances for the ecstasies of parents and guardians, it is one of the most beautiful old houses we have, of what is usually known as the “Magpie” type, so typical of Cheshire and Lancashire.

The house itself is to-day but three sides of a quadrangle, and is completely surrounded by a moat; but I do not think it ever had a defensive drawbridge entrance. The old stone bridge now spanning the moat is probably

OLD * MANOR * HOUSES

A view
of
Moreton Old Hall



BIRD'S-EYE VIEW OF MORETON OLD HALL.

MORETON * OLD * BARR

the original one that was built with the present house.

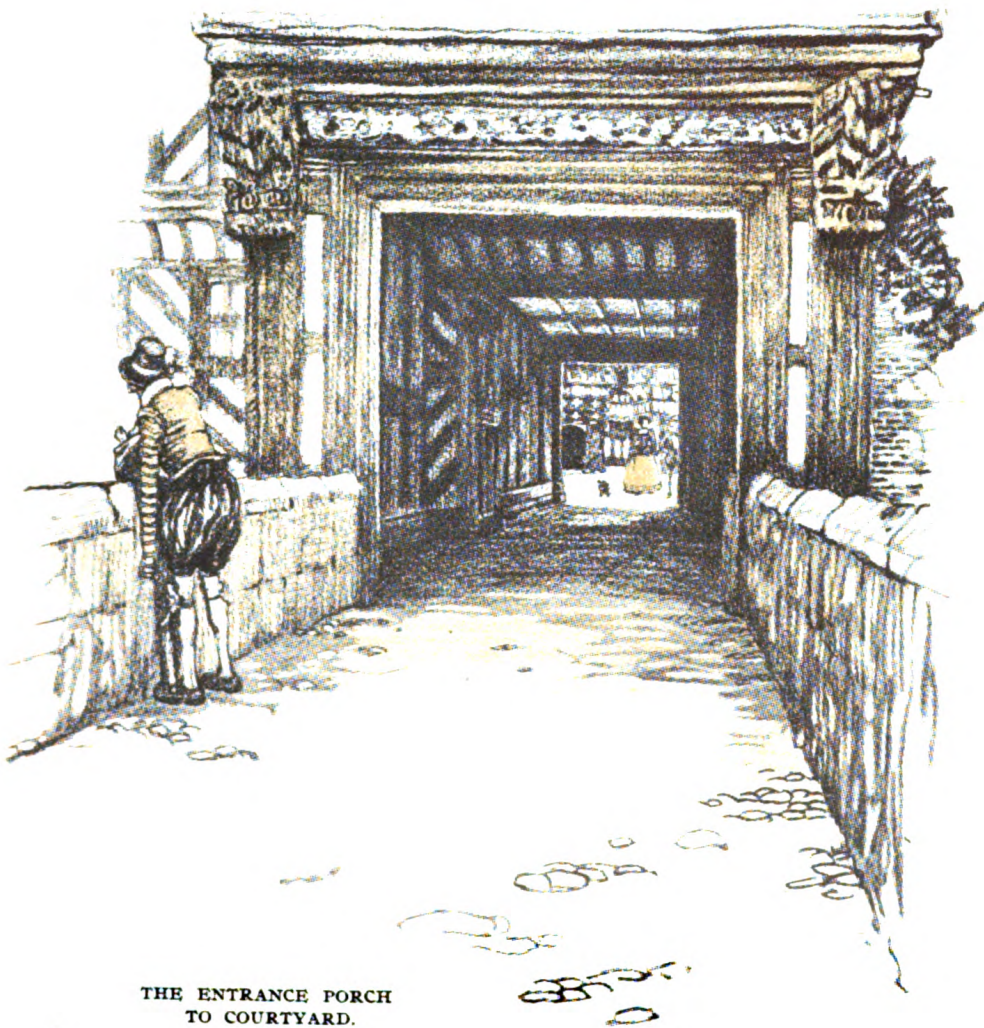


Once inside the courtyard, we expect to see Queen Elizabeth and her courtiers, or perhaps only one of the Moretons of that period, step from under the window carved by “Richard Dale, carpeder,” the previously mentioned gentleman with the cold; but when failing to meet an Elizabethan squire and his wife, we meet or rather are shown over the house by the wife of a Mr. Richard Dale, whose family at present farm the adjoining land and have done so for over a hundred years, we can only marvel how small the world is, and that to-day a Dale, possibly a descendant of our old friend the “carpeder” of MDLXI, should be showing us the window his ancestor carved.

When I taxed Mr. Dale himself with being a descendant of his celebrated forebear in the carving line, like our present-day politicians, he did not commit himself to any definite statement. “The guide-book says so,” was all I could get from him.

In my perspective view, the gate-house is seen

OLD * MANOR * HOUSES



THE ENTRANCE PORCH
TO COURTYARD.

in the foreground, with its wonderful, rather top-heavy upper story. But I must mention

ΜΟΒΕΤΟΝ * ΟΙΟ * ΒΑΠΠ



ENTRANCE TO SPIRAL STAIRCASE.

OLD * MANOR * HOUSES

the delightful little doorway giving entrance from the courtyard to the spiral staircase which takes you giddily to the long gallery. This long gallery I have seen described as a picture gallery, and also as a dancing hall; the former is perhaps the more ludicrous of the two, as there is no single wall or yard of wall, with the exception of the small bay over the porch, above four feet from the floor which has not a window in it, the room (measuring in all twelve feet by sixty-six feet) being almost one continuous window from end to end. Whoever could turn this into a picture gallery would be a very clever man indeed. Nor do I think it was built primarily for dancing—a long, narrow room (only twelve feet wide) would be hardly the ideal one to show off the stately dances of Elizabethan days. I think it is quite apparent that it was built





MORETON * OLD * HALL

for that popular Elizabethan game bowls, or skittles —certainly not for pictures, and probably not for dancing. It was just the skittle alley, built as part of the house, which was so constantly done in Elizabethan and Jacobean houses, the game Samuel Pepys tells us he watched the King play in St. James's Park.

At either end of this room are frescoed above the window Moreton legends :

“The wheele of Fortune whose rule is ignorance”

at one end, and opposite to it,

“The Spear of Destiny whose ruler is knowledge.”

Both very good maxims to have facing you as you play any game of skill.

At present there is very little of the original furniture in the house. A fine spice chest in the kitchen, an oak table or two, and a few pewter plates with the Moreton crest is all that survives.

OLD * MANOR * HOUSES

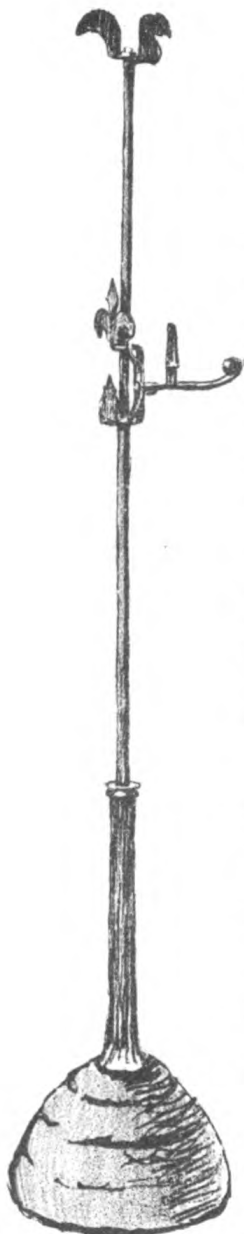
The great hall has at some period been greatly misused. The minstrels' gallery has been built up and the screen below it taken away, while what has been left has been thickly coated with lime white which has eaten deeply into the oak and is almost impossible to eradicate. The open fireplace has also been built up to form a modern kitchen range.

Under whose régime this was allowed to be done I do not know. If a Moreton, it must have been a very degenerate Moreton, and I cannot think that it was in Miss Elizabeth Moreton's ownership, as she was such a very great lover of the old house. I am afraid it must have been a case of the pearls once more, and some tenant perpetrated it who did not realize or appreciate the beauties of the old house he was inhabiting. In any case, the lime whitening of the whole of the upper part of this great hall has completely spoilt the charm of it—in fact, everywhere in the inhabited part of the house the outside is the best.

If only Moreton was furnished as Ockwells Manor ! which we shall come to presently.



MORETON * OLD * HALL



What a house it must have been before it was made into a Cheshire "Magpie," that is to say, before the timbering was plastered over with tar, which preservative has been lavishly put all over it at least every fifty years during its lifetime.

A comparison of the building as it stands to-day with Nash's careful drawing of it, in *Mansions of Old England*, published about 1840, shows very clearly the encroachment of the British workman's tar brush on the delicate work on the outside of the building. He could not even leave alone the chimney-stack, in brick, near the entrance to the gate-house, but must plaster it with black and white stripes painted on the brick itself. I can only hope that the Bishop of Derby did not use similar language to mine when he came into the property and found this desecration.

It is very sad to see a beautiful old house like this not occupied by a Moreton. I am not sure that I would not rather see it kept empty, as Stokesay is, than see some of its rooms, as they are to-day, sprinkled with Tottenham Court Road and Victorian furniture.

OLD * MANOR * HOUSES

Cannot some wealthy North Country man be found who would appreciate and live in it, and furnish it appropriately, allowing visitors to see it on one day of the week as is done at Ightham Mote House, making, perhaps, a small charge to help some charity or to pay for a guide?

It is one of those places where you would like to pick the tenant yourself, but, unfortunately, the one you would choose never has the wherewithal to live in the house.

But what a fascination there is in making a pilgrimage to see and study these old buildings. First, the excitement of a fresh inn—not hotel, mind you—but just a plain real inn, wondering what your room and your landlord will be like; and then on the morrow your first glimpse—the first impression—of the house you have come far to see.

Or to go over, on the evening of your arrival, and see it at sunset, which I think is perhaps the best time of all to get a first view of it; and then to return to your inn, leaving exploration until the morrow. Unfortunately, I never sleep that first night if I do this.



MOBETON * OLD * HAIR



Congleton will always have a soft spot in my heart, although it is no beauty spot in itself, for at Congleton my landlord was a well-known amateur rider, and we forgathered on that and other subjects we had in common. Moreover, at Congleton I made a discovery.

OLD * MADON * HOUSES



For many years I have been trying to find someone who can make models of my old inns and houses, to enable me to have something like the original always by me, not the roof-ruled stereotyped architect's model, but a model which gives all the beautiful curves of roof line and leaning



MOBETON * OLD * HALL



uprights—a thing that can only be done by an enthusiast. Here, at Congleton, I found him—a young man who spends all his holidays visiting these old places, and, moreover, one who has served his apprenticeship as a cabinet-maker and is now an art master.

When I mentioned my difficulty in finding a maker of models, he jumped at the idea, and when I discovered that his present vocation was a teacher of wood-carving at a local technical school, I took him to my heart.

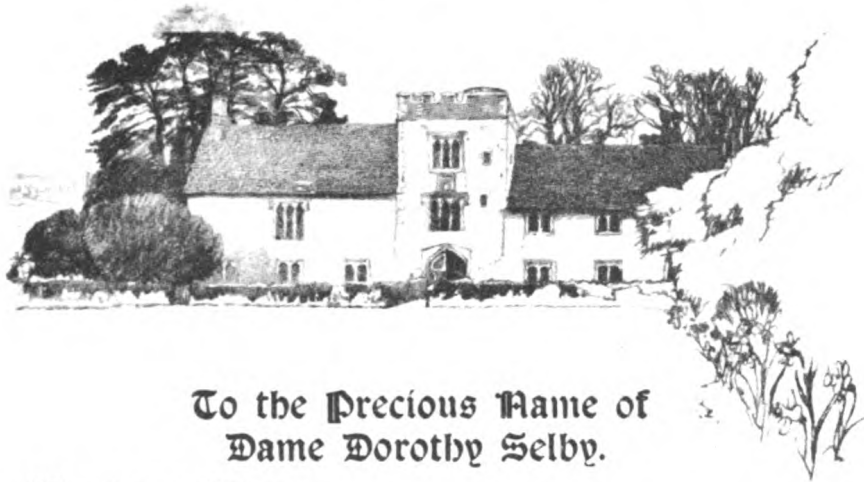
An enthusiast on old houses, a cabinet-maker and wood-carver—what an ideal combination for my model maker.

Before I left Congleton we had come to terms, the preliminaries for models had been arranged, and before this book is published I hope to have models of all six houses among my most cherished possessions.



THE * TRADES * OF * CONGLETON

IGHTHAM * MOTE



To the Precious Name of
Dame Dorothy Selby.

She was a Dorcas,
Whose curious needle turned the abused stage
Of this lewd world into the golden age.
Whose pen of steel and silken ink enrolled
The acts of Jonab in records of gold.
Whose art disclosed that plot, which, had it taken,
Rome had triumphed and Britain's walls had shaken.
In heart a Lydia, and in tongue a Hannab,
In zeal a Ruth, in wedlock a Susannab,
Prudently simple, providentially wary,
To the world a Martha and to Heaven a Mary.

THIS is the house of the Selbys, the home of Dame Dorothy Selby, the lady who is described upon her tombstone in Ightham churchyard as being a paragon of all the virtues, and who is credited with having either sent the anonymous letter to Lord Monteaule which gave away the Gunpowder Plot, or who solved the

IGHTHAM * MOTE

problem of it by working it in needlework—an art of which she was a great exponent.

Ightham Mote is inseparably connected with the Selby family—as Moreton is with the Moretons, and of this family Dame Dorothy, whose epitaph is found at the head of this chapter, stands alone.

Dame Dorothy Selby of the Mote—what a delightful old lady she must have been !

To-day Mr. Colyer Fergusson, the present owner of the house, gives us permission to see Dame Dorothy's home on any Friday afternoon we may wish to do so. Surely our thanks are due to him and his family for granting us this concession—a favour which I do not think we always realize.



OLD * MANOR * HOUSES



Imagine a gentleman, shall we say, living at Brixton, allowing the public to roam over his villa or mansion from two to four o'clock every Friday ; to penetrate to that sanctum sanctorum his drawing-room—and even to walk in his back garden and inspect his chicken-run. I only wish that some of the summer visitors to these houses, those who leave sandwich paper and other impedimenta about, could and would place themselves in the position of these public-spirited owners and imagine for one minute their own domains being so invaded.

IGHATHAM * MOTE



I fancy the *Times* would soon be full of letters on the subject, and in a very short time the local Member would be forced to ask a question about it in the House.

The Mote House is what Victorian writers would have described as being one of England's "popular antiquities."

Every Friday in the summer people arrive in cars, char-a-bancs, and on foot to see this glorious old house, which has a public right of way running down its front drive; and every Friday afternoon an attendant is kept busy showing visitors over it.

By the kindness of the owner I was allowed to make my sketches at any time and to spend many days there.

The popular and perhaps truthful impression

IGETHAD MOVA HOUSE
BAND





OLD * MANOR * HOUSES



is that an artist's life is a lazy one, and I certainly have at these houses at least one day which would verify this belief.

Most people think that to make a sketch all you have to do is find a "pretty" subject—sit down on a camp-stool and splash your paint on—just in the same way as the amateur photographer takes his photos before he has had time to look at his subject. In reality, I am afraid it is nothing of the sort.

Generally, on the first day I am taken by any looker-on for the "village idiot," or a harmless type of madman. As for that whole day I wander about the building, peering at it from this view and from that, and trying to settle from which points of view my drawings shall be made.

All of which must sound, and I am sure looks,



IGHATHAM * MOTE

a very lazy way of spending one's time to people who allow perhaps one hour at most "seeing" the house, and in that time take half a dozen snapshots.

It always takes one complete day to explore thoroughly and decide on these points of view. On the second day, having fully settled these weighty questions, I plunge at it at 9 a.m. and stick to it as long as daylight lasts. A performer, however, should never give away his tricks, or the illusion evaporates. If I told you that for my bird's-eye views I climbed a tree and made a noise like an aeroplane, the trick would fail, and I should have to give up drawing and take to some other profession. I think an "ale draper," or "jersey comber," like the Congletonians—they sound so easy.

Ightham Mote House is best approached down the steep hill from Ivy Hatch, which is some five miles from Sevenoaks.

Down this incline, after passing one or two cottages on our left we get the first view of Dame Dorothy's home.

This in itself is one of its most fascinating views—looking over the top of the kitchen-garden

OLD * MANOR * HOUSES

wall, above the yew hedge to the garden side to the tower, and the front entrance of the Mote. This is the view that “gets over,” as they say in the theatre—the view that holds even the motorist, and makes him stop his car to look at it.

Unbelievable as it may seem, I have actually seen a car noiselessly running down this incline actually stopped by its owners, to look at the view !

We take our hat off to such motorists as we always do to a sweep.

Why is it that coaching and driving men used always to raise their hats to a sweep ? The reason the Fownes family gave me was that it was “for luck.” I presume because horses were apt to shy at a sweep.

I remember whenever you passed a sweep on the road the driver of the coach always saluted him with his whip, giving him a cheery “good morning, sweep,” as he drove by.

Even now, I always raise my hat instinctively to a sweep if I pass one on the road when driving my car—which lets the cat out of the bag, so to speak, and shows that even a car-hater and a horse-lover can fall so low as to own the former.



IGHATHAM * MOATE

My only excuse is that it is a very, very old car, and having driven it for many years I still know nothing about its interior, nor can tell the sparking-plug from the carburetter.

But let us get back to dear Dame Dorothy, who would have disliked cars and everything to do with them, for at present we have not even got up to the moat which surrounds her house, and we are still standing looking over the kitchen-garden wall.

As we walk round to its great entrance doors, we will glance at the story of its inmates and the history of its being.

The East or kitchen and great hall portion is perhaps the oldest part, dating from what our "competent architectural authority" once again would tell us is of the Decorated period, i.e., between 1270 and 1380, during the reigns of the three first Edwards and Richard II.

In this part of the building was the original chapel (not where it stands to-day), the kitchens and great hall, the walls of which are in many places four feet thick.

This portion was the whole extent of the first



IGNAZIAD MOVA HOUSE
BEQA





OLD * MANOR * HOUSES

house as built some time during this period, between 1270 and 1380. At a slightly later date the gate-house tower was built by Edward Haut in 1486, to whom we shall refer later, and after this, at various dates, and by various owners, the side wings of the quadrangle were completed.

Ightham in its early youth was like Stokesay, just a gate-house in one building, and great hall, solar, kitchens, and chapel, etc., in another.

Later came the Tudor chapel, so delightfully pictured by Nash in 1840, and other half-timbered portions during the sixteenth and seventeenth, and even some windows during the eighteenth century.

Of its owners, Ivo de Haut seems to have been the earliest recorded, for he lived here during the reign of Henry II between 1154 and 1189, and after him, in Henry III's reign, came Sir Piers FitzHaut, who was also steward to that king's household. The next recorded name is that of Sir Thomas Cawne, in the reign of Edward III, who is credited with being the builder of the great hall.

Why this Sir Thomas Cawne comes in here in the pedigree I cannot discover, for from 1374,

1240



IGHAM * MOTE

thirty-four years later, to 1450, the de Haut family were again undoubtedly the owners—two de Hauts being High Sheriffs of Kent, Henry de Haut in 1371 and Richard de Haut from 1478 to 1482, the latter being unfortunately beheaded at Pontefract in 1484, and the estate confiscated by the Crown.

Rather ominously, perhaps, we find the next owner to be Sir Robert Brackenbury, Governor of the Tower, who was killed the next year at Bosworth Field.

In Henry VII's reign the property was once more restored by the Crown to the Haut family, and Edward Haut, the builder of the gate-house tower, became the owner.

In 1521, a Sir Richard Clement bought the Mote House from the Hauts, and built the present chapel. Then Sir John, and later Sir Hugh Pakenham, owned it from 1532 to 1544, when a Lord Mayor of London, Sir Hugh Allen, became owner by purchase. Sir Christopher and Charles Allen followed him from 1559 to 1580, while Elizabeth was on the throne, and it was not until 1591 that the Selby family came into



OLD * MANOR * HOUSES



possession of it through purchase by Sir William Selby, Mayor of Berwick, who was knighted by King James at Berwick in 1603.

After this, his nephew, another Sir William Selby, came into the property in 1611, and now we come, after long and somewhat heavy reading, to the interesting part, for at this point our heroine steps on to the stage in the shape of Dame Dorothy Selby, the wife of this owner. From then onwards, the house was tenanted by Selbys from 1591 until 1889, when the present owner, Mr. Colyer Fergusson, purchased the estate.

As we have now crossed the bridge over the moat and arrived at the porch, we can see the Selby crest in front of us, carved on the tower above the entrance gates to the courtyard.

IGHURHAM * MOTE

On the left-hand side of this porch is a long slit in the wall, which was made to allow the porter to hold parley with anyone outside, without being seen or opening the gates. It is rather a curious and ingenious contrivance; below is the plan of it, with the porter speaking to someone outside on the moat bridge.

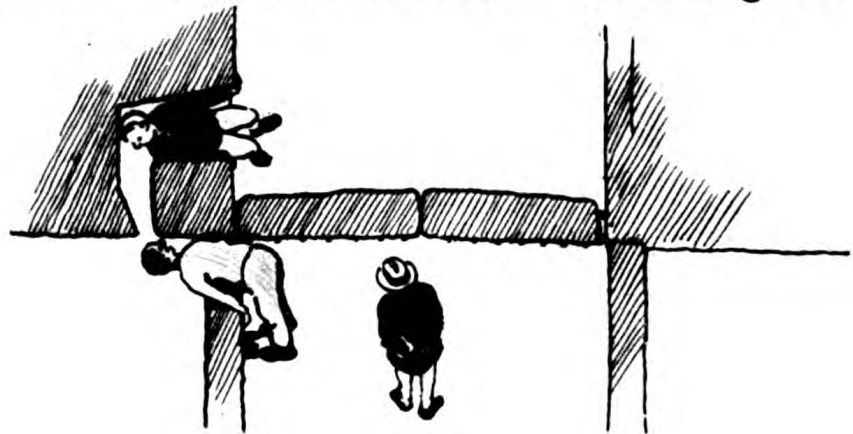


- | | |
|------------------------|-----------------------|
| 1 THE GREAT HALL | 10 NOUR |
| 2 HIGH REEFER ROOM | 11 LIBRARY |
| 3 HIGH NOOK CHAMBER | 12 SERVANTS ROOM |
| 4 GREAT CHAPEL AND | 13 KITCHEN |
| 5 EAST | 14 OPEN YARD |
| 6 GALLERY UPPER FLOORS | 15 BRICK S OVER MOAT |
| 7 STAIRS | 16 WOODEN BRIDGE TO |
| 8 DINING ROOM | 17 GARDEN |
| 9 LIVING ROOM | 18 ENTRANCE OVER MOAT |

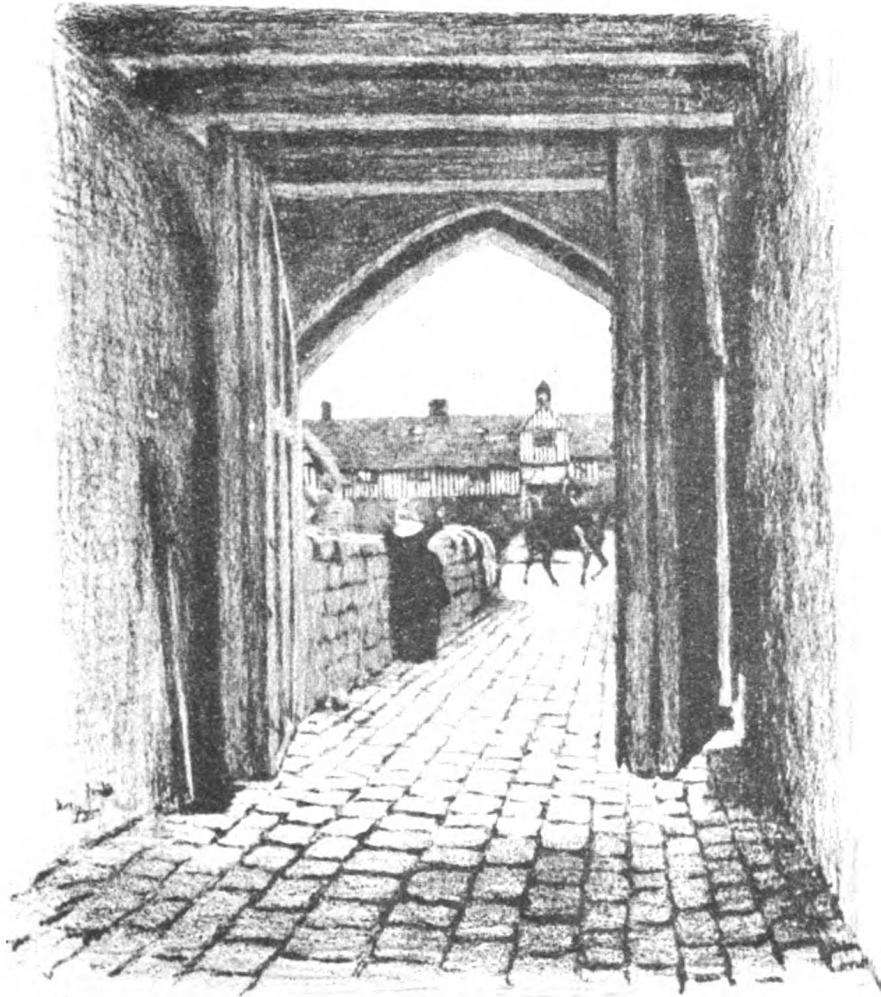
Having assured this porter that our intentions are honest, the massive doors are swung open, and we pass under the tower into the courtyard.

Facing us is the great hall, and on our left the Henry VIII chapel; all of which can be best explained by a plan of the building and the bird's-eye view of the house, given on the preceding page.

There seems very little doubt that the original main entrance to the Mote House was through an



OLD * MANOR * HOUSES



archway directly opposite this courtyard entrance, and where the Jacobean stables now stand, and that the present entrance gateway and drive are of more or less modern date.



IGHTHAM * MOAT

The house is built, like so many of these old houses, in a hollow, probably on account of the water supply.

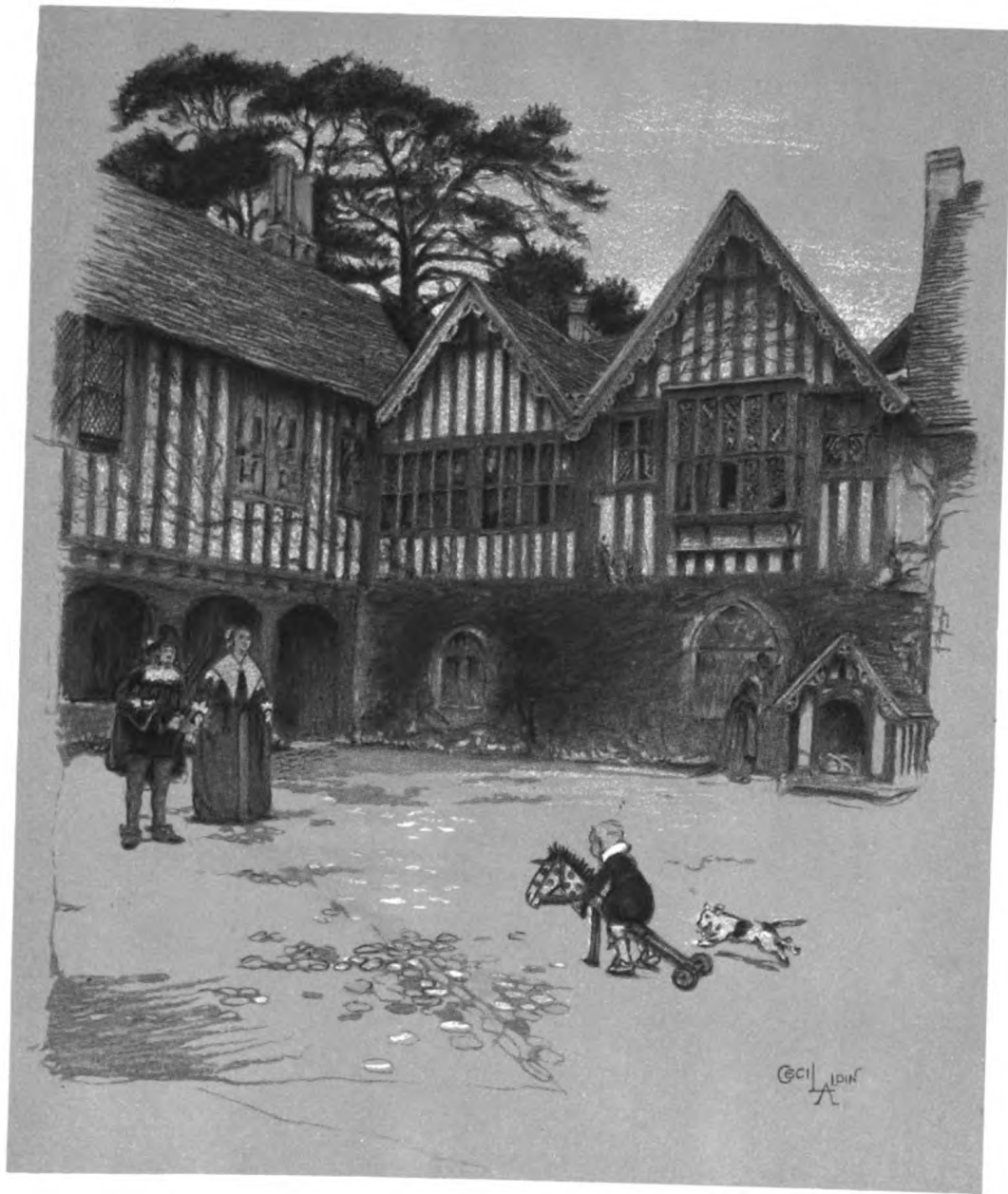
Ightham is certainly well supplied with water, as numerous springs on the surrounding high ground supply its lakes and moat. It takes much water, however, to percolate through four feet of solid masonry, which is the thickness of most of the walls at Ightham, and a surrounding moat without, with such walls as these, makes very little difference to the comforts of the house within.

In the courtyard, the old solar chamber faces us on the left as we enter, and its beautiful barge boards are a great feature of the house, but as this book is not a guide book, I must leave you to the attendant, who will show you over its rooms and chapel, and from whom you will probably get much more information than I can attempt to provide for you.

When you have seen the interior, we will rest in the sun by the south lake, and see the delightful view of the timbered south side of the house, with the stables in the distance. Which all sounds rather like an Oxford College guide when

IGĤAĤAĤ MOVA HOUSE
BETA

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO
LIBRARY





OLD * MANOR * HOUSES

he hands you over, temporarily, to the guide belonging to another college.

I shall never forget once spending a day in a celebrated school classroom during holiday time, and hearing the official college guide make the same little joke, and go through the same wonderful exhibition of rhetoric, with each successive group of sightseers.

One can understand that the description of a place and its history becomes mechanical, but unfortunately for me, the two jokes, which always got their laugh, always came at the same moment, and were invariably led up to by one of the crowd asking the obvious question at the appointed time.

After he had brought round about six or seven "parties," with the same, for me, tedious result, I thought that he must have had an accomplice in the crowd to lead up to his joke, but on carefully studying each face as the successive groups arrived into the classroom, I could never see the same one twice or recognize one that I had seen in the room before.

What a glorious profession for a humorist. To know that at a given moment some total stranger



IGHTHAM * MOTE

will give you your cue to bring off your pet joke, and to know that it is infallible, and that twenty times a day you will be able to laugh with your audience at it.

Now let us look at the letter Dame Dorothy deciphered or wrote, warning Lord Monteaule of the Gunpowder Plot, and about which a Mr. Thomas Selby, who was a descendant of the Northumberland Selbys in the female line, writes in the "Gentleman's Magazine" of 1863 :—



"There is an old tradition that it was Dame Dorothy Selby who discovered the meaning of the anonymous letter, and a report, less well-founded, adds that she discovered it by working it on a piece of tapestry.

"I cannot vouch for this latter report, but the following facts are beyond dispute.

"My great-great-grandmother Dorothy, the daughter of Sir Henry Selby, Kt., second son of George, cousin of Sir William Selby, the husband of Dame Dorothy, handed down the tradition to her children, and as such it was stated to me by my grandmother, the late Mrs. Selby of the Mote, who died in 1845, aged 90."

OLD * MADON * HOUSES

my lord out of the love i beare ~~you~~ To some of youer friends
 i have a care of youer preservation therefore I would
 advise youe as youe tender youer life to devise some
 excuse to shift of youer attendance at this parliament
 for god and man have concurred to punish the wickednes
 of this tyme and thinke not slightly of this advertizement
 but retire youe self into youre countrey wher youe
 may expect the event In fasti for howe they are be no
 appearance of annu yet i saye they shall receive a terrible
 blowe this parliament and yet they shall not see who
 hurts them this counceill is not to be continued because
 it maye do youe good and can do youe no harme for the
 danger is passed as soon as youe have burnt the letter
 and i hope god will give youe the grace to make good
 use of it to whose holy profession i commend youe

And here is a reproduction of a portion of the actual letter, which either Dame Dorothy wrote, or at any rate deciphered, one authority stating that it was done while she was staying at Gayhurst in Bucks :—

LETTER OF WARNING TO LORD MONTEAGLE.

“ *To the Right-Honorable the Lord Monteaagle.*

“ My Lord,

“ Out of the love I bear you to some of your friends I have a care of your preservation therefore I would advise you as you tender your life to devise some excuse to shift of your attendance at this parliament for God and man have concurred to punish the wickedness of this time and think not slightly of this advertizement, but retire



IGHATHAM * MOTE

yourself into youre country where you may expect the event to . . . for though there be no ~~fire yet~~ appearance of any fire yet I say they shall receive a terrible blow this parliament and yet they shall not see who hurts them. This counsel is not to be contemned because it may do you good and can do you no harm for the danger is passed as soon as you have burnt the letter and I hope God will give you the grace to make good use of it. To whose Holy protection I commend you.”

I think with Mr. Selby that she was much more likely to have written it, for as far as I can see there is very little difficulty, if the copies I have been able to see of the original letter are correct, for anyone to decipher the manuscript. Moreover there is somehow a female touch about it.

The little matter of the word “you” being corrected and almost erased in the first line, and “to some of your friends” added, rather bears this out, the printed letters being obviously used to hide identity by handwriting. I should like, however, to see the word “My” in Dame

OLD * MADON * HOUSES

Dorothy's ordinary handwriting, as the writer of the letter had not got his or her hand in, so to speak, and the first "M" and "y" are evidently in the usual hand of the writer.

Then there is no doubt that in the original the lettering was done by someone who was accustomed either to drawing or sewing, and this was more likely to have been a woman than a man.

The type of the black-letter printing is well drawn, if I may say so, for there is no shakiness or uncertainty about it, after the first two words, and the size of the lettering varies very slightly ; also although on an unruled surface the level is kept exceedingly well. All of which points to a hand used to using the needle, pen or brush.

Referring back to our dates, we see that Dame Dorothy's husband did not come into the Mote House property until the decease of his uncle in 1611.

So that the little picture I had intended to do of our heroine writing the letter at the Mote House must be abandoned, as, whether she wrote



IGHURHAM * MOTE

the debated letter to Lord Monteagle or whether she did not, the fact of dates clearly shows us that it was not done while she was the chatelaine of the Mote House itself, and rather adds conviction to the authority who states that it was done while staying at Gayhurst in Bucks.

I fear conjecture, however, makes rather uninteresting reading, and we know that epitaphs are sometimes apt to flatter on the *de mortuis nil nisi bonum* principle; yet the fact of this epitaph clearly making reference to her pen and needlework and the great plot, and also the circumstantial evidence of the MS. of the letter itself—the carefully drawn lettering and neatness of the text—all rather point to the character of Dame Dorothy, who we are told was a Dorcas.



1640

“Prudently simple, providentially wary,” one who could wield the “pen of steel” or “silken ink” with particular skill.

From the days of my early youth, Dame Dorothy has always been my heroine of the letter, and to me she shall always remain its originator.

BINGHAM'S * MELCOMBE

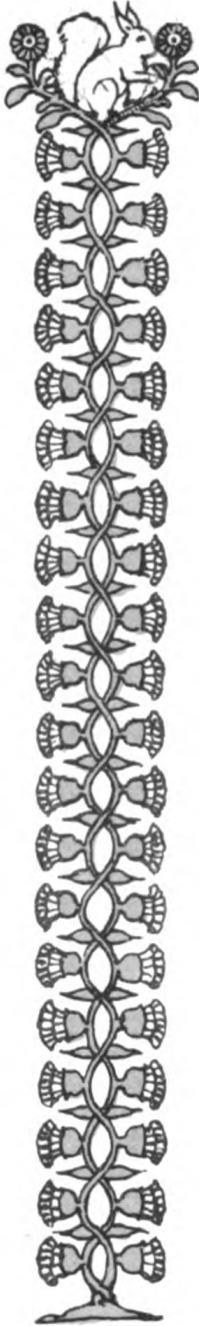
IT has always been a matter of debate with me as to whether definite descriptions of the architectural beauties of these houses—descriptions in detail given in the full-blooded architectural language so necessary to describe them—would not have been more interesting and instructive than these notes which I have appended to my sketches.

That you would have preferred to read that “lights have quarter-round and fillet moulding filled in with hollow-moulded cinquefoil tracery, the three upper foils being broken with ogee counter-cusps,” and so on.

I am quite sure you would, but, unfortunately, I can only draw you the windows and cannot describe them. A “galloon weaver can never be made into a wisket maker,” as they say at Congleton, and the only thing for you to do is to skip the author even if you should glance at his sketch-book.

Like many other writers, however, he will still





BINGHAM'S * MELCOMBE

meander tediously on, more interested in the fact that one Anthonie Stapley, of Hickstead Manor in Sussex, diaried that his cure for the "hooping cough," in 1670, was to "get three field mice flaw them draw them and roast one of them and let the party afflicted eat it; dry the other two in the oven until they crumble to a powder and put a little of this powder in what the patient drinks at night and in the morning," than in going deeply into the stories of cinquefoil traceries or ogee counter-cusps.

Quite seriously, however, I cannot think of these old houses as just bricks and mortar, they are much more alive to me than that, these friends with whom I have so often dwelt, and whose every stone has an interest.

They have distinct characters—human characters as well as architectural, sometimes suggested by their history and occupants, at others by their situation and surroundings.

Binghams Melcombe, for some unaccountable reason, I always think of as the very old person of my collection, although as a matter of fact she is not so old as some of the others.

BINGHAM'S MEMOIRS
DORSET





OLD * MANOR * HOUSES

It is not exactly her looks nor her architecture, but I think it can be best described by that one word—atmosphere.

Yet it is an atmosphere of rest and quiet rather than decrepit old age, a feeling when once you are within the gate-house of absolute peacefulness.

There are not many people, other than Wessex folk, who can tell you where Bingham Melcombe is to be found on the map, and there are fewer, even including Dorset people, who can direct you to it.

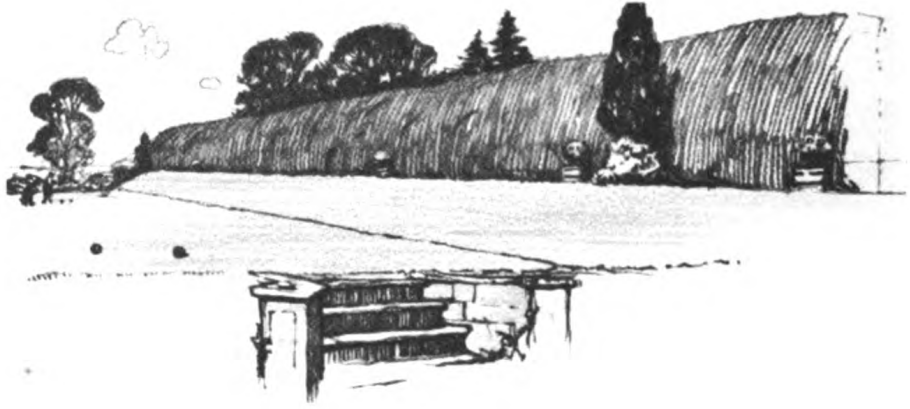
In the centre of Dorset, buried among the hills, ten miles from any town or station, it is one of the most inaccessible places in England.

I motored there from Dorchester, the last mile of the drive being down a narrow by-lane not wide enough for two cars to pass, and at the end of this lane I suddenly came to the eagle-topped gates of the house, which give entrance to the drive running parallel with the avenue, which probably was the main entrance in Henry VIII's days.

Here to-day lives the widow of Mr. Bosworth Smith, who had been scholar, author, and old Harrow master, and who bought the property

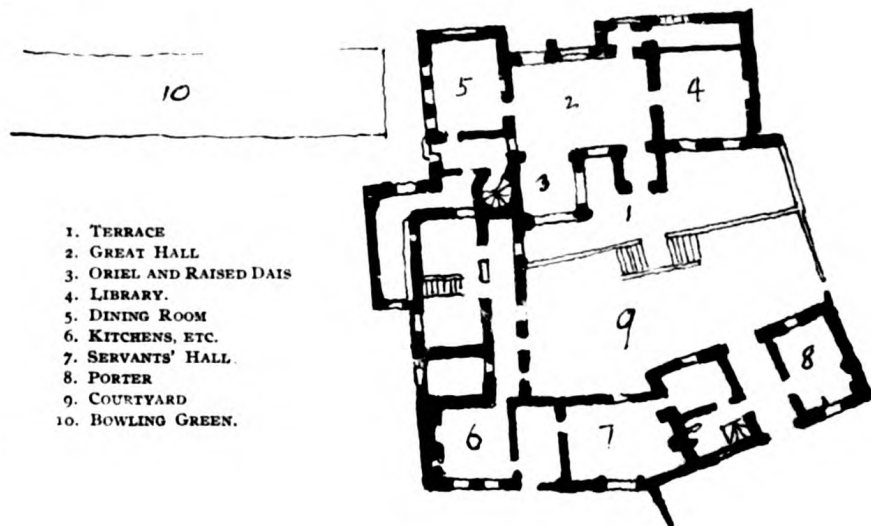


BINGHAM'S * MENDOCINO

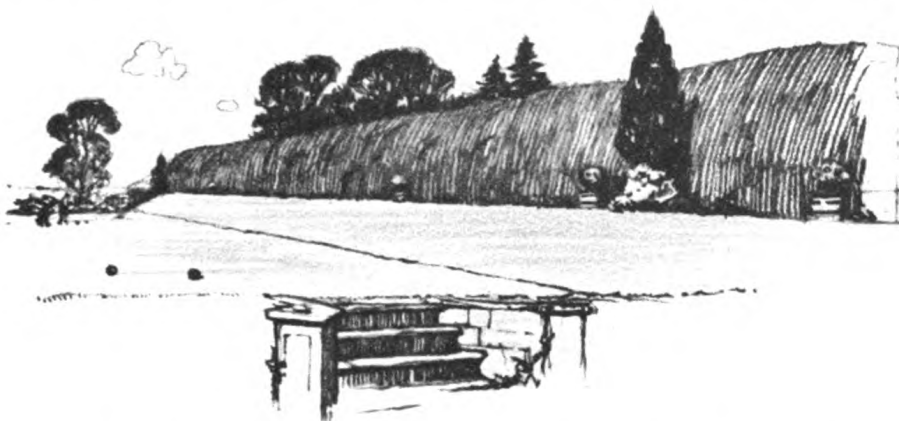


from the Bingham's some years ago, living here until his death.

And what a home to retire to after a strenuous life ! What a place in which to study bird life and habits !



OLD * MANOR * HOUSES



Old Harrovians will remember Mr. Bosworth Smith and his wonderful knowledge of birds, and would have been able to imagine their old master revelling in the quiet of Bingham's Melcombe, dreaming of the past, and continuing his study of the feathered friends he knew and loved so well.

Once again, as will be seen by the plan, we start with a gate-house. When through this we find ourselves in a most delightful courtyard surrounded on three of its sides, with stone buildings and a small terrace in front of the house, which is literally smothered with hydrangeas which have flourished here for many centuries.

Unlike some of our other houses, few additions were made to this Manor house of Melcombe by

BINGHAM'S * MEDCOMBE

1283



the Bingham, who lived here from Edward I's reign to the time of its purchase a few years ago, and whose crest, in yellow stone, is carved above the hall oriel.

This old lady of my book has just dreamed her centuries away, with no exciting incidents of architectural fashion or otherwise to mar her peaceful existence.

1340



Perhaps she is a typical Dorset old lady, and is similar in her architectural features to other Wessex houses, such as Waterson, Mapperton, and Anderson, but she has one outstanding feature, owned by none of the others—a most wonderful yew hedge bordering the bowling-green in her garden.

This hedge measures some eighteen feet deep by fourteen feet high ; it will carry a man seated on its top—a favourite coign of vantage, I hear, of the younger generation who have dwelt at the house—and it extends the whole length of the lawn.



1449

Of the history of the house's owners, very little is necessary. It is just the history of a county family, the Bingham, with occasional very

OLD * MANOR * HOUSES

mildly exciting incidents. That it is the house of the Binghams, and always has been, is all that need be said.

In an inventory the goods and chattels of one Robarte Bingham, the squire in 1561, were valued at but two hundred odd pounds, including every piece of furniture the house then contained, a not very large sum for the contents of a house of this size.

Unfortunately, all the woodwork in the interior has been painted white—including the very fine Elizabethan carved mantelpieces. From my personal point of view, this completely spoils the charm of its interior to-day, and gives an atmosphere of modernity to its delightful panelling which is out of keeping with the rest of the house.

It is the one falling away from her disregard of fashion's changes that my old lady has been guilty of in some four or five hundred years.

Here at Bingham's Melcombe, one has only to read the late owner's fascinating book on bird-life and bird-lore to realize the peacefulness of it all, a home in which to study and



1485

1649



BINGHAM'S * MELCOMBE

dream of the past, with no excitement from the outside world.

Occasionally in the winter, the South Dorset hounds may draw the hills and woods at the back of the house, when a few hunting people will come in to tea before motoring or hacking home ; or perhaps once a week a motor run to Blandford or Dorchester, over ten miles away, but the rest of the time is just one quiet rest, where an interview with the gardener, or a visit to the adjoining Rectory are the chief happenings of the day, and the arrival of the post and the daily paper the events of the evening.

A perfect setting for old age, from which, in the end, to make the great farewell.



BRAMSHILL * HOUSE



*“Here’s to the hound with his nose upon the ground,
And here’s to the scent that we follow.”*

BRAMSHILL HOUSE will always be known to Berkshire and Hampshire people as the home of Sir John Cope.

The Sir John Cope who, from 1817 to 1850, hunted, at his own expense, three-quarters of Berkshire and a large portion of some of the surrounding counties.

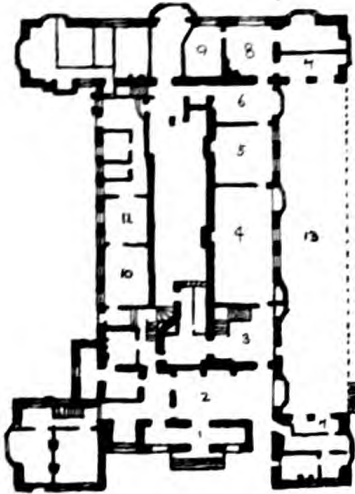
Here we have a totally different quietness to that of the house in the preceding chapter, yet Bramshill House is quiet.

If not in reality, certainly in imagination we can hear the bay of the hound and the sound of the horn. The surrounding country, the house, the stables and kennels are full of it, as different from our last picture as youth is from age.

Situated near the celebrated Hartford Bridge flats—the galloping ground of the coaches in the old days—the house rather reminds one in the



BRAMSHILL * HOUSE



- 1. ENTRANCE HALL.
- 2. GREAT HALL.
- 3. STAIRS.
- 4. DINING ROOM.
- 5. LIVING ROOM.
- 6. " "
- 7. TERRACE ALCOVE.
- 8. LIVING ROOM.
- 9. " "
- 10. KITCHENS.
- 11. " "
- 12. " "
- 13. TERRACE.

IO 66



distance of Hampton Court Palace, or, at any rate, of a section of it.

A great house in the midst of wild heathland and fir woods, where, had it not been for our sporting owner Sir John Cope, Wolsey or Queen Elizabeth would have been more appropriate central figures.

Built in the shape of two T's placed end to end (H), the actual building covers a very large amount of ground, and the first thing you are told by the local yokels is that it has three hundred and sixty-five windows, which I understand from the present owner is incorrect; that, however, is the popular tradition, and there is also another erroneous one that it houses the celebrated "Mistletoe Bough" chest.

The Manor of Bramshill is a very ancient one, and is mentioned in Domesday, when it was held by one Hugh de Port.

In Domesday Book it was known as Bromeselle, and not Bramzle as it is now pronounced in Hampshire.

BRASHIDE HOUSE
HARDAS

مجلس العلماء
بجامعة القاهرة





OLD * MANOR * HOUSES



In 1275 John St. John of Basing (his grandfather, Hugh de Port, having taken St. John as the family name) was in possession of the Manor, and in 1346 it passed by marriage to the Foxley's family, the male line having failed upon the death of Edmund St. John in that year.

In 1347 Thomas Foxley held a licence to enclose 2,500 acres and made the park, he also holding the appointment of Constable of Windsor Castle.

Then followed at Bramshill Sir John Foxley, M.P. for Hampshire, and in 1436 the estate passed by marriage to Sir Thomas Uvedale of Wickham in Hampshire.

In 1474 it was sold to a Berkshire family of the name of Rogers, and in 1499 this family "conveyed" it to Lord Daubeney, who was chamberlain to Henry VII.

It then went through some vicissitudes of temporary mortgage, and in Henry VIII's time Henry second Lord Daubeney was created

1240



1379





BRAMSHILL * HOUSE

Earl of Bridgewater. At his death it was escheated to the Crown, and in 1547 granted to William Paulet Lord St. John, afterwards made Marquis of Winchester; thus giving the Manor back once more to the same family who owned it at the time of its first mention in Domesday.

On the 20th October, 1600, the fourth Marquis of Winchester sold the Manor and park to Sir Stephen Thornhurst, and from him it was once more sold to Edward Lord Zouch, who in 1605 started building the house we see to-day.

In 1621 the Archbishop of Canterbury had an unfortunate accident while shooting deer in the park, killing a keeper with his crossbow, and to-day we are shown, not far from the house, "Keeper's Oak," where, tradition says, the unfortunate man was killed—an incident which caused much trouble subsequently to the clumsy Archbishop.

In 1625 Lord Zouch died, and it is his statue which is seen high up on the building over what was originally intended to be the principal entrance.

The house was then bequeathed to Sir Edward

OLD * MANOR * HOUSES

Zouch, who was Marshal of the King's Household, and in 1639 his widow selling it to the Earl of Antrim, who married the Duchess of Buckingham whose former husband was assassinated on 23 August 1628, and was the mother of the notorious Buckingham of Pepys's day. It is probable, therefore, that this latter Duke of Buckingham was many times at Bramshill.

Then in 1640 Lord Antrim sold the estate to Sir Robert Henley, who died in 1681, leaving the property £20,000 in debt. Sir Arthur Henley, his brother, made things worse, killed a man and had to fly the country, and then the Cope family in 1699 purchased it, and it still remains in their possession.

Sir John Cope, son of the sixth Baronet, was the actual purchaser, giving £21,500 for it.

Besides the statue of Lord Zouch on the building, we find "E. Z. 1612," the date the house was finished, on many of the stack-pipes, and on the Renaissance front, over the porch, is carved the Prince of Wales's feathers, which also appear on firebacks and the drawing-room ceiling, inside the house.



BRAMSHILL * HOUSE



It is surmised that the house was intended for the Prince of Wales when originally built, but as he died in 1612 he was never able to take possession of it.

In 1845 Queen Victoria visited the house and commented upon the Prince of Wales's feathers over the porch.

One of the great features of Bramshill is its terrace on the south-east side, looking out over the Park and garden, upon which the game of Troco was played. To-day, the gardens extend only on the right side, but there is no doubt that originally they spread in front of the whole of this south-east portion.

At each end of the terrace, which measures 194 feet, we find sheltered porches which contain the original oak seats as they were erected in 1612.

OLD * MANOR * HOUSES



One of the great charms of Bramshill is its interior, with its wonderful furniture and pictures, and here we find something which is different from many of these old manor houses.

At Bramshill nothing has been bought except during the period in which it was made, nothing has been added in the way of "old furniture." Here we find seventeenth-century cushions, chair backs and needlework, together with furniture and ornaments which have stood in the house since the day of their creation ; everything taking its place as part of a complete whole.

At some houses one finds more wonderful individual pieces, finer cabinets and suits of armour, but at very few do you find, as here, nothing that has stood under any other roof, through

BRAMSHILL * HOUSE



the centuries the house has had its being. Everything is Bramshill, everything is part of Bramshill.

I spent many days there, but my task was hopeless. It is not one small section of a volume, but six large tomes which could possibly begin to do the house justice, but those few days gave to me infinite enjoyment, at the same time leaving me with a feeling of utter failure.

I did two drawings, but I wanted to do twenty! To be able to see my Zouchs, Antrims, Buckinghams, and Copes in their long gallery and great hall, and to feel them around me as I worked in rooms which in every panel, chair, and cabinet brought them so vividly before me. The hunting squire, Sir John Cope, who lived in the north-east side only, in the early part of the nineteenth century, hunting through the winter, six days out of the seven, with a country surrounding his house almost as wild as some parts of Devonshire and Cornwall. The great brazier, possibly lit on dark winter evenings to guide him home,

OLD * MANOR * HOUSES



which still can be seen above the roof balustrade, near Lord Zouch's statue.

Bramshill's owner must have lived a very strenuous life in the winter in those days. To hunt six days a week is no small undertaking, but to master a hunt whose country then covered land over which three or four packs of hounds call their country to-day was surely no light task; hacking to the meet perhaps twenty miles away, with no luxurious car to run you home again at the end of the day.

Bramshill has had possibly many more distinguished owners, at any rate owners more celebrated, but to Berkshire people Sir John Cope will always remain its *Deus ex machina*.

The home of the jolly hunting Squire who knew and called all the men on his estate by their christian names, and where the port probably went nightly its full round of bottles, and the twang of the horn and bay of the hound was heard at daybreak. This is what we inseparably connect

BRAMSHILL * HOUSE



with Bramshill, whether it be for a hunt after fox with Sir John Cope's hounds, or the chase of the hart or buck or a bevy of roes in earlier times.

Imagine, if you do not already know it, a great Elizabethan house set high on a hill in the middle of a big area of wild commons and pine woods.

BRAMSHILL HOUSE
HANDS

So, the first thing I did was to
write down the names of the
people who were present at the
meeting. I also wrote down the
date and time of the meeting.





OLD * MANOR * HOUSES

A mile away runs the main road at right angles to the house, which is approached by a perfectly straight, but undulating, drive and avenue, every visitor who travels it being in full view of the house for the whole of its distance. Behind the house, right up to the postern entrance, are great gnarled and twisted beeches and oaks, the wild heathland growing up to the garden wall and terrace.

Coming from Eversley, this postern entrance side, it is the unexpectedness of Bramshill that is so fascinating. Who would imagine that after tramping some miles of pinewood and heath you would suddenly emerge to find an enormous Elizabethan mansion within a few hundred yards of you, looking at you, so to speak, over the top of the old garden wall, a wall sheltering its peacocks and rose gardens. On the terrace beyond, we might expect to see ladies as Hollar, Lely, and Van Dyck depicted them, and men as John Evelyn and Samuel Pepys must have seen them; the age of silks, satins, and velvets; the age when the human male outvied the female in the brilliant colouring of his plumage.



BRAMSHILL * HOUSE



That is the side from which I first approached Bramshill, and where I spent many days with occasional visits from a youthful descendant of Sir John Cope's, who kept up a continuous flow of ingenuous and critical conversation just behind me as she watched the progress of my work.

In half an hour I knew more about herself, her school, her elder brother and sister, her aunts, Bramshill House, and the countryside in general than I could have discovered for myself in five years, besides a thousand and one other interesting facts on life in general, and school in particular. Then I discovered that my young friend was an authoress, a story of hers having won a competition in "The Young Ladies' Forget-me-not Magazine" I think it was, and had actually been in print, the remuneration for her literary effort being a large box of chocolates.

I was also told that "As soon as it was finished I wrote and told the Editor that the box was empty, and he sent me another."

OLD * MADON * HOUSES



If my charming and candid critic will only write to me, I will send her a dozen.

One day I stayed rather late in order to sketch a sunset.

“You’re very late to-night,” said my young friend as I prepared to pack up the implements of my trade, “won’t your wife be cross if you’re late for dinner?”

“Now, how do you know that I am a married man?” I queried. (We had never been formally introduced, or met before our casual acquaintanceship.)

Very seriously came the reply: “I always know a married man, he has so many wrinkles on his forehead.”

“Out of the mouths of babes” has the brand of the Benedict at last been discovered.

OCKWELLS * MANOR



When we were children we always used to save the piece of bread with the biggest lump of jam upon it until the last ; Ockwells is this tit-bit that I have been saving until the end, at the same time it is the manor house which fills me with more envy, hatred, and all uncharitableness than any other.

Whenever I go to Ockwells I long for the good old prehistoric days, when if you wanted a thing you just picked out your heaviest and most knotted club, and went out and—got it.

I long to club Sir Edward Barry, F.S.A., the owner of Ockwells, and afterwards to walk in and take possession of his home and everything that is his ; just pure unadulterated envy with murderous intent.

After all, why shouldn't I ? As the children say, "I found it first." I knew the house before he did, at any rate before he bought it, nearly

OLD * MANOR * HOUSES



thirty years ago. I went and sketched it then, when it was a rather ruinous farm-house, and I have sketched it to-day.

No wonder I get "peevd," now that it is in the hands of an owner who has treated it as few owners would have had the knowledge to do, who has restored it in so perfect a way, and created a most glorious flower from the withered shell, while keeping the perfume of the original blossom hanging over it. No wonder I envy this owner and all that is his.

Ockwells, near Bray, in Berkshire, is not a large house like Bramshill, and has no imposing front which can be seen from the high-road. It is in fact very difficult to find, but when once you have found it, and obtained the necessary permission to see over it, you realize what a perfect specimen of a smaller manor house it is, and you at once understand my prehistoric

OCKWELLS * MANOR

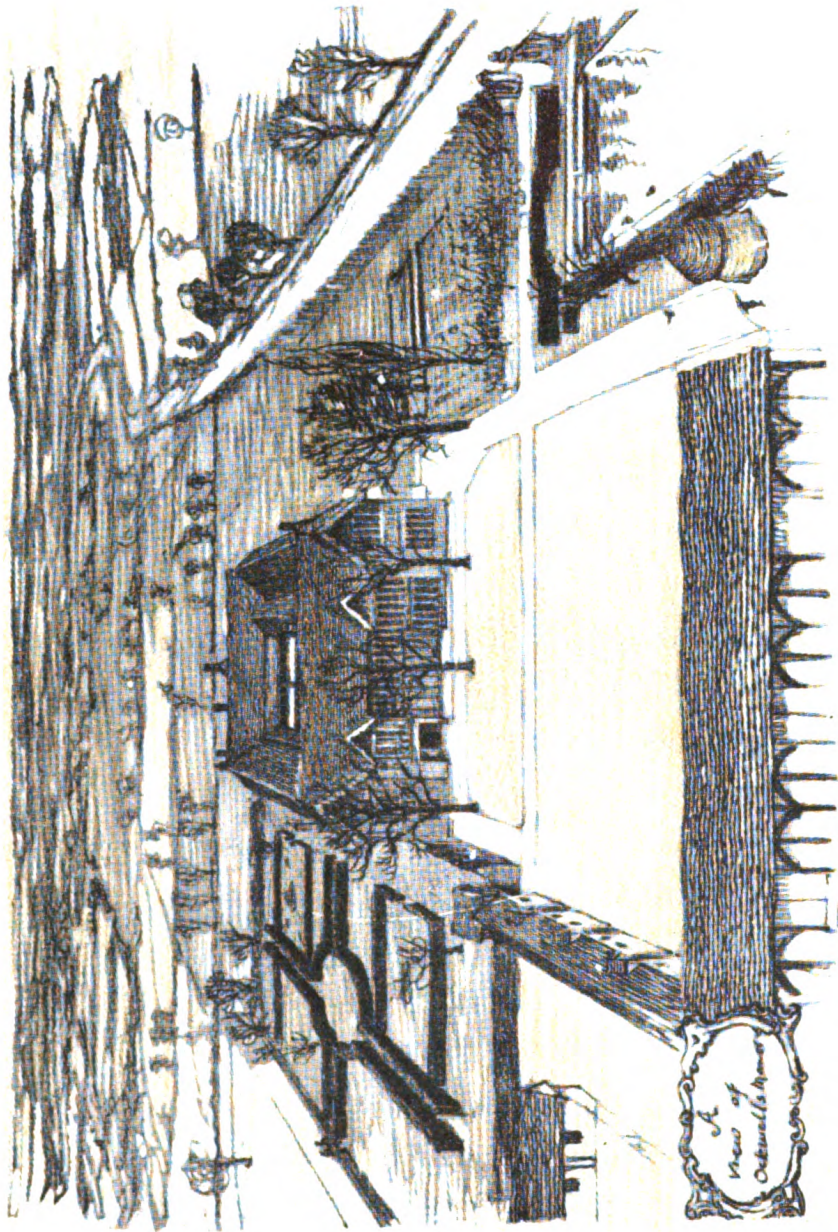


tendencies towards the owner ; surely in order to become the possessor of even one of his Elizabethan bedsteads, or a single suit of his wonderful armour, it would tempt any right-minded man to feel the same.

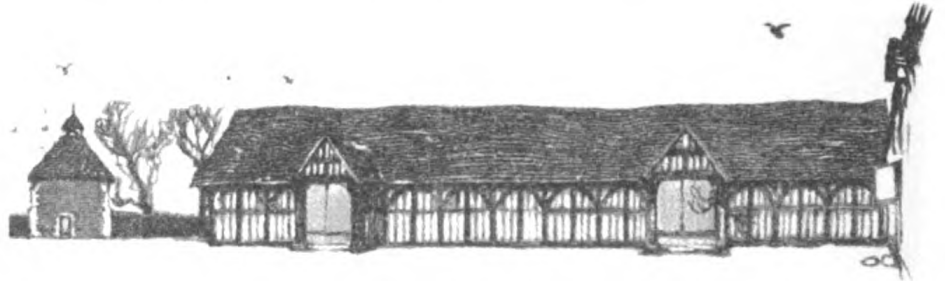
In truth, the owner must be an artist as well as being a distinguished antiquarian, which do not necessarily run together, for the colour of his house fascinates him as much as the antiquity of the *objets d'art* he has within it. He must also have a great feeling for tone values.

At times a painter feels that certain objects in the picture seem out of tone with the surroundings ; but at Ockwells nothing either inside or outside the house ever strikes you in this way. You never feel that a suit of armour stands out too prominently in the room, or an old hanging flag in the great hall has too much light upon it.

OLD * MANOR * HOUSES



OCKWELLS * MANOR



Everything in the house is in tone, and is in its right place, and every piece of furniture takes its correct tone value in the whole.

True it is not quite in the same way as at Bramshill, where everything, so to speak, has been bred in the house, for when I first knew Ockwells the only antiquities it contained were a pair of Cromwell's boots (then lost), the refectory table (unmovable), and a malformed pair of antlers, all of which are now in Sir Edward Barry's house. Moreover, it had very little of the priceless old heraldic glass in its great hall that is there to-day, as, fortunately, this had been removed some time before to a place of safety at Taplow Court.



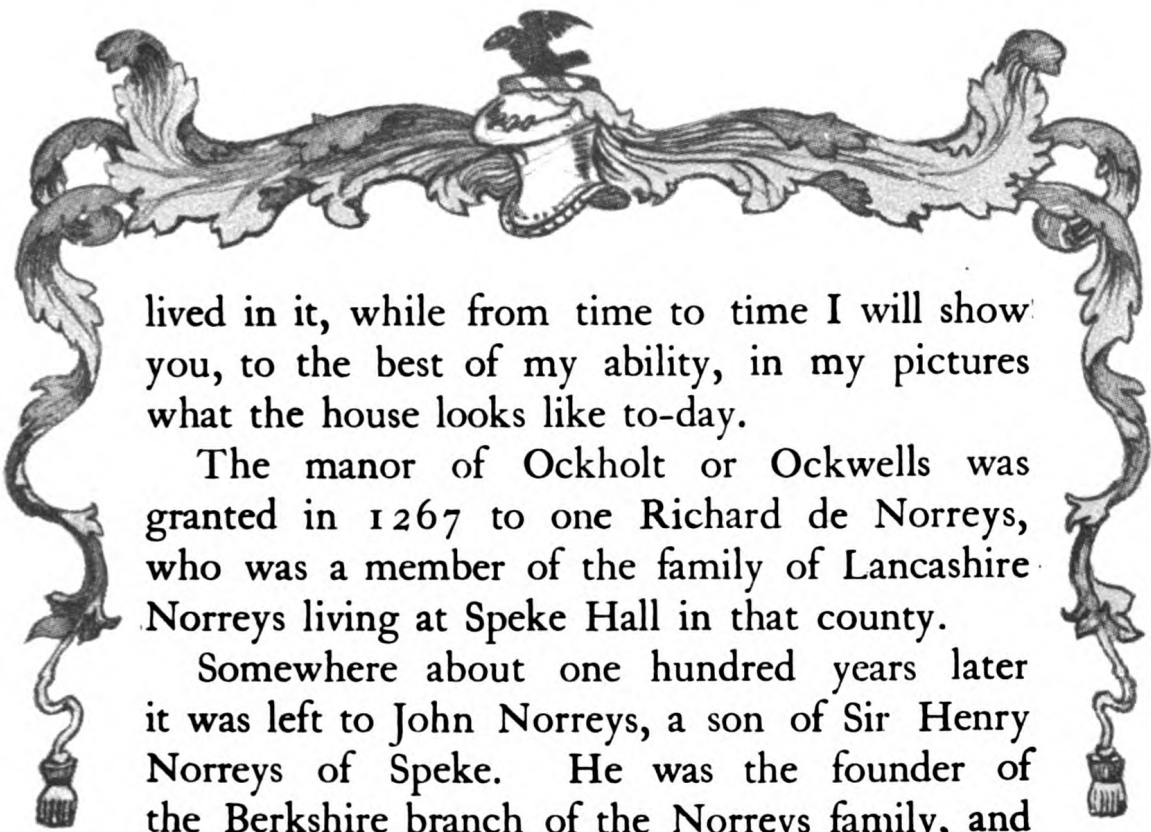
As we have done with our other manor houses, so we will continue with Ockwells, and take a glance at its history and the people who have

ORIGINS MAJOR
BERES





OLD * MANOR * HOUSES



lived in it, while from time to time I will show you, to the best of my ability, in my pictures what the house looks like to-day.

The manor of Ockholt or Ockwells was granted in 1267 to one Richard de Norreys, who was a member of the family of Lancashire Norreys living at Speke Hall in that county.

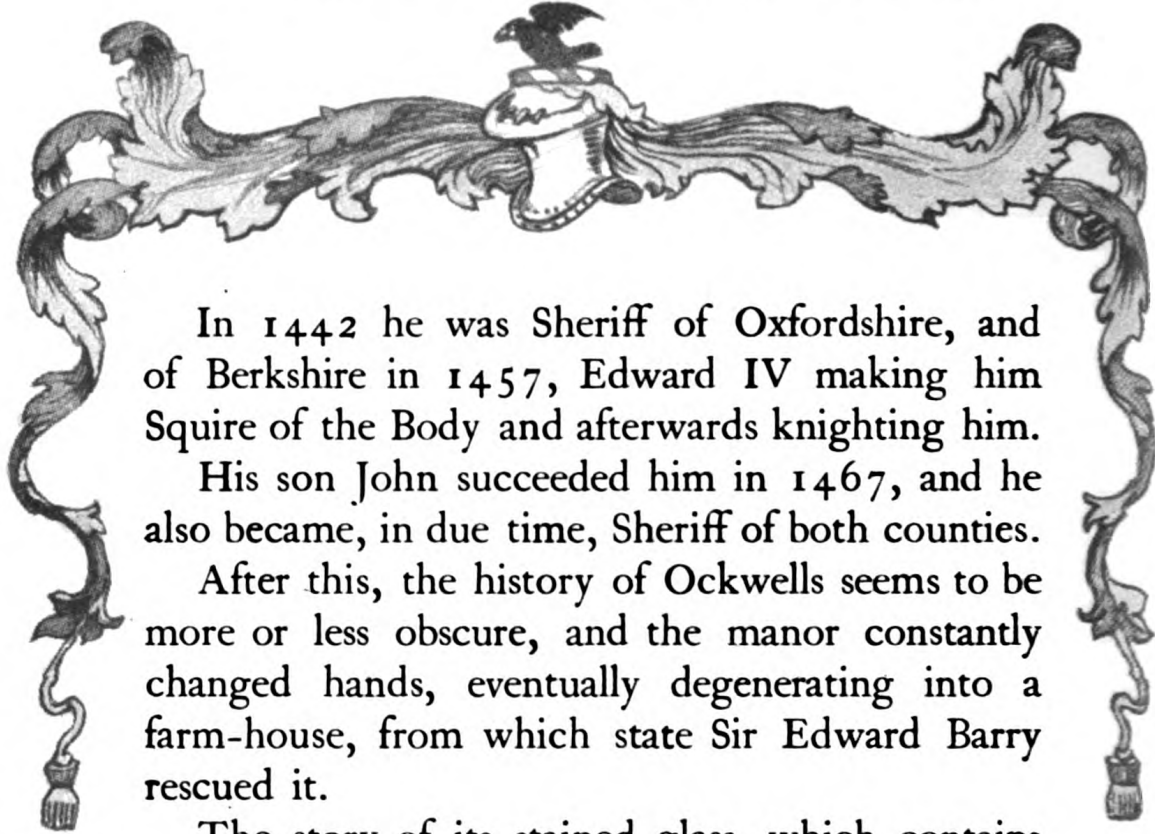
Somewhere about one hundred years later it was left to John Norreys, a son of Sir Henry Norreys of Speke. He was the founder of the Berkshire branch of the Norreys family, and between 1446 and 1456 a grandson of his, also called John, built Ockwells manor house.

This John Norreys must have been a great favourite at Court, if we may judge by the number of official positions he held at various times, being Usher to the Chamber in Henry VI's reign and also Squire of the Body and Master of the Wardrobe, all very important Court offices.



1216

OCKWELLS * MANOR



In 1442 he was Sheriff of Oxfordshire, and of Berkshire in 1457, Edward IV making him Squire of the Body and afterwards knighting him.

His son John succeeded him in 1467, and he also became, in due time, Sheriff of both counties.

After this, the history of Ockwells seems to be more or less obscure, and the manor constantly changed hands, eventually degenerating into a farm-house, from which state Sir Edward Barry rescued it.

The story of its stained glass, which contains the coats-of-arms of many well-known people of Plantagenet times, helps us a little with Ockwells' history and is contained in the eighteen upper windows of the great hall. With the help of Mr. Everard Green (Rouge Dragon, and late vice-president of the Society of Antiquaries), who has deciphered these windows for the owner, we will read the story they tell us.



OLD * MANOR * HOUSES



In the farthest window from the entrance we have the coat-of-arms of Sir Henry Beauchamp, Knight of the Garter, Sixth Earl of Warwick, who in 1444 was created "first and chief" Earl of England, with the special privilege of wearing a golden circlet, and among other things, was Lord of the Forest of Dean, and Hereditary Pantler to the King's Household. He was also crowned King of the Isle of Wight by Henry VI. He died, aged twenty-two only, in 1446, and his little daughter, Lady Ann Beauchamp, aged five, followed him in 1448, being buried in the Benedictine Abbey of Reading—another of life's tragedies.

In the next window we have the armorial



OCEWELLS * MANOR



bearings of Sir Edmund Beaufort, K.G., who was Constable of the Tower in 1450, and was killed, fighting on the Lancastrian side, at the battle of St. Albans in 1455.

Then the arms of Margaret of Anjou, wife of Henry VI, in the fourth window those of Sir John de la Pole, K.G., and in the fifth those of Henry VI.

After this comes Sir James Butler's coat-of-arms : he was knighted in 1426 and was afterwards



OLD * MANOR * HOUSES



created Earl of Wiltshire. His second wife was Eleanor, daughter of Edward Beaufort, Duke of Somerset, and of Eleanor, daughter of Richard Beauchamp, Earl of Warwick.

In the seventh window is the crest of the Benedictine Abbey of Abingdon, and in the eighth the coat-of-arms of Richard Beauchamp, Bishop of Salisbury from 1450 to 1481.

In the ninth the coat-of-arms of Sir John Norreys, the builder of the house, whose crest, in correct heraldic language, is a "raven rising proper."

The tenth window has the arms of Sir John Wenlock, who was Usher to Queen Margaret of Anjou, mentioned and left a legacy in Sir John Norreys's will ; and the eleventh window contains the coat-of-arms of Sir William Lacon, of Stow, in Kent, who was buried at Bray in 1475, his wife being a Miss Syperwast of Clewer near Bray.



OCKWELLS * MANOR



The twelfth has the arms of Roger Mortimer, Earl of March, and great-grandfather of Edward IV and Richard III.

Sir Edward Nanfan's coat-of-arms, the Sir Edward who lived at that beautiful house, Birtsmorton Court, in Worcestershire, appears in the thirteenth window; and in the fourteenth the same arms and crest, but the impalement is different.

The fifteenth has the arms of Sir John Langfort, Kt., who married a daughter of Sir William Norreys of Bray, grand-daughter of Sir John Norreys of Ockwells and Yattendon, Berks.



1485

In the sixteenth window the arms and crest are probably those of the De la Bêche family at Aldworth, Berks, where there is a farm-house still known as De la Bêche. The families of De la Bêche and Langford were related, Sir Philip

OLD * MANOR * HOUSES



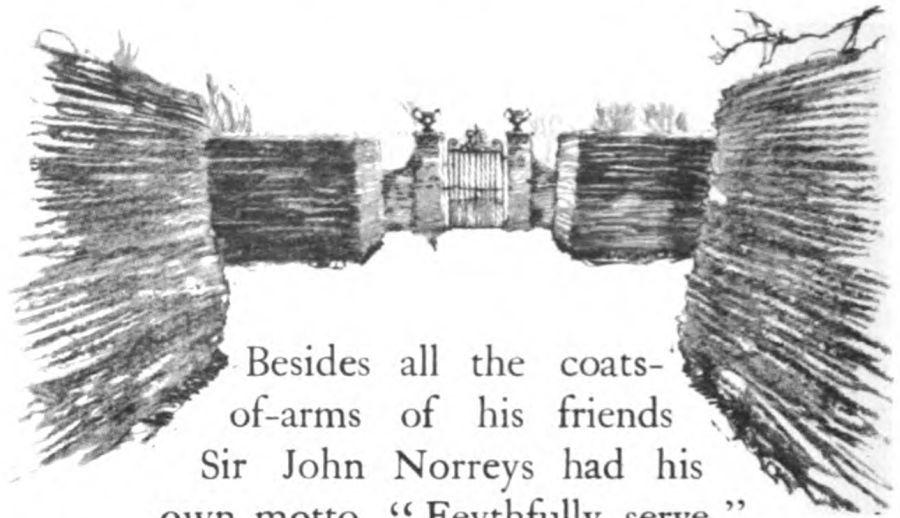
de la Bêche's only daughter marrying Sir John Langford. The Langford family owned Aldworth until the early part of the sixteenth century.

The seventeenth window contains the arms of John Purve of Chamberhouse in the parish of Thatcham, Berks. He was bodyservant to Henry IV.

Lastly, in the eighteenth window we have the arms of Richard Balstrode of Upton, Bucks, who was Keeper of the Wardrobe to Queen Margaret of Anjou, a son of William Balstrode who married Agnes, daughter of William Norreys of Ockwells.

From this list it can be seen that, as was usual in houses in Plantagenet and Tudor times, the coats-of-arms of the owner, his King and Queen, friends and relations, were emblazoned on the windows of his house.

OCKWELLS * MANOR



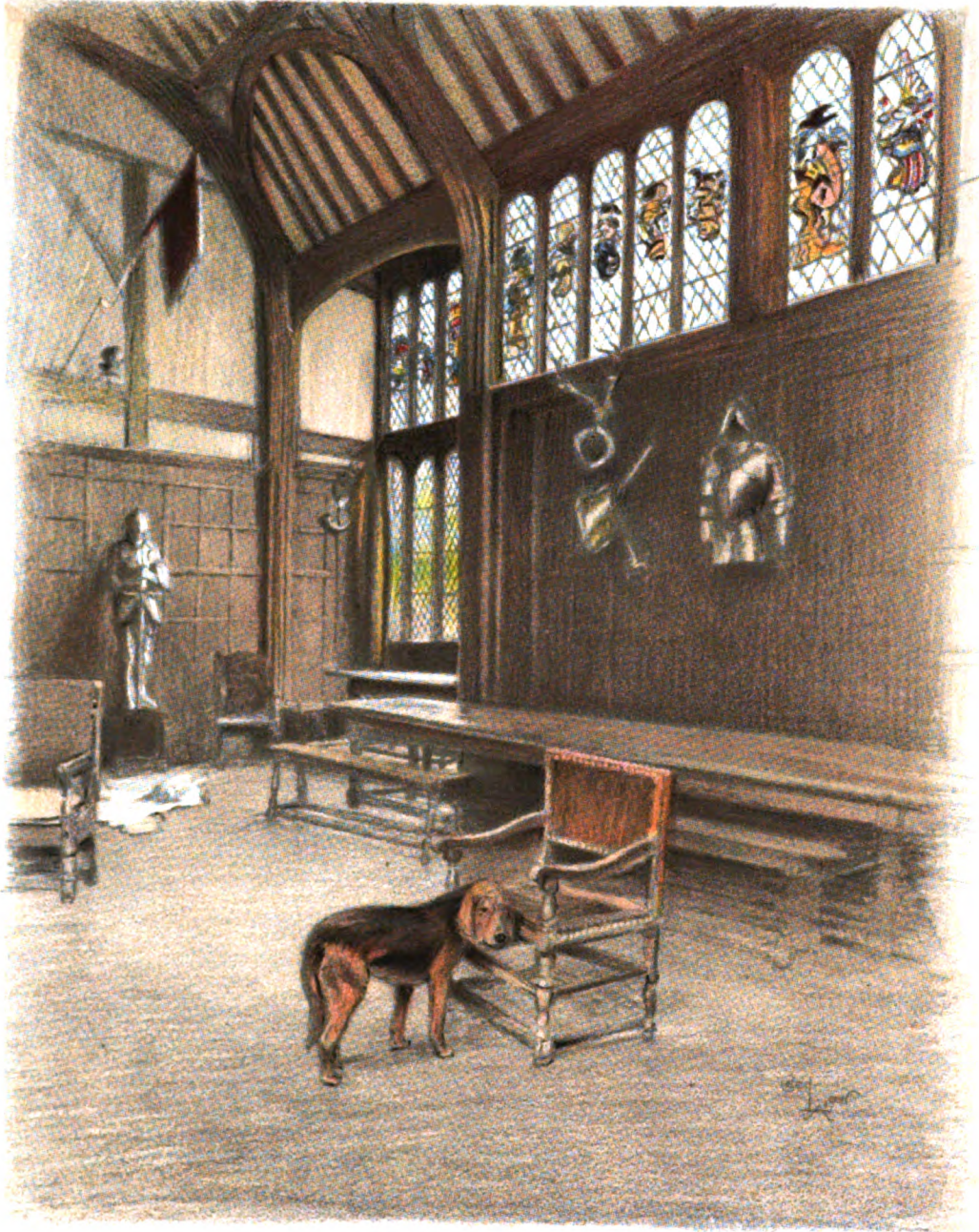
Besides all the coats-of-arms of his friends Sir John Norreys had his own motto, "Feythfully serve,"

on every window.

When the present owner of Ockwells bought the property he had the glass brought from Taplow, where it had been kept for safety, and replaced piece by piece in its original great hall windows, the wonderful brilliancy of its colouring, together with the extraordinary artistic value of its blacks and blues, making it a feature which is not to be found in any other house.

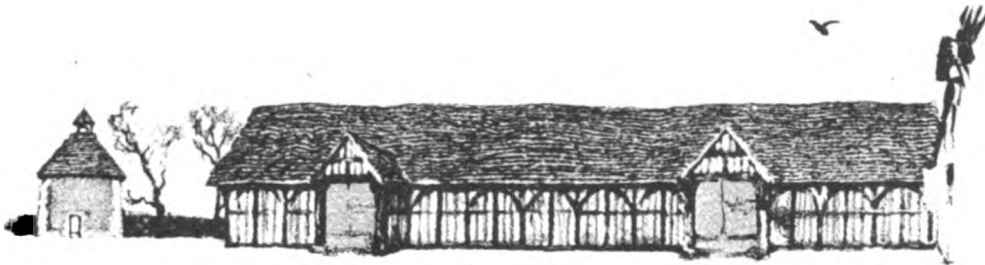
The present approach to the house is more or less modern, the entrance gates now being on a comparatively new road. There is, however, very little doubt that the original entrance was from the old Windsor and Maidenhead Thicket road,

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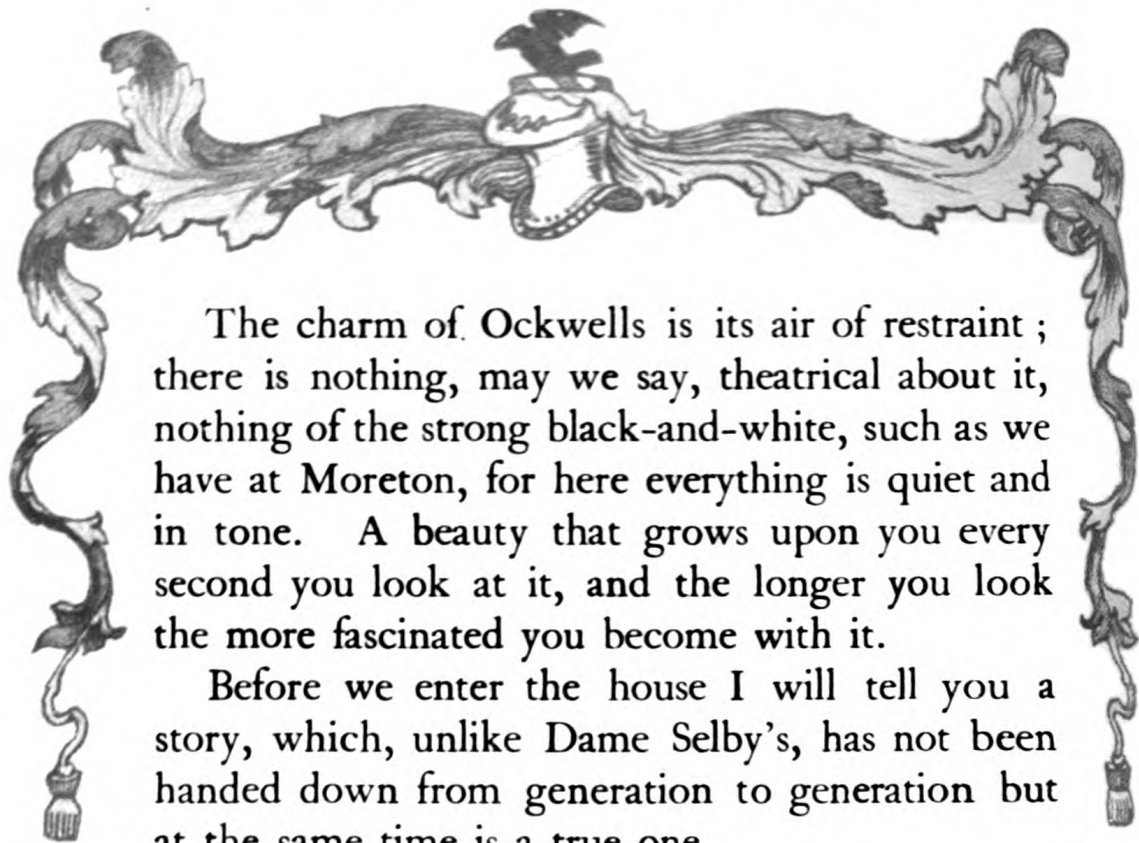
traces of which can still be seen across the Ockwells estate.

You made your entrance then under the gate-house, which we still see, and as we always prefer the old ways to the new, let us enter under this gate-house which faces the new entrance. Here we have our first view of the house, with its beautifully-toned roof, carved barge-boards, and stained-glass windows.

Certain additions have been made, but they are so good and in such perfect keeping with the original old portions, that no one but the most confirmed "purist" could object to them.

At one time, no doubt, there was a complete, possibly loopholed, wall surrounding the house, and traces of this have been found when getting out foundations for other walls, but it was never a moated manor house.

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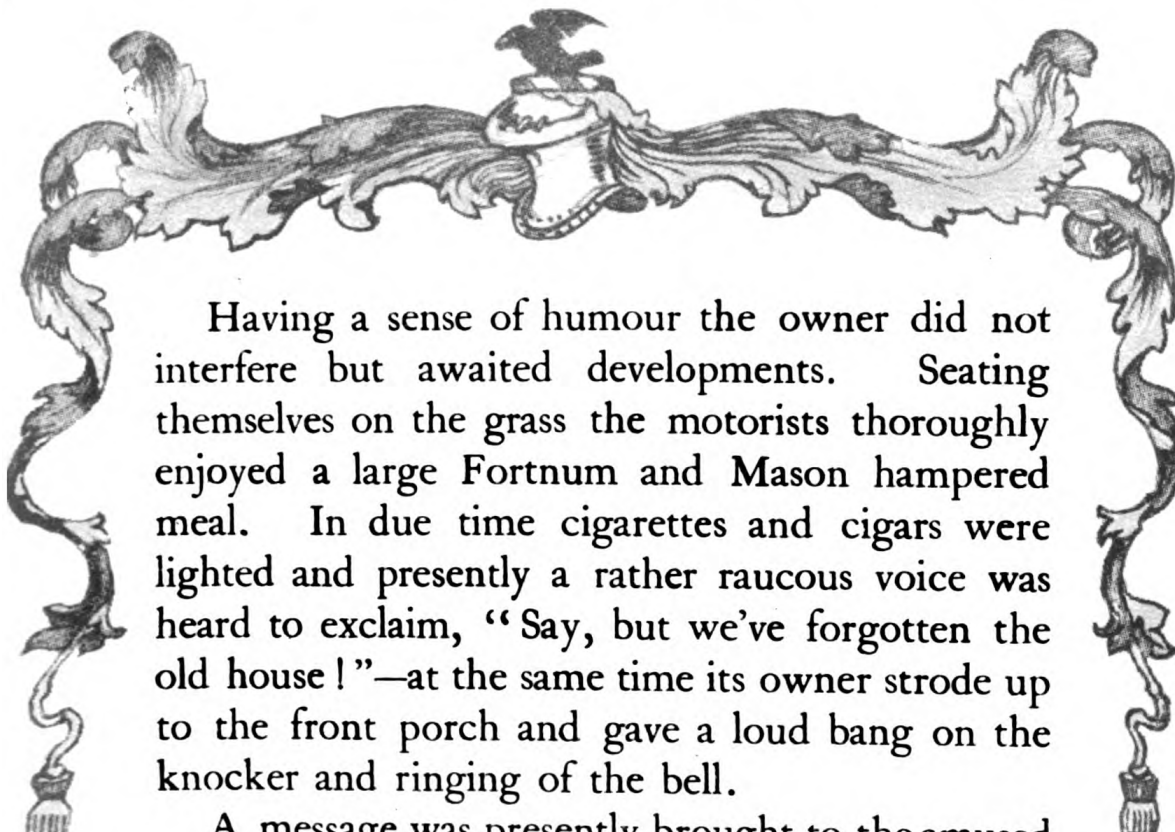


The charm of Ockwells is its air of restraint ; there is nothing, may we say, theatrical about it, nothing of the strong black-and-white, such as we have at Moreton, for here everything is quiet and in tone. A beauty that grows upon you every second you look at it, and the longer you look the more fascinated you become with it.

Before we enter the house I will tell you a story, which, unlike Dame Selby's, has not been handed down from generation to generation but at the same time is a true one.

The owner of a certain old manor house and his family were one day at luncheon, when they saw a large and heavily-laden car glide by their open window and pull up at the front door. No visitor, however, rang the bell, and after some minutes they could see from their window the occupants of the car preparing for an elaborate picnic on their lawn opposite the front door.

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A decorative border of stylized leaves and flowers frames the text. At the top center, a bird is perched on a branch. The border extends down the sides and ends in tassels.

Having a sense of humour the owner did not interfere but awaited developments. Seating themselves on the grass the motorists thoroughly enjoyed a large Fortnum and Mason hampered meal. In due time cigarettes and cigars were lighted and presently a rather raucous voice was heard to exclaim, "Say, but we've forgotten the old house!"—at the same time its owner strode up to the front porch and gave a loud bang on the knocker and ringing of the bell.

A message was presently brought to the amused owner that a Mr. — of — had come to see over the old house.

History says that the owner's sense of humour did not go so far as to allow them to do so, but a very, very polite message was sent, "the owner regretting that his house was not open on that day," etc., etc.

After some grumbling the car occupants



1449

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departed, leaving, as a memento of their visit, a considerable amount of corks, paper, and one broken glass on the lawn.

On the right of the porch is the great hall with its massively timbered roof running the full height of the house, and under the windows the original refectory table, which, without cutting in pieces, it is impossible to get out of the room.



Opposite the windows we have a fine open hearth where five-foot logs are always burnt, logs which take two men to carry each one. At the east end is the Minstrels' Gallery, reached by a small staircase in the passage outside.

As to Ockwells itself, far abler pens than mine must describe it. The architectural beauty, and the treasures it contains are beyond the scope and capabilities of this already too bulky notebook, the pages of which are only intended to

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give the reader a few notes which I am afraid can be but poor imitations of the beautiful originals.

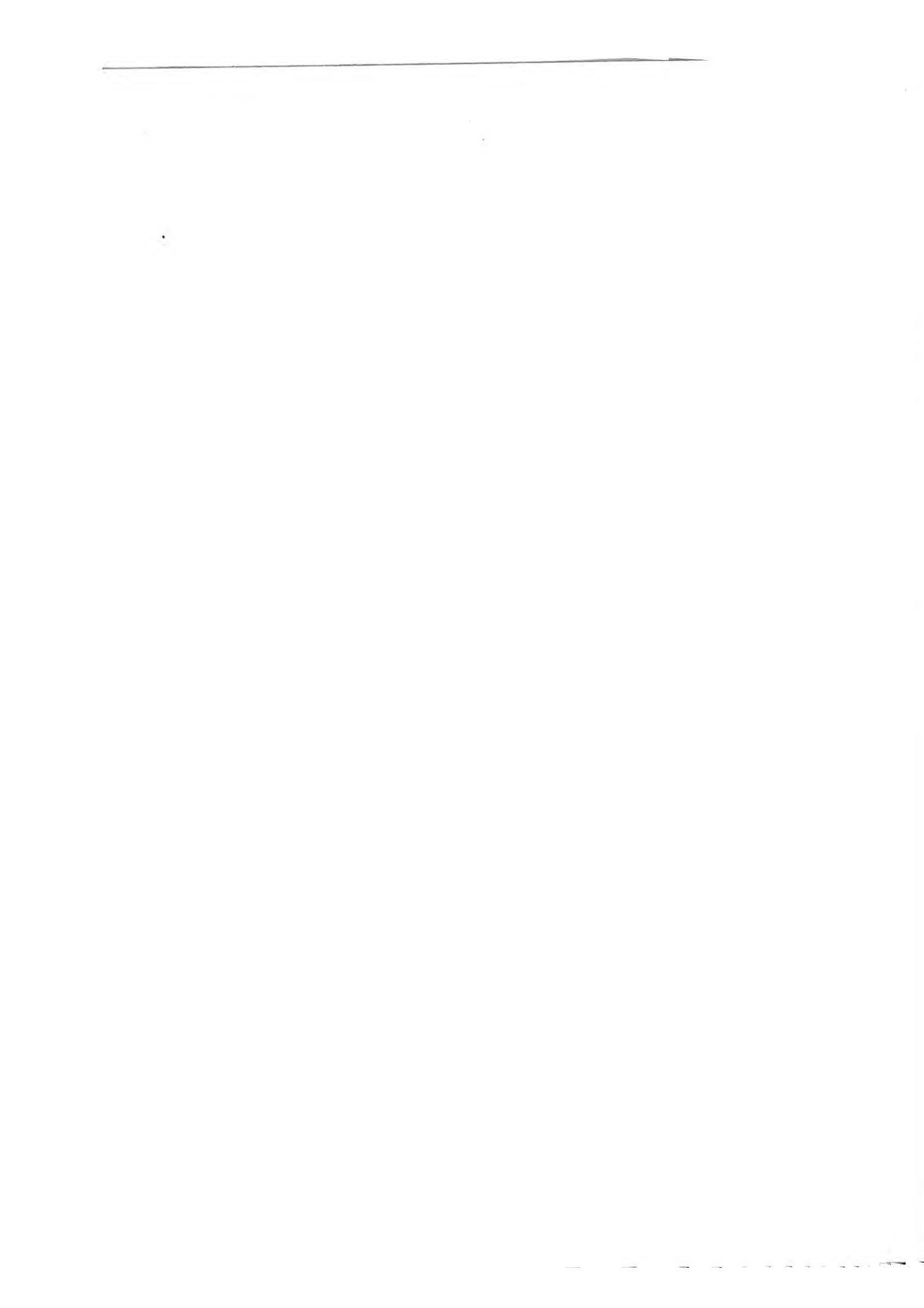
Such as they are, however, I have placed them before you in the hope that they may be the initiative for a pilgrimage.

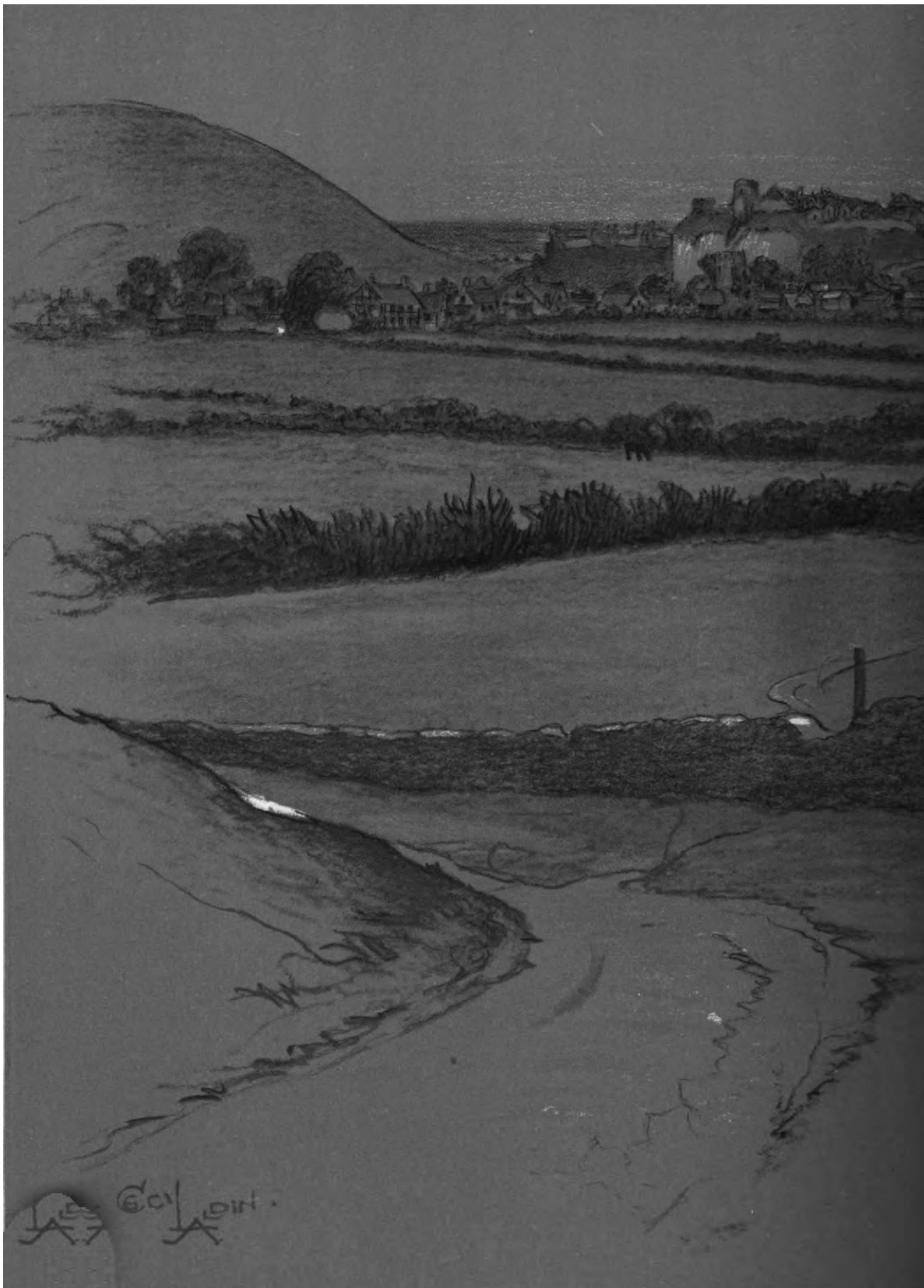
When that pilgrimage is undertaken may the pleasure afforded to myself when visiting these Manor Houses be equally yours, and I shall feel that my sketch-book has not been in vain.











1877
Govt
A. D. H.

